



Flagship Seminar Series:
Revisiting India's Role in the Bangladesh Liberation War.
Centre for Social and Economic Progress (CSEP)

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Welcome Address:

Rakesh Mohan – President and Distinguished Fellow, CSEP

Speakers:

Chandrashekhar Dasgupta – Author, “India and the Bangladesh Liberation War” and former Indian Diplomat

Shivshankar Menon – Distinguished Fellow, CSEP, and former National Security Advisor

Mohammed Ayoob – Distinguished Professor Emeritus of International Relations, James Madison College and the Department of Political Science, Michigan State University.

Quazi Sazzad Ali Zahir – Veteran, Bangladesh Liberation War, and Padma Shri Awardee.

Moderator:

Constantino Xavier – Fellow, Foreign Policy and Security Studies, CSEP.

For More Details:

<https://csep.org/mNIJwf6>

Watch the event video here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OfaodDTZUZI>

The following is an edited transcript from the event.

PROCEEDINGS

Rakesh Mohan: Given the unfortunate event that took place yesterday, where we lost the first Chief of Defence Staff, General Bipin Rawat, who lost his life along with 11 other service personnel in the unfortunate helicopter crash. So, may I request all of us, the panelists and also of course, everyone in the audience to join us for a minute of silence as a tribute to their lives and service to the nation. Thank you. Although it is indeed a sad day, just one day after this tragic accident, I'm delighted to welcome you all to today's Flagship Seminar for the CSEP. It is the 13th one that we are hosting in the first year of CSEP. And we won't end the year with 13, by the way, because we have the 14th one just next week. We are releasing the book called 'Unshackling India' by Ajay Chhibber, exactly at the same time next week. We are really grateful to Ambassador Chandrashekhar Dasgupta, to allow us to host this webinar on his incredible book, 'India and the Bangladesh Liberation War', published by Juggernaut. Our fellow, Constantino Xavier, will moderate this session and introduce the author. But I must say that he has of course, had a very, very distinguished career for which he was honoured with the Padma Bhushan as long ago as 2008. Given the current situation in the world, he's also an expert in India's Climate Diplomacy.

So, he's had a long, long distinguished career in diplomacy on behalf of India. His book is a really masterful account of India's strategy, and decision making, leading to the 1971 War. What impressed me about the book, of course, was the really detailed research that has gone into it. And almost all from archival research; going into the papers of many of the main actors at the time. I should also say that I hadn't quite realized before this - 1971, I was indeed a student, just graduated as a fresh BA. I'd come home to India, after almost seven years abroad, having gone abroad when I was 16. And it was during the time that I was in India that this took place. So, it just happened that I was here during that period. But what impressed me in terms of reading the book, was the really masterful diplomacy that was carried out during the period by our prime minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, and of course, all her advisers, both the military, as well as the diplomatic corps and others, including Mr. P.N Haksar and Mr. P.N Dhar.

But it is with the kind of masterful activity that took place in managing the world's opinion during that time, and especially, given the pivot that took place from the United States to China at that time, this was a very, very difficult achievement – to be able to do all the preparation, and of course, to make sure that people understood that it was really the Bangladeshis, then of course, East Pakistan, we were honouring what they wanted, as opposed to suo motu activity from India. So, I must say that your masterful account through all the records is not an opinion, as far as I can make out, was very, very impressive to me. We are particularly thrilled at CSEP to host this because much of our foreign policy work so far, has focused on India's neighbourhood. Relations with India and Bangladesh, not only from our connectivity infrastructure angle, but also the political security, economic and social dimensions that do tie both the countries together now. And of course, we must note that this is the 50th anniversary of Bangladesh's founding, around, I think, almost to the date. next week is the date. So, it's a particular delight for us to be able to host this at this time.

We always, in almost all our webinars, we host these webinars on the basis of a judgement that it is methodical and scholarly work that goes into a book, that then we feel if the Centre for Social and Economic Progress should host this. So, I think, given the very difficult geopolitical scenario in the world today, and the kind of epochal changes going on today, between, I would say, the North Atlantic in some sense, and the Indian and Pacific Oceans, that this is a very opportune time for us to be thinking about the way that India has to navigate these difficult waters in the coming years and decades, perhaps. So, this is a very welcome addition to the literature, at least for people who, like me, are not experts in this area.

We are, of course, delighted to have an absolutely stellar panel of experts to comment on the book. Let me first just mention Professor Mahmoud Ayoob, who's retired from Michigan State University, and one of the most prominent scholars and critical security non-western approaches to international relations, and Colonel Ali Zahir, joining from Dhaka, who's a war hero of 1971, who played a critical role in acting active in the Bangladesh Liberation forces. And very recently, he was honoured, 50 years after the event, and received India's fourth highest civilian award, Padma Shri. And finally, of course, our own distinguished fellow Ambassador, Shivshankar Menon, who is former Foreign Secretary and National Security Adviser. I won't do detailed introductions, because I think Constantino Xavier will do that. So once again, thank you very much to all the panelists and all the participants in this webinar. Constantino.

Constantino Xavier: Thank you, Dr. Mohan. Welcome all, to another Flagship Seminar at CSEP. I'll be moderating this discussion for the next 90 minutes. We'll have a discussion with Ambassador Dasgupta, for a first round focused on the book, and more conversation then later on, about the book and its implication for the study of India's strategic history, but also contemporary lessons, as we try to decipher India's behaviour in the neighbourhood and beyond. This is also in line with some of the work we've done at CSEP on going back in time to look forward. We've had the Back to the Future theory where we try to look at books, practitioners, people that have played a critical role in decision making in specific moments in time. We did one, for example, on the Indian Intervention in Sri Lanka between 1987 and 1990. And then we did one led by a non-resident fellow, Professor Anit Mukherjee on the 20th anniversary of the Kargil War in '99, and how that fits into current debates about civil-military relations and military preparedness.

But today, we are here, thanks to Ambassador Dasgupta, who's brought us this fabulous book, India and the Bangladesh Liberation War. It is really a story of India and how India decided to act across 1971, it's pretty much a book focused on the year of 1971. It gives us a bird's eye view of various different elements that are brought together through political decision, diplomatic, military, economic, political factors. I think for that we all really have to be grateful for Ambassador Dasgupta, we hope this book will be read well beyond India. So, what we'll do is, we'll give Ambassador Dasgupta the first word, and then come to the discussants. Ambassador Dasgupta, if I may quickly introduce you in four lines, in detail. Ambassador Dasgupta was in Indian Foreign Service from 1962 to 2000 as ambassador to China, Ambassador to the European Union, member of the Prime Minister's Council on Climate Change. He served three terms, consecutive terms on the United Nations Committee on

Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. He's also had another book published in 2002 on War and Diplomacy in Kashmir; the War of 1947-48.

Ambassador Dasgupta, over to you, if I may just kick off things, one voice I heard reading these 250 pages of yours, and this is the voice I imagined, but it sounds like the voice of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, who seems to, across those eight months, nine months, keep saying, "Hold, hold, hold. Wait, wait, wait. Let's get this right. Let's get that right," in order to keep India's eyes on the final prize, the ball, which was the political objective of ensuring a new, free, nation and neighbour, Bangladesh. It was not easy; domestic criticism for not moving immediately, 10 million refugees, and the risk of communal tension, economic repercussions, concerns about pressure from abroad, foreign exchange reserve, military supplies and military preparedness – whether the military was ready to go in or not, internal tension, Mukti Bahini for the first three months, the Bangladeshi freedom fighters losing out on the Pakistani offensive, I think the last stronghold they lose is actually in June. So, between March and June '71, the history of defeat is actually for the Mukti Bahini and the Bangladeshi freedom fighters. So again, "hold, hold, wait, army," preparedness, logistics, the internal debates in the army of whether the army could and what it could pull off; very different visions.

The internal consensus, even among Bangladeshis, was not clear. There were not only the Mukti Bahini, there were the Mujib Bahini, there were the communists, there were different forces. The Soviet Union, we think that August is the cut-off point where the Soviet Union supported India and everything rolled out. Your book actually shows that even after August, there were another two to three months of intense diplomatic negotiations to push Moscow to come in support of India in November-December. The United States' hostility constantly, I think, in the voices of Nixon and Kissinger, including through military deployment in the Bay of Bengal in early December, the question mark about China escalating, the battles and the actual fighting between Indian and Pakistani forces in November. Finally, the December 4 attack by Pakistan and again, India delaying its recognition by two days, holding again, waiting for the right moment, planning for post victory and planning for withdrawal of troops. I lifted all this to give some of the people a bit of context, but where do you see the greatest challenge in these eight months where India was closest to not holding and moving in or precipitating some action?

Chandrashekhar Dasgupta: Thank you very much, Constantino, for highlighting some of the main questions in the book. My book is not a history of the military operations in December 1971. Rather, the central argument in the book is that these military operations were only one part, albeit crucially important part of a larger multi-dimensional grand strategy that encompassed defence, foreign and economic policies, as well as management of Home Affairs. I think for the first and only time since 1947, India formulated and implemented a grand strategy. Many of our Pakistani friends believe that India had always wanted to break up Pakistan, and we simply seized the opportunity that presented itself in 1971. The documentary evidence proves without doubt that this was not the case. India was well aware of the fragility of the unity of the Pakistani state, but it pinned its hopes not on a breakup of Pakistan, but on a transition to democracy that would bring an East Bengal party, in this case, the Awami League to power in Islamabad.

New Delhi believed that this offered the only hope of a breakthrough in India-Pakistan relations as a whole, because the Pakistan Army and the West Pakistan establishment in general, were committed to a policy of continuing confrontation. I had cited the R&AW [Research and Analysis Wing] report of 1969, which was extremely prescient. Their estimate was that the six-point program for autonomy had such strong support in Bangladesh, that the army was ultimately going to move in to crush this autonomy movement.

And at that point of time, the autonomy movement would turn into an independence movement, and East Bengal rifles would take up their weapons in defence of Mujeeb and his demands for autonomy. But despite this, our hopes, after the December 1970 elections in Pakistan, which gave the Awami League an absolute majority, was that an Awami League government would be allowed to be formed at the centre. And we hope that this would enable us to manage our relations with Pakistan more sensibly, not an overnight solution of all problems, but at least, to handle them in a mature way and to reduce tensions. So, this is what we were hoping for right up to 25th March, when the Pakistan army launched Operation Search Light, and instituting a savage reign of terror. And then all hopes for a united Pakistan lay buried under a mountain of corpses. At that point, we realized that the hopes for a democratic transition were not going to work out. We recognised that Bangladesh was going to emerge as an independent state, and that the only sensible role that we could play, the role which was in our own national interests, was to hasten the emergence of an independent and sovereign state of Bangladesh.

But in April 1971, the Chief of Army Staff, General Manekshaw advised the prime minister that military preparations for a successful war would not be over later much later in the year, till after the monsoons. And Manekshaw was fond of circulating an account that it was this that persuaded Indira Gandhi not to send the army into East Bengal right away in April. But the fact is, that the government had already decided that such a hasty move into East Bengal would be counterproductive in terms of achieving the objective, the overall aim of hastening the independence; the recognition of Bangladesh as a sovereign and independent state, because the principles of non-interference in the internal affairs of other states, in the territorial integrity of states, these were firmly embedded in international law and practice since the adoption of the UN Charter. And an immediate Indian intervention would be condemned by the international community as interference in Pakistan's internal affairs, and moreover, the Bangladesh cause would lose all international support and sympathy. Therefore, it would be counterproductive to move in immediately, even if that had been militarily possible.

Now, in April, in the first week of April, Mrs. Gandhi had two meetings with Mr. Tajuddin Ahmad, the General Secretary of the East Pakistan Army League, who had sought shelter in India. Mrs. Gandhi was very impressed with Tajuddin, with his sincerity, his dedication to the cause of Bangladesh's independence. And shortly after that, we gave Tajuddin no clear-cut commitment, but shortly after that, we formulated gradually, the elements of what I call, a grand strategy, which encompassed defence policy, foreign policy, economic policy, or policy towards the refugees, other elements of domestic policy in order to further our aim of carrying the struggle to a conclusion before the end of the year. So, the essential element

here was that Bangladesh's independence, the success of its freedom struggle could only be attained by their own sons and daughters. Our role was only to help them and to bring the struggle to an early conclusion.

Had we moved in April 1971, this would not have been possible – it could have been counterproductive. So, coming to the military dimension of our grand strategy, this included a massive program for training and equipping the Bangladesh freedom fighters ultimately, some 100,000 freedom fighters were trained during the course of just a few months. Alongside this, preparations were made for a direct Indian military intervention before the year end, to bring the liberation war to an early conclusion. These military preparations were supported and supplemented by diplomatic initiatives to mobilize international support for the Bangladesh case, to make the point that Pakistan was driving out millions of refugees into India. This was no longer a problem that concerned only Pakistan's domestic affairs, Pakistan was exporting its domestic problems to India, and that gave India a right to defend its interests. Diplomatic initiatives were required to ensure uninterrupted and timely supplies of military equipment, and the Indo-Soviet Treaty obviously helped a great deal in this direction. The date for supplies was brought forward after the signature of this agreement.

We needed also, to deter a possible Chinese intervention and again, the Indo-Soviet Treaty served that purpose. Diplomatic measures were required to ensure that the UN Security Council did not impose premature ceasefire before decisive result could be achieved on the battlefield. And on this, as you rightly pointed out, the Soviet assurance was forthcoming only at the end of November, because right up to the end of September, when Mrs. Gandhi visited Moscow, the Russians bid against India's direct involvement in the situation prevailing in what they called, East Pakistan. So, on the economic front, resources had to be mobilized for providing shelter to millions of refugees, at the same time, for extensive military purchases, and we took special care to ensure that no foreign exchange crisis would arise in the event of America stopping economic assistance to India after the outbreak of the war, and I think that was a very prescient move. We also factored in the possibility of an oil embargo imposed by Iran, and other West-Asian allies of Pakistan.

Immediately after signing the Indo-Soviet Treaty, we asked the Soviets to respond to such a situation, to such a contingency by diverting Iraqi oil to India. The Russians at that time were buying considerable quantities of Iraqi oil. On the home front, while taking steps to provide shelter to 10 million refugees, we also have to ensure that all of them were speedily repatriated to Bangladesh after the liberation war. And this meant that refugee camps had to be located near the border, so that they could be speedily repatriated, and they didn't sort of merge into the rest of the community, as it happened with most other previous refugee influxes into India. Now, after the first few weeks, the vast majority of the refugees were Hindus. They were being driven out by the Pakistan army as part of an anti-minority program, and the Pakistan army was being helped by their local collaborators, the Razakars. The central government in Delhi issued strict instructions to all provincial governments in border areas to ensure that this did not precipitate communal tensions in India.

The Bangladesh Liberation Movement was a secular movement, the Indian state was a secular state. But these Pakistani provocations, driving out millions of Hindus across the border,

would very well have generated communal tensions had pre-emptive measures not been taken in time by the central and state governments. I think one of our great successes in 1971, was the maintenance of communal harmony, despite severe Pakistani provocations. So, these are the elements of what I describe as India's grand strategy. But we often hear the criticism that India won the war, but lost the peace because we didn't convert the ceasefire line or the Line of Control which came into effect in 1971, into a proper international boundary. I think this criticism totally misses the point. Firstly, the objective of the 1971 War was to hasten the liberation of Bangladesh. This is the only India-Pakistan War, in which our principal aim was not related to Kashmir or to any other aim concerning our western borders. The aim was to speed up the liberation of Bangladesh, and this aim was fully achieved on the 16th of December, 1971.

During the course of the December war, we added a subsidiary aim, and that was to replace the 1949 ceasefire line, which came into effect as the result of a Security Council decision, by mutually, bilaterally agreed New Line of Control, bilaterally agreed between India and Pakistan, which also reflected the ground realities of 1971. This aim was achieved in Shimla. India's objective in Shimla was to shift from multilateral fora to bilateral fora, for resolving all India-Pakistan differences. And the decision to replace the old 1949 ceasefire line by a new line of control was part of this objective. And it also gave certain tactical advantages to our side. So, I think these objectives were achieved at Shimla; it was never Mrs. Gandhi's intention to convert the line of control into an international boundary at Shimla, though I do think this was a long-term objective, and she saw Shimla as a step in this direction. She feared that if she had done this at Shimla itself, she'd have been accused in India, of having 'surrendered' Pakistan occupied Kashmir, to Pakistan. So, it was not only the Pakistan public at that time, Indian public opinion also, had not been prepared to accept the conversion of the line of control into an international boundary. So, I do think that this criticism, that we lost the peace in 1972, is misplaced. Thank you.

Constantino Xavier: Thank you, Ambassador Dasgupta, for giving us a wide overview and really, the various elements that went to the strategy. That, I feel in many ways, explain the calmness with which at some point, the Prime Minister took certain decisions. I'm recalling her sitting with President Nixon in DC, in her November '71 trip if I'm not mistaken, early November, where President Nixon is obviously teasing out wanting to respond, appealing to her to change her position, and it transpires again, I'm reading the documents that she refuses to engage in that. And the calmness, having that purpose of mind, that strategy in place, knows already what the end will be, which is the one of course that happened on 16 December. And that comes from a clear vision and of the lot of work that went between 25 March and November, of course, that you've mentioned.

I'll come now to ambassador Menon to share with us his comments about the book. As a quick introduction, if I may, he's of course, a distinguished fellow with us at the Centre for Social and Economic Progress. Also, visiting professor at Ashoka University, former National Security Adviser, former Foreign Secretary, and also, the author of two fine books. And if I may say, one of them very similar in terms of format to this one; 'Choices Inside the Making of Indian Foreign Policy', that is based on several case studies of decision making on very

strategic security and foreign policy issues, and most recently, another book on India and Asian Geopolitics: The Past, Present that we launched earlier this year. Ambassador Menon, over to you.

Shivshankar Menon: Thank you, Tino, thank you very much. What I'd like to do in my seven minutes, is to tell you the lessons that I learned from this really admirable book, this remarkable book, which is based, as Dr. Rakesh Mohan reminded us, on very deep archival research. For me, the beauty of the book is really, it's an object lesson on how to write contemporary history. Now, that's not an easy thing to do; writing contemporary history, quite apart from the fact that many of the participants are still alive and waiting to contradict you and to fix the historical record in their own favour. But also, archives are not always available. It's difficult too, and you are dealing with events, which normally, still have contemporary political significance. But this is a book, which I think, shows you how to apply reason and logic and how to follow the evidence. I think the core and the key to the success of the book is the fact that it follows the evidence. It goes through the archives and there isn't a statement in there that I could find, which is not based on sources, on evidence, on facts, and verifiable facts. And then to apply reason and logic, and to separate the facts and the objective reality, from the opinions and the conclusions that you might draw from it. It's clear, it's reason, and it's restrained in its rush to judgement. I mean, for me, that's part of the beauty of the book, and part of its persuasiveness also, when it makes its case. The problem, of course, is that our archives in India are very patchy, our record in actually transferring material to the archives, we should be following the 30-year rule, but we don't always, and especially not on issues which are considered politically sensitive now, which includes most of what happens in our immediate neighbourhood and what would interest many scholars of contemporary history. But what ambassador Dasgupta has done also, is to look at archives abroad, to look at various collections of papers. And for me, therefore, this is very important. If we are to write contemporary history, which we must, this is an example of how to do it.

The second point I'd like to make, and the second lesson that I learned out of it, is about grand strategy. Ambassador Dasgupta has described just now, what kind of grand strategy India followed. But what struck me is how it's a whole country effort; it's iterative, it's flexible, and realistic, all at the same time. This is asking a lot. But somewhere underlying that, is a willingness to deal with reality as it is. And when that reality changes, to change the strategy, to adjust it, to cope with it. And for me, that is very important, especially, I would say, well, even in a centralized decision-making system, which is what Mrs. Indira Gandhi ran, and which many leaders prefer, for obvious reasons. But even more so, a centralized decision-making system needs to canvass as wide a range of opinions as possible, and then, subject them and then be willing to devise a grand strategy and keep adjusting it. And for me reading this book, it's remarkable how whether it's military strategy where, as the possibilities open up; whether its diplomatic geostrategy, when you see the entire global environment shifting around you with Nixon's opening towards China, you respond, as he says, Mrs. Gandhi was surefooted, she signed the treaty with the Soviet Union.

But we still have to work with the Soviets, because for the Soviets, the treaty to initially at least, I think, was a guarantee of restraint, of calm, and then to see where it would go. But for

me, that is quite remarkable. The ability that Mrs. Gandhi and her advisers show to adjust to circumstances as they change in a shifting world, and whether it was military strategy being adjusted to take Dhaka. And not just military, diplomatic, but even domestic policy internally as well; the treatment of refugees always evolved over time. The goal was clear, right through. Once 25th of March had happened, Operation SearchLight, the goal, I think, was clear. But the strategy itself had to be, as I said, iterative, flexible and realistic and an all-of-country effort. What this says about Indian strategic culture, I think, this at least, should put to rest all this talk that, "Oh, India has no strategic culture, we don't think strategically", then, how did we manage this?

But it also shows you in some ways, an Indian approach to the use of force, that force is part of a larger political goal. The use of force in the pursuit of larger political or national goals is what is at stake here, and therefore, it is successful. It's not just purely a military approach to the use of force and to respond to security situations, in fact, it's the precise opposite.

The third lesson that I learned from this, and it's in the title, is that this was Bangladesh's liberation war. It's not India and the third Indo-Pak war or whatever. This was Bangladesh's liberation war. And this complex interplay; the geostrategic context, the Bangladeshi liberation struggle, for me, that's very interesting to see how India assesses that, how we took each of those elements on board and then developed this strategy. It was also the first media war because we couldn't count on governments who were naturally wedded to the principles of sovereignty of territorial integrity, non-interference in the affairs of another state, but the use of publicity in fact, with a 4pm briefing, daily briefing by the MEA spokesman actually began in 1971, and continues luckily. So, the use of publicity of getting public opinion in the world on our side, using television too, by spreading pictures of what was happening to the refugees, it actually made it impossible for the British and French governments to support the US in the Pakistan consortium meeting, for instance, because they were aware of the strength of the feeling in their own public opinion. Even in the US, Nixon and Kissinger were very aware, as you can see from the transcripts of opinion in congress, public opinion, the media. And it's an interesting interplay, I think; it was the first such media war as it were, on a global scale. As for India's role, I think this is the one indispensable book on India's role in the birth of Bangladesh, and I don't think it can be better. And the events that are described was seminal to the formation of the subcontinent as we know it today. If partition gave us one reality, actually, 1971 is in many ways, the root of many of the issues that we deal with today; whether it's Pakistan's nuclear weapons, whether it's Pakistan's use of asymmetric methods when she saw that she couldn't deal with India through conventional warfare. We now worry about a bigger two-front conflict, which maybe is good, because you're known by the enemies you choose. And if you're going to pick enemies, pick good ones. But this book itself is very clear, precise, readable, so, I would strongly urge anyone who's interested in India's contemporary history and the shape of the subcontinent today, to please read the book. Thank you.

Constantino Xavier: Thank you, Ambassador Menon for your perspective, and I can just, having benefited from the archives, I can endorse your point about openness, in terms of the records; the written records, without which we'll be hostages to opinions, views, hearsay,

memories, and particularly, we'll be hostage to the old phrase that, "Where you stand is where you sit". That's what this book brings out. It gives us a bird's eye view from the political centre, and the advisors around the Prime Minister that are trying to coordinate and bring these different inputs, and harmonize them. One example I found fascinating, is the Western Command of the Indian Army, pushing to open up a Western front in the early planning. And that is politically dismissed, but it tells you also, the Western commands, obviously, USP or comparative advantage, was a Western front with Pakistan. So, it's natural as you see in Bombay – I guess that wasn't the point he had for the Western command, you would, and you try to make yourself useful to the strategic and political decision-making, you will privilege, of course, the Western Front. And that was overridden, and the political decision, of course, of doing that is critical.

I invite all participants to share your questions in the chat box or to the Q&A function as we go along. I'll hopefully get time to pick some of your questions for the different panelists. But now, I'll come to Professor Ayoob, who is our next discussant. Professor Ayoob is University Distinguished and professor emeritus in International Relations at James Madison College, and the Department of Political Science at Michigan State University, in the United States. He was a professor in Pakistani Studies at Jawaharlal Nehru University, JNU here in Delhi, in the 1970s. He played an advisory role to the Government of India during this crisis of 1971. He's worked on various issues and particularly, on the subaltern realist approach, that decentralizes a lot of the IR [International Relations] Strategic Studies Research that tended and maybe still tends to be focused in Western, North American and European universities. He's also the author of a book with K. Subramanyam, 'the Liberation War of Bangladesh,' that was published in 1972. Professor Ayoob, over to you.

Mohammed Ayoob: Thank you very much, Constantino. First of all, I'd like to add my words of appreciation for Ambassador Dasgupta's book. It's a piece of great archival research which sets at risk many of the false notions and ideas that have surrounded the discussion about the 1971 War. It also demonstrates how such painstaking archival research can trump impressionistic accounts of the events. And I plead guilty to these impressionistic accounts to some extent, because I was too close to the events in the early 1970s, from 1970, 71 till about 1973, and wrote a number of columns on these. In my analysis, and even later, though I have not visited this issue from the mid-1970s for a long, long time. But my analysis was based on the impressions that I had gathered from my conversations with some of the closest advisors to the prime minister, and by sitting on committees that I was appointed to, and I was of course, overawed by the group that was usually at these committees because they were all twice my age or more – I was just in my 20s, so, I tended to take them very seriously, these discussions very seriously.

But I've had no opportunity to look at the archival material. I got involved with various other things after I left the shores, and it's only now that I'm coming back to it after 50 years of this, but I'd really like to congratulate Ambassador Dasgupta for having done this great job. I was asked by Constantino, particularly, to reflect upon a couple of points or a couple of issues raised in the book that he thought I might be interested in doing, and I'll do that first before I go on to some other things that I want to talk about. We have discussed the role of public

opinion, particularly, international public opinion, that justified the making of this international public opinion; that helped New Delhi to justify its course of action. And I know some of that from again, close quarters, because I worked quite closely with the director of the XP division, Ambassador S.K. Singh, who became a great friend of mine later on, in presenting India's position and charting out some of the strategies as to how to present India's position to the international public.

But equally important, I think, was the way that the government was able to shape public opinion at home. It was done very intelligently. First, to get the skeptics and some leading public figures were among them, on board, in order to when it came to it, to justify the intervention and the decision that was taken. And I saw that also, from close quarters. One of the strategies as Ambassador Dasgupta pointed out, and I think Ambassador Menon did as well, was to demonstrate to the international public, that the government was acting with utmost restraint, and wanted first, to try out all the methods, all the options, before a decision to go to war was taken.

I remember a major conference that was held in, I think it was in July 1971, convened by Jayaprakash Narayan. I was one of the rapporteurs at that conference, which gathered about 200 eminent personalities from around the globe, which had in its final concluding statement, a single point demand that India must act immediately to put these atrocities to an end. And I know that it was funded by the Ministry of External Affairs. It was a deliberate attempt to show that the government was under great pressure to act, but was acting with extreme restraint and within international law. So, I think it was equally admirable, the way this strategy was conducted, almost as admirable as the way the Indian case was presented abroad. The other point that Constantino wanted me to focus on, and this has also been addressed by Ambassador Dasgupta in his book, was why was it that international opinion just at the governmental level, and never really came around to supporting India's position, even after the war had broken out, in fact, particularly after the war broken out. And that in the UN General Assembly, I don't remember the date exactly, but during the course of the war, there was a resolution passed asking for an immediate ceasefire after the Soviets had vetoed a couple of resolutions in the Security Council, and that had made the same demand.

And that's now, as Ambassador Menon I think also pointed out, it was the Westphalian logic in operation, the Westphalian logic of non-interference in the internal affairs of states that had been internalized to a great degree or absolutely one could argue, especially by the ruling elites of post-colonial countries. And it worked to their benefits also, because many of them were authoritarian, and didn't have great track records back inside their countries, and they didn't want others to be barging into their domain, and the 'No Trespassing' sign was put up. The idea of humanitarian intervention, which came into vogue from the 1990s onward, was a concept that was unknown, I would say, at that time. Both the Indian intervention in Bangladesh, and these Vietnamese intervention in Cambodia, were condemned for having broken international law. Humanitarian intervention, the idea came into vogue after the end of the Cold War. And I would argue that there was a lot of, not just hyperbolic vocabulary that was used to justify it, but it was to a certain, if not to a large extent, rather hypocritical in

character. Because the interventions that were dubbed humanitarian, were undertaken very selectively, in order to suit the goals of the intervenors.

Of course, there were some that were genuinely humanitarian back in Bosnia, for example, but many of the others were really to serve the purposes of the intervening groups. Now, you wrote extensively about this, on humanitarian intervention and state sovereignty. In fact, I did a brief for the UN High Level Commission, whatever it was called in the early 2000s, about this. So, humanitarian intervention was not on anybody's horizon at that point, and I've been a great skeptic of the whole, this whole business for R2P, the Responsibility to Protect, that has been bandied about, because in operation, it's not really what it was supposed to be. Now, coming to the meat of the question], the Bangladesh War and why India intervened. Well, let me first of all, make the point that the roots of Pakistan's disintegration lay very much within the Pakistani polity. Pakistan was a geographically absolute state to begin with, and it needed a tremendous amount of political sagacity to keep it together. Political sagacity on the part of its ruling elites, which was almost totally absent. So, from the word go, the problems that bedevilled the Pakistani polity were very clear to be seen.

But what made the difference, and here, I think one should notice this, that had India not intervened militarily, I mean, I know that the Mukti Bahini and the liberation fighters did a great job within East Bengal. But had India not intervened at the time and had it resisted from going in and clearing up the mess, the outcome would have been vastly different. I don't think that the Pakistani military would have been able to reimpose control on Bangladesh, totally, but it would have left behind a great mess. There would be a lot of mayhem and chaos, and the leadership of the resistance movement would have moved far too much to the left. And this was one of the reasons, I think Ambassador Dasgupta also mentions in his book, that New Delhi, and I picked this up during that time, listening to people discussing these issues behind closed doors even, that given the fact that the Naxalite movement was in full bloom, that a radicalized East Bengali movement for independence would have not suited India's purposes. And so, the outcome would have been vastly different.

I have a feeling that even if Pakistani military was not able to totally control the East Bengal, it would have probably been able to control some of the major centres, or cities and the whole place would have been a great mistake. I still think that despite all the humanitarian considerations, there were of course, major humanitarian considerations of refugees and so on. But I would argue, again, depending on my recollections from 50 years ago, that it was primarily the strategic and geopolitical reasons that motivated India's intervention. I still remember a few days after the March 25th crackdown at a symposium from the lawns of Sapru House, K. Subramanyam speaking from the floor, cut through all the academic arguments that people like me were making on the panel, and said, "This is the opportunity of the century for India to go in and excise East Pakistan", as she would have called it. And it made a lot of sense to me even then, because no matter what happened, I had no romantic notions about India-Bangladesh relations being a love fest forever and ever. But no matter what happened, even if there were tensions between India and Bangladesh, as they were bound to arise for a whole host of reasons, including the disparity in power, India could live with it because it would at first, be a thorn in India's flesh; not a security threat. And India has

had many thorns in its flesh from its smaller neighbours, so, this is nothing new that we couldn't handle. So, that was one major consideration. The East Pakistan, particularly if it existed in the form that it did, particularly in the event of a two-front war, could have posed a major security, if not threat, but concern for New Delhi. An independent Bangladesh, I knew that would not have, in fact, I said so at the India International Centre, the lecture that I gave soon after the liberation of Bangladesh, that the Bangladeshi elites' attitude towards India, would waver between gratitude and resentment. Gratitude for what we did to liberate Bangladesh, but also resentment that they were unable to do so all on their own, and we would have had to live with it; it wasn't going to be a love fest, but it is still much better than the situation that then prevailed. One last point. Subramanyam's characterization of the opportunity of the century, was well and good, and all of us sort of, believed in it at that time, or people like me accepted that that was the best option for New Delhi. But it was limited to that century; the 20th century. The situation now, as we look back in the 21st century, particularly after the nuclearization of the subcontinent, is very different, because nuclear weapons are great equalizers. And the notion that many of us had at that time, that having shown Pakistan the power of superiority, if not the power predominance of India, Pakistan would come to terms with it and a new set of relationships would evolve. In fact, I published a book in 1975, written for the Indian Council of World Affairs, called 'India, Pakistan and Bangladesh: Search for a New Relationship', which was based on that premise, but the premise was all wrong. And the premise was wrong for two major reasons.

One, we had thought that Pakistan would have learned the lessons of Bangladesh not to take on India again. But the lesson that the Pakistanis learned, particularly the Pakistani military and political elites, and I think to a large extent, even in the public, was not that. The lesson that they learned is, that if India could do this to them, could do a "Bangladesh" on them, they could well do a "Bangladesh" on India, in Kashmir. And I was told this innumerable times by Pakistani diplomats and academics abroad, that, "If you could do it to us, why couldn't we do it to you?" Of course, the situation was very different, and I don't want to go into any details or arguments about it. The other major reason was nuclearization of the subcontinent. The fact that both India and Pakistan came to possess nuclear weapons, and Pakistan was able to, and the United States was persuaded by Pakistan because of the Afghan Jihad in particular, to turn a blind eye towards Pakistan's nuclear program, because nuclear weapons are great equalizers. And so, the advantage that India held in conventional terms of its conventional superiority, has been reduced to a considerable extent by that again. Now, one final point.

Constantino Xavier: Professor, could we leave that for the discussion, your next point? [crosstalk].

Mohammed Ayoob: I want to talk about the intellectual climate of that time amongst the Indian elite.

Constantino Xavier: Very briefly, please, because we're running out of time.

Mohammed Ayoob: Okay. Two things struck me very much at that time. Not that I think back about it, but particularly, the civility of discourse, which is missing today. There were very

strong opinions on the sides of the intervenors and the non-intervenors, but even more, after the victory, about how to treat Pakistan at Shimla, or what should be the outcome. And they were genuine differences, but these debates were conducted with utmost civility. There was no attempt to disparage people, or attribute motives to them one way or the other. There were several who advocated that Bhutto was our best bet, and I was among them. And then there were several others who argued that this was not true; that we should have taken a much harder line at Shimla to put an end to Pakistan.

And there were senior journalists like Girilal Jain and my good friend, Inder Malhotra,, who criticized me for seeing what I did. But of course, there were others like Pran Chopra and Mukherjee, who said much the same things that I did. But what struck me now, and particularly, now when I think back on it, that during that period, whatever I said, it could have been criticized for political or intellectual reasons, but nobody ever raised the issue that I was saying this because I was a Muslim. And now when I think back, during all that discussion and debate and writing my columns, which I wrote for The Times of India and the Hindustan Times, I never considered the fact that I was a Muslim, and therefore I should restrain myself about saying things that other people might want to say. And that is a reflection of the India of the 1970s; the early 1970s. We were still in the shadows of Nehru. That we shouldn't forget. Thank you.

Constantino Xavier: Thank you, Professor Ayoob for your remarks. In interest of time, I'll just move immediately to our distinguished guest from Bangladesh, Colonel Sajjad Ali Zahir. It's a pleasure to have you here with us. He's a veteran of the Bangladesh Liberation War in '71. He actually saw things on the ground and he did things on the ground. He was deeply involved, and for that, he was conferred with Bangladesh's highest civilian award, the Independence Award in 2013. And also, with India's civilian award, the Padma Shri this year, here in Delhi. When the War of Independence broke out, he was an officer of Pakistan's elite 14-Para Brigade stationed in Sialkot. He deserted the Pakistan Army, crossed the Jammu and Kashmir border, carrying with him classified information of Pakistan military deployments, and other sensitive military information, which he handed over to the Indian military authorities. This provided valuable inputs for Indian operations in the sectors of Shakar Garh and Zafarwal, among others, and for aiding Indian forces, he and his family had to suffer bitterly. He joined the Liberation War on the Eastern Front in the Sylhet sector, and was awarded the Bir Protik Gallantry Award. Colonel Zahir, it's a pleasure to have you here with us. Over to you.

Quazi Sajjad Ali Zahir: Thank you very much for kindly inviting me to speak again, on such an august occasion as such qualified people, and I am not so qualified person. But then, I have some information. First of all, I have received some great honour from India and Bangladesh. Pakistan also gave me an award; very high award. They awarded me death sentence. And God bless them, still valid now. So, gentlemen, you have heard many people talking to you in lectures and associations. But you haven't heard anybody who has 50 years that has passed with a death sentence. I want it to be valid, and that's a proof of my patriotism. As a young officer, I was very inquisitive. I learned Urdu very quickly, learned some Punjabi. I was quite fair-looking, they thought me a person from Karachi, didn't doubt me much. That helped me to enter their command post, access to equipments. I was a master of map reading, night

navigation. And the commanders will take me, and you'll be surprised, just after March, they were preparing for the war. And command post, ammunition dumps, helipads, everything was there during reconnaissance. That gave me great information; I am pleased to tell you that I gave every information to Indian forces, first in Samba, then in Pathankot, and then Delhi. Some officers thought me to a Pakistani spy, "How do you know so much? You are so young". But then, I thought I was up to the task.

On the 6th of December, I received a message from Indian authorities; "Your information and plan is working". And I said, "God bless them". I've been able to save 1000s of lives, but definitely my family suffered, I must tell you. All my houses, my father's houses were burnt, a lot of things happened. But then, war kills life, love, characters, human beings, but also kills history, if you don't culture them. Today, coming over here, and whatever they read about Ambassador Chandrashekhar's book, and also, descriptions I heard today, makes me feel hope is on the move. It's a fascinating entertainer, beautifully written book. But if you allow me sir, I will suggest to you a few things that when you have the next edition, please do visit Bangladesh in detail. Talk to people, talk to victims' families, talk to the people who suffered in '71 in Pakistani side. Coming back to the notion that whatever Pakistan is doing, that is very important for us to know. On the 1st of August 1971, they had a four days war game. In that, they decided many things. They decided reorganizing three infantry divisions, two armoured division, two armoured brigades. And that was the thrust that they were working on. They had given the plan of capturing, shelling and capturing Agartala airport in Tripura and sending a division into Kolkata.

So, those things, they are all planning. But then what happened is another situation is that Pakistanis had also ordered for a very large shipment of arms and ammunition from China, a large number of ships are coming. Before they enter Chittagong port, they were diverted to Karachi. And then, [General] Niazi [Khan] blamed that on General Gul Hassanand said he was playing politics. Probably, that would have been a Strike Force anyway. So basically, '71 if we think from another point of view, being a front-rank freedom fighter and a Pakistani trained officer, I've gone to the villages and deep villages with guerrillas, with villagers. Sir, all the villages were ours, believe you me. Pakistanis after the month of August, were not coming out of their bunkers. In the daytime, some patrolling they used to do, evening, they used to take shelter in the big bunkers. They developed a totally defensive mentality; in that they have large bunkers, communication trenches, everything was built up.

Strong point defence, they pushed their troops forward so much that there was vacuum everywhere for us for infiltration. I beg to disagree that the communist would have taken upper hand. Sir, believe you me, there was one communist group, was the communist itself, but they are tremendously divided. A number of them stayed back and fought against Mukti Bahini, killed some Mukti Bahini also. But another was NAP [National Awami Party], a Pro-Soviet Communist party. They were the people who, the Mujibnagar government initially was suspecting. But we the commanders on ground recommended to our commanders, that they should be trained, they should be put into Bangladesh along with us. So, about 4,000 of them were sent in and that had a positive impact with the Soviet Union of course. And when I was one of the commanders of the Mukti Bahini Association, I had ensured and gave

recommendations for all of them to get certificates of the freedom fighter, because many of them didn't have the proper documentation. But then another thing I'm telling you over here, sir, that all the plans of '71, was made on 17th of March 1971 in Larkana. Bhutto sahab, it was his palace. Media was told that Yahya Khan is going for bird shooting, so the media left, so they didn't know where they are going.

Three helicopters landed in front of Bhutto's Palace. Mustafa Khar, [Zulfikr] Bhutto and Mumtaz Bhutto received them. They all drank Black Dog whiskey, I even know the name. But I have no problem with the drink, the whiskey, but they did not plan for shooting birds, they planned for shooting Bengalis, and it's very great of some people, who did convey the message to father of the nation of Bangladesh, Mujib-ur-Rehman, and that's the reason he gave that clarion call of 7th of March, asking people to get armed, to resist, because he knew. I had the chance to talk to Mujib-ur-Rehman once, he loved me very much. Once, he told me, "You're not even 20. How did you do dare to come from Pakistan alone?" I said, "Sir, you have ordered me; why shouldn't I come?" And then I asked him, "Sir, you knew everything before the 7th March week?" He smiled at me, "Did you know about that?" I said, "Yes, sir. Some bit of it". He says, "I am the leader; I'm supposed to know". So, in the speech he says, that they come to our place, East Pakistan at that time, has many meetings, many plants, go back there to West Pakistan, have a five and a half hours meeting, conspiracy against me and my people. That's what happened actually.

So, they had enough time to mobilize and everything was decided that day and why Tikka Khan was brought? Because there is a reason that Tikka quelled the Belushi rebellion, and he was brought in here. Pakistanis before they went for Operation Searchlight, they had two references with themselves. This was the third genocide. First genocide, Baluchistan - Tikka, and most of the Punjab battalions did that. Exactly the same thing is what Operation Searchlight did. First, most of the troops' commanders must be Punjabis. I am not racial, but I'm telling facts. Number two, it will be a secret operation. Number three, all the foreign journalists will be told to leave. Same thing happened, Operation Searchlight. And number four, we will conduct operation and kill villagers. They will be scared, they will submit and when they submit, what will happen? Lakhs of them will leave Baluchistan. That's what happened. They left Baluchistan, many went to Iran, many went to Lebanon, many went to Afghanistan. And that's what exactly happened in Bangladesh. All foreign journalists cut out, and before that, Americans and Middle East people and their friends abroad will be told not to criticize them too much. Exactly same thing happened, when we should have went out. So, and number three, sir, would you believe that – what is the second genocide?

Nobody believes me, but I went to Jordan to study that secretly, that genocide. You are aware that after the Palestinians said Jews went into a lot of confrontation, lakhs and lakhs of Jews left Palestine; they crossed the Holy Jordan River, when into Jordan. They are living in refugee camps in terrible condition. But then slowly, they started asking for equal rights, education, treatment, jobs, business, everything. King Hussein of Jordan say, "I will not give you equal rights". Then they were a lot of demonstrations. King Hussein did not use the Jordanian Military because they would be sympathetic towards the Palestinians. They have some human qualities. So, he had to find out some soldiers who had no human quality. Who was

he? General Xia-ul-Haq, Pakistan, commanding the training division in Jordan, he was told to attack the camps. We don't know how many people have died. Again, the Palestinians had to cross the Jordan River. Some went to Syria, some went to Egypt, and some went back to Palestine. What could you do? Palestinian people have embraced me and cried and told me this story. This is a forgotten genocide.

So, Pakistanis have experience of two genocides. Just with the experience of two genocides, Tikka came to Dhaka on 7th of March. I'll give you three statements, I'll not make it very long, but you will not understand what's happening. On 26th of March 1971, Tikka out of the command post six o'clock in the morning, saying, "Dhaka has no people, only fields, stray dogs are alive and eating the corpses. Bobby has used everything in his power", who is Bobby? Brigadier Jahanzab Arbab, 57th brigade commander of Dhaka, later on second active lieutenant general. And you talk about Shimla agreement? Number two, sir. That evening, Yahya Khan makes a statement, "I will kill 3 million of them. Rest will eat from my palm". Number three, Niazi Khan taking over command on 11th of April, says, "haramzada kaum ko main sabak sikhaunga, uska naksha main badal dunga" [English: "I will teach that bastard nation a lesson, and will change the shape of their map]." Face you change by blood. Would believe, in Larkana, they decided that Mullas before boarding the aircraft will give fatwas to Pakistani soldiers that they are going to a Munafik country, they are non-Muslims, anti-Islamic. He said, Jihad, because Islamic Republic of Pakistan will be attacked by Mujibur, with his non-Muslim followers. And dying soldiers would be asked to drink water, and they would say "Nahi paani piyunga. Commanding officer ne bola hai" [English : I won't drink water, as directed by the commanding officer.] That was the motivation, sir.

Now, we have to go back to the history of this. Sir, books are very nice, because books are written by literate people. Victims of '71 are the poorest of the poor. So, sir, I live in Bangladesh in the villages. I've written 60 books till now, doing oral history only. When these people I talk to, they cry and cry and cry, but they have not much voice. Again, the tragedy of Bangladesh. A lot of people, all of you have made very good ideas about realistic ideas. Only poor went for the war. In my camp 810 people, Mukhtis, boys. Only one was honours, three were graduates, five had intermediate. Rest all were peasant's children One lungi, one fatwa, one rifle - nobody had a shoe to wear, because they didn't know how to wear a shoe. Now, what happened? The upper and middle-class people stayed back in Pakistan. Would you believe sir, the number of officers, Bengali officers inside East Pakistan were only 26% revolted; they stayed back with Pakistan. Rich people, well off people don't want to give their lives.

Most of the Professors, teachers, bureaucrats, diplomats, stayed back in Pakistan. Who fought the war? The peasants, the cultivators, [indistinct- 1:19:26], and they have gone back to their profession; they did not become political leaders, big bureaucrats; they couldn't decide the fate of the country. And when you had the repatriation, that's what you forget to discuss. When Bhutto was able to take the 90,000 prisoners of war, he said, "Okay, take the Bengalis, lakhs of them, officers and men". General sahab and brigadier sahab and Mukti Bahini only had majors. They all came back. They all take over the command, and we are left to rot. And how did Bangabandhu [Mujib-ur-Rehman] die? It is Pakistani conspiracy. Because we have

the information, the killers, some of the top killers, they are not traceable anywhere in the world; they're all in Pakistan, even now. So, this is a very strange world we're living in. Okay, we then go on and on and on. [crosstalk]. To the author of the book, I close my hand and congratulate you for whatever reason, sir. But then, write about the tragedy of '71. Why Bangladesh, the poorest of the poor fought because they are being butchered, they are being humiliated, they are being raped. And people say, two lakh women are raped, my statistics say more than six lakh women are raped. Thank you very much, sir.

Constantino Xavier: Thank you so much Colonel Zahir for your testimony from the ground with emotion, with experience, with trauma and pain, of course. There are many good books and I hope there'll be many more books that give voice to the victims. For example, I think Professor Yasmeen Haque has a wonderful volume on the role of women in the 1971 war and a variety of chapters of different women that played a role there. But in the interest of time, I will go forward and maybe, Ambassador Dasgupta, I'll come to you, I'm sure you will have a few things to say. But I'll ask each of you two things first, if you could stay 10 more minutes with us beyond 7:30, so we have then about 20 minutes to go into a few more questions. And second, to be brief and the answers, so we can cover a lot of ground and also take questions from our participants. In fact, several have come in already. And let me start with Ambassador Dasgupta connecting with Colonel Zahir he has already mentioned, and I hope we can come to a different ground now and comment on what we shared. But there's two questions from [audience], both relating to the issue of refugee.

In fact, [audience] asked, "Was there any thinking about compelling these 10 million refugees to go back to East Pakistan, should Pakistan have won the upper hand in the war?" What was the plan if things would go wrong? You were pretty much the 10 million foreign citizens in a very volatile situation, so what would have been the plan? What's the possibility," she asked, "ever considered that many of the refugees would prefer to stay in India, even after the creation of Bangladesh?" Similarly, [audience] asks about the question, how it was to deal with the states and the regional communities in India that were hosting these refugees. You mentioned the regions and states of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, I think your book mentions that in fact, the population of Tripura more than doubled, and actually, more refugees than local autonomous inhabitants. But if you could mention quickly and discuss these issues of refugees and what the planning, the thinking was and the logistics involved with economic support and the preoccupations within the government of India to deal with the flow of people.

Chandrashekhar Dasgupta: Thank you. Before I reply to this question, I would like to say very briefly, how much I was moved by the words of Colonel Zahir. What I knew about the '71 War, is from documents and books. He has lived that experience, and it was really very, very moving to hear him recount his experiences during the war. I just wanted to say that. Now, coming to the questions. Firstly, at no stage did we consider compelling the refugees to go back. In point of fact, that was a proposition which was made to us, not in such a blunt and direct way, but we were invited to send the refugees back once Pakistan announced that it was ready to receive them. But we knew that these refugees would not go back voluntarily till their lives and honour were guaranteed, and that could happen only under a free Bangladesh. So, at no

stage did we think of forcing them back. The main question which had to be resolved was whether we should follow the policy that we had followed with respect to previous refugee influxes, which is to resettle them in diverse parts of the country, so as to preclude excessive pressure on the host communities in one specific area. But we decided against it, because we were pretty sure that we would succeed in creating a situation where they could go back to a free Bangladesh within a few months. And see that, arrangements for their return, worked out in some detail in November, before the outbreak of the war together with the Bangladesh government. And arrangements regarding transportation, the rehabilitation, etc. These were issues which were contemplated well in time. Thank you.

Constantino Xavier: Right. Ambassador Dasgupta, may I stay with you on one more question. You begin in the first chapters of actually laying out the debates inside the government after 25 March, you say it begins late February, and late March. And there were different currents, different currents within the Ministry of External Affairs. You mentioned people that were more hopeful about this being an opportunity for Pakistan to democratize finally, and others that were quite skeptical. More aligned maybe, with the intelligence service, the Research and Analysis wing, whose lead R.N Kao] comes out early on saying, "This is a hopeless situation. There will be a breakup of Pakistan. The sooner we prepare for it, the better". In fact, he had been arguing since 1969, if I get that right. You mentioned several inputs from the R&AW] important points that reinforced that position.

What does this tell us about different organizational cultures? We think about in Foreign Service, the intelligence, there's conflict and tensions, also, the military and within the military in different services. With the paramilitary, the border security force at some point, takes exception, takes a different position. So, if you could walk us through, I mean, just very briefly, how important was that, or was everyone friends with each other, knew each other, a call away, and things got sorted out? Because you mentioned the institutional deficiencies as there's no formal organization to coordinate all this, but it happened probably through the Prime Minister's office, Mr. Haksar, Mr. Dhar, of course, at the top. But you could walk us through to what extent organizational cultures matter, didn't matter, at that period.

Chandrashekhar Dasgupta: Well, in the first place, you're absolutely right. Mr. Kao, the head of RAW was quite emphatic in January, after the December elections in Pakistan, he was quite emphatic that Pakistan will break up, that this overwhelming majority of seats in the eastern wing that Mujib won also ties his hands; he can't show much flexibility on the six-point demand, and if these are not considered in full, and they will not be continued in full. He has really not much latitude for negotiation. This was his view. It wasn't entirely that in MEA, there was a single view. As you said, there were differences within MEA. But the senior most MEA officials, named our ambassador to Pakistan and the Secretary in charge of Pakistan affairs, felt that while a breakup was very much on the cards, it wasn't inevitable. And they visualized situations where compromise could be backed out between Bhutto and Mujib on the one hand, and Mujib and the army on the other - namely an arrangement under which Bhutto remained in effective power in West Pakistan, while the Awami League was in power in the Eastern wing, and with an Awami League government at the centre also. And Bhutto did make a statement, "idhar hum udhar tum" [English : Here we are, there you are], which

seemed to be a feeler in this direction, but he had to back down very soon. And likewise, there was some talk of an arrangement under which the army would be guaranteed a certain proportion of the revenues raised by the provincial governments, and this could act as a sort of compromise solution.

But within MEA, the Joint Secretary in charge of the Pakistan division, Ashok Rai, held a view similar to Kao's. Ashok Rai had served as Deputy High Commissioner in Dhaka, and on two occasions; in 1965, and in 1966, Mujib had informed him directly, that he intended the six-point program - that his ultimate intention was independence. And in '66, he told Ashok Rai that the six-point program was intended as a bridge to independence. And this made a huge impression on Ashok Rai and he tended to side with the Kao view. So, there were these debates, the prime minister's office was not that much involved. I mean, it was to some extent, but they were preoccupied with the elections. And it was only after the elections that Mr. Haksar could give his full attention to this. So, there were debates within the government, and the organizational shortcomings to which I referred to were really, you know, the compartmentalization of civil and military affairs.

I mean, we didn't have the sort of institution which the United States has, and the National Security Council, which brought policymakers in the military and civil side together. We did not have an integrated services command, we did not have defence ministry which was integrated with the service headquarters, and so on. So, I think, you know, there wasn't a full awareness on the part of the military about relevant developments on the civilian side. For example, the fact that we did not have a Soviet assurance on the veto, the fact that when military plans were first drawn up in the end of July, there still was no Indo-Soviet Treaty. So, the implications of all this was not clear to them, even the ultimate aim was not clear to such a highly intelligent officer like the Air Chief at that time, who records in his memoirs, that he didn't have a clear idea of what the political motive of the war was, Air Chief Marshal Lal.

Constantino Xavier: Thank you, Ambassador Dasgupta, may I interrupt you, because we are really running out of time?

Chandrashekhar Dasgupta: Yes.

Constantino Xavier: But I think you wonderfully played out, you also laid out the various tendencies. In fact, if I may, quote from your book, you actually mentioned that "the patchwork of arrangements and the personalities that played, compensated to some extent, the severe institutional limitations of coordination". And that's, I think, what your book brings out, and hopefully we'll also have more histories on the intelligence service contribution, based on records that we don't have until today. It's today, paradoxically easier to know more what India's role was going to American archives and Russian archives and to India's archive on its own. But Ambassador Menon, if I may come quickly to you then on this issue. You were former national security adviser, who was obviously sitting in that chair at the top, getting these various inputs. What does this '71 tell us in terms of lessons about this institutional coordination at the top? The National Security Council Secretariat, and the role of the NSC has now been existing for almost 15, 20 years, and it's a new body. Is that good enough? Is it

expanding? Must it expand? Is India prepared today, to deal with these shortcomings it had in '71?

Shivshankar Menon: I think the NSC is the one place where we actually do integrate civilian military hierarchies, where we all sit around the same table. The NSC, the National Security Council secretariat is truly proper in the real sense. All three of the Armed Forces services, and civilians from various streams, and intelligence, etc. And so, as a secretariat, and I think we learned those lessons from '71, but also, from Kargil. And what really brought it home to us is what Professor Ayoob mentioned. Once, you know, we became a nuclear weapons state, we then needed to take a holistic view across the entire spectrum of violence. And we needed to have some place where we looked at it together, but you will notice that the decision-making power in the NSC is still with the political element, which is as it should be. Because each of these hierarchies, yes, needs to integrate, needs to be coordinated, needs to learn to work together. The second part of what Ambassador Dasgupta said about, you know, jointness within the armed forces, I think that's exactly what General Rawat was tasked to do, and to bring about, and to have a CDS, I think, is the first step at the top, but we need to actually work it into theaterisation and into the kind of inter service coordination and integration, actually, in the operation of the armed forces. That's still to be done, but it's a military reform, which I think everybody recognizes, has to be done and is being done.

So, I think we're much better than we were before. Also, don't forget, I mean, if you look at the bureaucracy, the size of the government, the complexity of the issues we're dealing with, the world was a simpler place in '71. And everybody at around that table in the committee room in 162, in South block, they all knew each other by their first names, many of them had been to the same schools. Now, that's not the case anymore. We are actually today, running a much more complex system, and dealing with much harder issues, some of them that they didn't have to worry about at that time. But I think we're learning. You know, for me, this is one area where, external and security policy, is one area where the government of India has shown a consistent ability since 1947 to learn and adapt. We have not shown the same ability on internal security; where our answer to any new problem is create a new force immediately. But that's a different problem. Because I think you cannot afford in external and in security, and especially among the armed forces, what you're dealing with is outside your control. So, you cannot afford to make a mistake or to say, "I'll do it later; I'll see about it", "I'll patch together some temporary solution". And so, yes, but to your question, yes, I think we're learning, we're trying and we're much better off than we were before.

Constantino Xavier: Thank you, Ambassador Menon. I recall always your lecture at the National Defence College in 2010 on India's approach to the use of force, where you, 10 years before the current foreign minister's book on 'the India way', speak about the importance of studying the India way to the approach of force. And I think those lessons that you speak of an adaptation have often been transmitted through oral ways, communication, training inside the government, but probably it's also useful to have these books by Ambassador Dasgupta, for example. Also, books by Srinath Raghavan on '71, Tanvi Madan has done work on this, Nitin Gokhale has this book now on R.N Kao. I think the more of that history we get, I think also, the more we will be able to deal with these complexities, certainly an economic

dimension too for example, that we're not as complex, maybe in the 1970s and '80s. Professor Ayoob, one question for you I'd have is on one research tradition that you have really animated over decades, which is the idea of subaltern realism, that somehow, regional powers, developing countries, smaller states, have been quite, may I say, myopic, or focused on their immediate developmental and regional security issues; while bigger hegemonic powers like the US, the Soviet Union, at the point of '71 were much more expansive and ambitious. Is India today still a subaltern realist power, or would you say has India crossed the threshold, are they now a big power and has, in that sense, been socialized into the evil perpetually of oblivion, violent politics?

Mohammed Ayoob: I think it's not an 'either-or' issue. The situation is much more complex than that dichotomy demonstrates. India has a foot, I think, in both worlds. Some of us may feel that we have crossed the threshold, but I'm not so sure that we still have because there's so many immense problems within the country that have to be tackled, before we can make larger claims. And you see, the main thing about my subaltern realism thesis, I'm glad it caught on, was that the primacy in terms of the foreign policymaking or security policymaking in post-colonial states, the primary threat is seen as those that emerge from within these polities and within these societies. And external threats are in a way, get enmeshed with these. Internal security problems, and Pakistan is a great example, that problems of internal security in Bangladesh, the relationship between East and West Pakistan, really laid the ground for the Liberation War and Indian intervention.

So, intra-state conflicts can be turned into interstate conflicts. But the roots or the origins of these conflicts, both in terms of causes and beginnings, are firmly within these societies. I think that's what distinguishes the, what I used to call the third world experience - now that the term third world seems to be going out of fashion, I still use it - distinguishes the third world experience from those of the major powers; established powers, which came out of the European tradition, because most of the states that I dealt with, that I've been dealing with and writing about, are still in the era where the European states were in the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries, when the process of state making was incomplete. And as long as the process of state making is incomplete, internal threats will tend to dominate and create opportunities for external powers to intervene. And I think that's what happened in the case of Bangladesh. So, that was my thesis.

Constantino Xavier: Thank you, Professor Ayoob, you perfectly responded to a question by [audience] with exactly what the link is between non-interference in internal affairs of other states and the Westphalian logic in terms of state sovereignty. Colonel Zahir, may come to you and give you the pleasure of the last word today. Talking to us from Dhaka, I think it's two things that I would be very grateful for you. One is, a question from [audience], if you could answer that one. Mr. Mathur is asking, saying that he appreciates the courage shown by you in dangerous, uncertain time, something I think younger generations have much to learn from and be inspired from. But his question is, "What was that one particular incident, which firmly made up your mind to rebel against Pakistan, and the military that you were formally serving?" That is one question. The other request I have for you is, if you could share with us that wonderful citation you have written for the many fallen of the Indian armed forces. And

you've been very committed in honouring Indian servicemen who laid down their lives and their families, their wives, their children over the last few years. I think several 1000s have now been awarded. But I think there's a wonderful citation that you put together, and I think it would be very nice if you could share that with us.

Quazi Sajjad Ali Zahir: Thank you for the compliments. First of all, I would like to tell something that will probably make you a little thoughtful about the situation. A part of my lecture in Bangladesh, because I teach. I regularly teach in 27 institutes and three universities and then, I go and teach in madrassas and primary school, secondary school, and I'm always on the move. And then, whenever I go to some place, I start writing my book; it's all the same. The thing is this; men will die, but protests must remain. From one person, many persons have to come. From me, not only my children, but children of my ideologies would come. A good nation is a grateful nation. Bangladesh should prove to be a grateful nation. It's very important. Then, other nations would respect us. My lectures, which I give in India and Bangladesh, are almost the same. In webinars, I've done 62 lectures with different schools and colleges in India also, living as a partner. I say one thing, sir, please allow me. The blood of the Indian soldiers were flowing, will flow and keep flowing through padma, meghna, jamuna and teesta, and make the soil more fertile for our new generation to enjoy. That is what is my spirit of message. Number two, sir. I teach my children that, "Please do not go for propaganda. Indian army had come and stayed three months in Bangladesh as a victorious army. Lakhs and lakhs, about three lakhs in total. Not a single rape; not a single murder. Show me anybody", I challenge them.

Any soldier enters another country, they do the same, even in their own country, because they're young and energetic. And they get into fights with people who shoot them; not a single case. That's the reason. Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib himself came to take the guard of honour of the departing Indian Army led by Colonel Himmat Singh on the 12th of April 1971 in Dhaka, central stadium. They have gone back with honour and dignity; that's what your people should know. This is a great thing. Another thing, sir, is that this is the most battle-inoculated army in the world, my research says. War in '48 against Pakistan, war in '64 in Rann of Kachchh, in '62 against China, '65 against Pakistan, '71 Liberation War. The peacekeeping war, it was a war actually, in Sri Lanka. Peacekeeping operations all over the world, makes it the most battle-inoculated army in the world. And a lot of my students ask me in India, "In a future war, how will they fight?" I said they will fight like tigers, because it's a household name. Any officer you find out, mid-level officer, they are for the war. And then, they are fighting in Kargil, they are fighting on the Chinese border. I don't think they are a militant army, they're a civilized army under civil leadership, but so much of training they are doing on ground, please remember this. Also, they are doing peacekeeping operations all over the world.

One of the largest peacekeeping troops in the world; they fight for peace. That's the honour I want to give them. So, what I want to do is get back to '71, the period we love. If you love the period, then you love our neighbours. We can change our wives, we can change our family members, but you cannot change your neighbours; you have to live with them. And the more we get back to '71, more prosperous Bangladesh and India will become; morally, physically,

mentally and economically. Sheikh Hasina has proved that. [crosstalk]. Ahmed Hassan, the top economist of Pakistan, my classmate, he's a World Bank economist consultant. He said, "The way Bangladesh is moving ahead, within eight to 10 years, Pakistan will request aid from Bangladesh. So, how is it happening? Sheikh Hasina interconnected with India; total trade, commerce, exchange of people, that's what is there. Now, we have to do it with the young children, so that legacy of '71 is carried forward to them. Thank you, sir.

Constantino Xavier: Thank you, Colonel Zahir for that and for also, pushing us to think on how this all affects the relation today and tomorrow, as India and Bangladesh celebrate this important anniversary, remember it, but also lay the foundations of a much stronger connected relationship for the good of the larger region beyond just India and Bangladesh. So, we have gone 20 minutes over time, I ask for apologies to our participants for that, but I hope you also agree that it was well worth to get to close to two hours of the book that deserves many more hours of discussions. And above all, deserves to be read. I hope people are reading the book. It's very readable; it's very well edited; it's very well footnoted and I think people like to read and hear and discuss and have opinions, but nothing like reading a book front to back and make up your own mind. Dr. Rakesh Mohan, I'll pass the word on to you to maybe bring the proceedings to an end. And I just like to thank the colleagues at CSEP that have worked very hard in making this possible; Nitika Nayar, Zehra Kazmi and **Trishna Wahengbam**, who were helping us in setting up this event. Thank you from my part, over to you, Dr. Mohan.

Rakesh Mohan: Thank you. Thank you very much, Tino. This has been a really absorbing hour and 50 minutes. As Tino said, it has been so absorbing; it went on over 20 minutes over time. It just remains for me to thank Ambassador Chandrashekhar Dasgupta for giving us this opportunity, for his wonderful book and educating us, actually, about how Indian grand strategy worked in 1971. Professor Mohammed Ayoob, Colonel Sajjad Ali Zahir, and Ambassador Menon, thank you very much for your comments. Of course, one can't help being moved tremendously by the first-hand account of Colonel Zahir, what Bangladesh went through in 1971. It's impossible for me to say anything that can really do honour to what Colonel Zahir did at that time, and has been doing ever since, as he's told us. And it must be extremely difficult for him to talk about these events; very, very sad events that took place in Bangladesh at that time.

So, I really thank him from the bottom of my heart for agreeing to be with us, and giving us really, a first-hand account, which, with apologies to Ambassador Dasgupta, no book can give. Those of us who are sort of habitual book writers, cannot in any way, give the kind of ground-level personal experience that Colonel Zahir has given us this evening, I'm sure with sudden pain in his heart, in having to talk about these things. So, I really thank him very much indeed, for being with us. Thank you, Tino, for moderating. Thank you to Zehra, Nitika and Trishna for organizing all this. And for the audience, we will be back at the same time next week, November 16, on 'Unshackling India'. Six o'clock to 7:30, and I will be moderating. I hope I do a better job than Tino in terms of keeping time, except that I wouldn't have given even a minute away of this session; despite the fact that we went over. Thank you very much everyone.