

DEFENCE POSTURES AND PLANSGEOPOLITICS OF THE SUB-CONTINENTThe Setting

The Indian sub-continent in 1971, included India, Pakistan (with two wings), Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan, and Sri Lanka; with Burma, China, Afghanistan and Russia impinging critically on the sub-continent's security environment. Its dominating frontage on the Indian Ocean, which was becoming a fulcrum of power struggle, had increased its defence problems.

The north-west frontier of the sub-continent had been traditionally difficult for India in security terms. Not only that this area was under Pakistan - a hostile country, but two nations - Afghanistan and Russia - were bordering it. Though no serious challenge had been experienced from them lately, yet India was aware of the potential threat to the Indian security inherent in the peculiar geographical situation. However, the principal security threat in this area was seen as coming from within the sub-continent rather than outside the region. This was due to the fact that all of the highly strategic frontier region in the north-west, with the exception of Kashmir Valley and Ladakh, was part of Pakistan. The Khyber Pass - the historical route to the sub-continent - too was controlled by her. In addition, the Chinese activities in this region had considerably increased the threat to the Indian interests. China had constructed roads linking her with Pakistan occupied Kashmir.

The central frontier of the sub-continent's northern border consisted of three Himalayan Kingdoms - Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan - and the mountainous areas of India lying between Kashmir and Nepal. North to it lay Tibet autonomous region of China. India had open borders with Nepal, Sikkim, and Bhutan and that placed these nations in an important position in her security framework. However, in this area the threat came from outside the sub-continent rather than from inside. The Chinese had laid claim to Aksai Chin area. The road links established between Nepal and China had put the Indo-Nepal open border within easy reach of the Chinese. Besides, the northern borders of East Pakistan reached very near to the Indo-Nepal border, leaving a narrow strip connecting India's central part with its north-east portion. In 1971, the Sikkim ruler's apparent flirtation with the USA also had a weakening effect on India's security system in a highly strategic area.

The north-eastern land frontier, consisting of the mountainous areas to the east of Bhutan, that separate Assam (the Brahmaputra Valley) from Tibet and Burma, was part of India, with the exception of a narrow East Pakistan-Burma border on the extreme south. This area had its peculiar problems. The tribals of this region were vulnerable to exploitation by three external powers around this area - China, East Pakistan and Burma. On several occasions, the Beijing government had incited the tribals to indulge in anti-Indian activities. The border with Burma also presented a perplexing predicament for India. There were certain dissident tribal communities, in particular the Nagas and Kachins, whose traditional homelands lay on both sides of the border. The Burmese Nagas had on many occasions rendered various kinds of assistance to the Indian Naga rebels. Similarly Kachins and their related communities in the extreme north-east of India were reportedly maintaining links with the Kachins of Burma. Naga and Mizo rebels were often reported to have made their way to China through Burma. East Pakistan too, occupied a strategic position in this region. Dominating all land-routes that connected the rest of India with the north-east through the narrow strip of Indian territory at the foot of the Sikkim and Bhutan hills, she posed a major problem for the Indian defence planners.

The Indian Ocean, though smallest of all the oceans, had a great value both for the littoral states and non-littoral states. It worked as a funnel through which passed all the sea routes from the East to Europe, via the Suez Canal. The strategically located Indian Ocean held a key position to many areas - the South Asia, the South-East Asia and the oil-rich region of West Asia. Hence, the bases here had become the prized possessions for the super-powers. They desired to acquire bases to have the capability to practice traditional "gunboat diplomacy" to shape events to their likings in this region. This made the Andaman and Nicobar Islands and the Laccadive, Minicoy, and Amindivi Islands highly vulnerable. Besides, Sri Lanka's policy of giving concessions to the super-powers and Pakistan had further increased the threat to the Indian security. Pakistan too, was reported to have given port facilities to the US ships. This had made a long Indian sea coast all the more vulnerable.

The geographical factors thus imposed on India a wide range of security problems. India's security was threatened both from inside and outside the sub-continent. To get a clear picture of the security

problems of India in 1971, it is essential to look at her relations with two important neighbours - Pakistan and China - and the super-powers' interests in the sub-continent.

Pakistan:

One of the main security problem was caused by Pakistan's geographical situation, whose two wings sandwiched India. Pakistan had maintained an anti-India stance since her inception, as she was created on the basis of the so called 'two-nation theory'. Her leaders knew that there was an inherent danger to her existence due to the cultural similarities between the people of both the countries. Hence, they decided to keep up an anti-India hysteria campaign in Pakistan to maintain her separate identity. In addition, the Kashmir issue, the question of the Indus water and the Farakka barrage were also responsible for exacerbating the relations between the two nations. The maltreatment given to the non-muslim population in East Pakistan with whom the Indian population had close religious and cultural affinity, was another factor that led to the further deterioration of relations between Indian and Pakistan. Pakistan's anti-India stance had gradually created an inflated sense of insecurity, which greatly facilitated the entry of super-powers into the politics of the sub-continent. Pakistan joined two US sponsored military pacts to contain communism - South East Asia Treaty Organisation (SEATO) in September 1954, and the Central Treaty Organisation (CENTO) in July 1955. She actually used them to improve her military capability against India. Pakistan could adopt any strategem to qualify herself for the supply of arms which could be used against India(1). Internal weaknesses of Pakistan were also responsible for her entry into the US alliances. The economic and political conditions in Paksitan were far from satisfactory. Islamabad hoped that the US would be able to give necessary aid and strength to Pakistan to remove political instability and economic backwardness. These alliances, however, adversely affected the Indo-Pak relations as they circumscribed Pakistan's autonomy in foreign affairs. She obviously could not settle all her differences with India without the tacit approval of the western powers(2). While Pakistan's alliances with the western powers improved her military capability, it intensified rather than relieved the Indo-Pak tensions.

India, on the other hand, embarked on the policy of non-alignment. She felt that the best policy for developing nations was to remain aloof from the power-politics of the super-powers, which could enable

to concentrate on their economic development. India contributed significantly to the formation of a non-aligned group. However, this was looked upon with suspicion by the Pak leaders. They considered it an attempt by India to strengthen herself by taking the leadership of the non-aligned nations.

The basic difference in the foreign policies of these two nations, besides other issues, proved an obstacle. For India, military alliances were the object of hatred, while for Pakistan, they were an instrument for achieving goals of foreign policy. That is why in 1959, when Ayub Khan suggested a joint plan for the defence of the sub-continent, Nehru could not agree to it(3).

Following Kautilya's dictum that one's enemy's enemies are one's friends, Pakistan began to look for close relationships with the enemies of India, and turned her eyes to China. She had realised that the Sino-Indian relations had begun to deteriorate after India gave shelter to the Dalai Lama. During the India-China War of 1962, Pakistan's President defended the Chinese action pointing out that the initial aggressive moves were made by India. The Sino-Pak relations received a fillip after the signing of the Sino-Pakistan Border Agreement in 1963, and were further strengthened during the Kutch episode and the autumn war of 1965. During these crises, the Chinese government wholeheartedly supported Pakistan's manoeuvres against India. After 1965, the Chinese aid to Pakistan considerably increased(4). While China financed many important projects in Pakistan the latter gave certain concessions in her territory to the former. Thus emerged the Sino-Pak axis against India.

It was her friendship with China, and the US military aid, which encouraged Pakistan in August-September, 1965 to try to solve the Kashmir issue by the use of force. Some felt that Pakistan had launched the mini war in April-May 1965 in the Kutch area as a full-dress rehearsal. It appeared that Pakistan wanted to try out the US arms and judge the Indian military capability. As India quickly agreed to cease-fire, Pakistan thought that India was not prepared to face the Pakistan Army, equipped with the US arms. Hence, Pakistan engaged in a full-scale war against India a few months later. As India was interested in solving the Kashmir issue peacefully, it again agreed to the proposal of cease-fire after twenty-two days of war. With the Tashkent Agreement in January 1966, in which they pledged to solve all the problems through peaceful negotiations, it appeared that a new era of goodwill and normalcy

between the two embittered nations had been ushered in. Unfortunately, it proved an illusion. There were several factors that regenerated the tensions between the two nations.

The internal developments in Pakistan to a great extent were responsible for the stepping up of the anti-India campaign. Failures on various fronts in the post-Tashkent era were creating dissatisfaction amongst the Pakistanis and it culminated in the resignation of Ayub Khan. To divert the attention of the Pakistanis, the leaders began to intensify their venomous propaganda against India. This hostile propaganda further strained the relations of the two countries. In addition, against the terms of the Tashkent Declaration, the Kashmir issue was raised many a time by the Pakistani government at various international platforms.

Another important issue that spoiled further the Indo-Pak relations was the East Bengal crisis. From 1964 after serious communal disturbances in East Bengal, the inflow of refugees into India considerably increased. The reasons for this were insecure conditions, economic distress and the deliberate policy of the ruling party. As the ruling elite did not like the large East Bengalee population which was nearly 60% in 1970(5), it continued the policy of discrimination till the liberation of Bangladesh. The large inflow of refugees - and emotional attachment of the Indians to the East Bengalee population, intensified anti-Pak sentiments in India. Eventually, the Indo-Pak relations by 1971, had come to such a pass that a war between the two countries appeared approaching again.

China:

China also occupied an important position in the security environment of the Indian sub-continent. Her proximity to the Indian sub-continent and her emergence as the third super-power had enabled her to play an important role in the power-politics of the sub-continent. Unfortunately, the Sino-Indian relations were characterised by continuing tensions, mutual suspicion, conflicting claims over certain areas at the border, one major armed clash and several border clashes and crises situation in which either the threat of force was employed or actual limited military operations were conducted. Trouble really began with the violation of the Tibetan autonomy by the Chinese government, resulting in a large-scale migration of the Tibetans' from their homeland. The Chinese did not approve of India's giving shelter to these Tibetans. Among other issues that exacerbated

mutual distrust were the Chinese rejection of the McMahon Line, ideological differences, and conflicting claims over Aksai Chin and other areas.

In addition, the Chinese desire to establish her hegemony in South and East Asia was regarded a security hazard by India. Aspiring to become another super-power, China's immediate objective since early 1960s was to dominate the wide arc from Korea to Pakistan. Her dominance could be challenged only by India among the powers in this big land mass. Her virulent communism of the Maoist brand gave an ideological edge to her objective of weakening "capitalist India", even if it involved supporting the feudal oligarchy of Pakistan. Besides, the Dalai Lama and his followers helped by India could some day threaten the Chinese hold over Tibet.

Keeping her objectives in view, China invaded Ladakh and North-East Frontier Agency (now Arunachal Pradesh) in 1962. Her strategy reflected a careful planning in these areas, as the Indian military and logistic capabilities were most limited. And India at that time did not envisage a war with China. As mentioned earlier, China also tried to incite the Indian tribal groups in the north-east region against India, which fortunately met with little success. During the Indo-Pak War 1965, China not only maintained a pro-Pakistani stance but also threatened to invade India from the north. Between 1968 and 1971, a number of small-scale skirmishes between the Indian and the Chinese military forces had taken place.

Thus, India's two important neighbours were threatening her security. Their combination had virtually created a ring of hostile countries around India on three sides that seriously endangered her position.

Super-Powers and the Sub-Continent:

Realising the significance of this area, the super-powers, became active in the sub-continent, and that further vitiated the environment. For USA, this area had gained significance since the end of the Second World War. It was regarded a vital link by John Foster Dulles in the alliance chain that the USA engineered on the rim-land of the Indian Ocean also. The USA was aware of its importance for the oil trade too. About 60% of the oil required by the West European allies of America and 90% of the oil consumed by Japan came from the region around the Persian Gulf(6). A large part of this oil was transported through the Indian Ocean. In the event of a serious

conflict, the dominant maritime power in the Indian Ocean could cut off this vital traffic, causing rapid and grave damage to both the USA and her allies. Therefore, USA desired to control both Indian Ocean and the sub-continent.

When USA looked for allies who could help her in strengthening her control in this area to contain communism, both India and Pakistan received her attention. While Pakistan as mentioned earlier, to qualify herself for arms aid, joined the US sponsored military pacts like CENTO and SEATO, India refused to do so as she believed in the policy of non-alignment.

The US move to win over friends and her entry into the sub-continent introduced the USSR into this area. The US sponsored alliances, threatened the Soviet security from this region. Pakistan joining the US alliances had galvanizing effect on Russia. Under the US control, the Indian sub-continent pointed a dagger at the soft underbelly of the Russian bear. Thus, the initial Soviet interest in the Indian Sub-Continent was a reaction to Pakistan's involvement in the US sponsored alliance system(7). She began to look for allies in this region to check the US designs. India became a natural choice for her due to her dominating position. In addition, a friendly India could help USSR in checking the Chinese designs against her. India had also become worried due to the threatening activities of Pakistan and China. Hence, to protect their mutual interests, the Soviet Union and India began to move closer.

Thus the sub-continent and the Indian Ocean had come under the cross-fire of the super-powers. The interests and policies of the super-powers significantly affected the regional security environment. The US desire to assemble an anti-communist defence system and the USSR's reaction to it brought both the powers face to face in this region. The Chinese interests in the sub-continent had further complicated the situation. Gradually the US-Pakistan-China axis emerged and to counter it Indo-Soviet friendship was promoted. The sub-continent's environment became highly explosive.

INDIA'S-DEFENCE-FORGES:

Pre-1965:

Before India's Independence, the British regarded the defence of India as only one of the fact of Great Britain's wider imperial defence policy. The Indian army was primarily assigned the function of defending the British colony at the North-West

frontier where the British faced troubles from the local population and the Russian threat, and also protecting the British interests within India. However, whenever there was emergency, the Indian troops were utilised to protect British interests in other parts of the world. During the two World Wars, the Indian army was sent to different theatres of war where it earned admiration of friends and foes alike.

At the time of Independence, the partition of India was accompanied by the division of the army. India inherited a force of 350,000 men(8). After Independence, Government of India evolved a new policy for the Indian Army as the tasks assigned to it during the British Raj were unacceptable in nationalist India. Independence brought a sharp reduction in the army's internal security role. As Britain remained no more responsible for the formulation of defence policy, India set up her new machinery to assume this responsibility. A new system of decision making was evolved and the Indians soon learnt how to operate this system efficiently. In addition, organisational changes in the army were made to remove some glaring defects.

So far as the modernisation of the army was concerned, it was never taken seriously before 1962, though proposals for it had been discussed at different levels. In sheer manpower, the strength of the Indian Army during 1947-1962 was sufficient, but it lacked the essential core in the way of equipment, training and general logistic support(9). The year 1962, can be regarded as a landmark in the military history of India. Following the shock of the Chinese invasion in 1962, the first real and systematic effort was made to reorganise the structure of the Indian Army(10). At that time there were 45,000 men in the Indian Air and Naval Forces, while the number of personnel in the Indian Army had increased to 500,000(11). The Government of India decided to expand its armed forces considerably, as also the indigenous production of equipment. Six new divisions were to be created as a part of the proposed ten mountain divisions, and six additional infantry divisions were to complement the existing eight infantry divisions. A second armoured division was also envisaged. This expansion of the Indian Army was planned to take place in a period of about 10 years(12). In addition to these mountain divisions, 2 scout battalions were raised for the purpose of patrolling the Indian border adjoining Tibet(13).

As equipment of the army was obsolete, efforts were made to modernise them. A decision regarding a standard self-loading rifle, which was being argued

over years, was taken in 1963 : the Ishapore rifle soon went into production and became the standard equipment of infantry troops. These semi-automatic Ishapore rifles were standardised on calibre 7.62 mm. The army was provided with lighter and longer range mortars. A mountain gun was developed to increase the army's efficiency in the hilly terrain(14). In addition, a decision to produce MIG-21 in the country was taken. But the tempo was not long sustained and fizzled out gradually as the imminence of China's threat receded into the background(15).

The budget for the supplies to the Indian Forces also gradually increased from Rs.630 million in 1963-64 to Rs.1180 million in 1971-72. However, this increase of 87% is impressive only in monetary terms, as during this period the wholesale price index increased by nearly 10% and of manufactured goods around 60%(16).

Higher level changes were also made to improve the defence control structure. Three Committees were established which were composed of the Defence Minister, the State Minister of Defence, the Defence Secretary, the Scientific Adviser, the three Chiefs of the staff and the Financial Adviser (Defence). These Committees dealt with the following three aspects : the first dealt with plans on Defence subjects, the second dealt with the welfare problems relating to the three Services, and the third dealt with matters pertaining to works and construction of all the three Services(17). In addition to these Committees, three more Committees were formed, known as Defence Minister's Army, Navy and Air Force Committees, for dealing with important matters pertaining to each Services. In the Defence Ministry, a Production Committee under the Defence Minister was also formed to deal with matters relating to indigenous production of defence equipment. After the India-China War 1962, the Joint Intelligence Committee was also reactivated to procure and analyse the required information about India's neighbours(18).

Besides, efforts were made to acquire sufficient number of vehicles, both heavy and light, to improve the logistic system. As India was heavily relying on foreign countries for vehicles, a decision was taken to meet this requirement with indigenous production. The significance of the Indian Air Force for logistic and fire support was also realised and in 1963, a string of airfields was hurriedly constructed below the Himalayan mountain range.

In 1964, a Five Year Plan was made by the Defence Ministry for further strengthening the armed forces, which was initially to cost Rupees thirty

thousand million but was increased later considerably, following the war with Pakistan in 1965 and the devaluation of the rupee in 1966. This Five Year Plan envisaged a well-equipped ground force of 825,000 men and an air force of 45 squadrons(19). The old aircraft like Vampire, Toofanis and Mysteres were to be replaced by more modern aircraft working with radar systems. The 45 squadrons of the Indian Air Force were to include fighter-bombers, reconnaissance aircraft, transport aircraft and helicopters equipped with better weapons to increase their fighting capacity. For development of the Indian Navy in a phased programme, overaged ships were to be replaced by modern ships. The construction of frigates was to be completed in a decades' time. Steps were to be taken to improve roads in the border areas. For the assured supply of arms and ammunition, the indigenous defence production was to be increased(20). For improving the logistic system, the provisioning arrangements in the field were to be reorganised. The plan also emphasised better training facilities. Consequently, a new battle inoculation method was adopted to simulate the noise, confusion and shock of actual warfare with a view to hardening soldiers(21). As the existence of weapons of different calibres had created problems for the efficient functioning of the supply and repair system, it was decided to standardise them. As mentioned earlier, from this time onwards, the Ishapore semi-automatic rifles became the standard weapon of the infantry. It was also decided that light and medium machine-guns would in future use 7.62 mm ammunition(22). The plan would standardise road transportation with Shaktiman TMB vehicles and the Dodge power wagons(23).

The defence plan made in 1964 was indeed a great step forward towards improving the fighting machinery of India. It takes time to translate plans on paper into operational capabilities in the field. Nevertheless, some of the important reforms had been introduced before the 1965 War, particularly in the service structure and in the logistic support. At the time of the 1965 War, the Indian Army consisted of 745,560 men (excluding boys and non-combatants), had ten infantry divisions, ten mountain divisions and one armoured division, and three armoured brigades(24). The IAF had 45 squadrons (including transport squadrons) of MIG 21, HF-24 (Marut), Mystere, Gnat, Canberra, Hunter, Ouragan, Vampire, An-12, C-47, Il-14, Otter, Viscount Avro-748, and Caribou, with 71,379 men excluding non-combatants(25). The Indian Navy had the aircraft carrier Vikrant, 2 cruisers, 3 destroyers, 5 anti-submarine frigates, 3 anti-aircraft frigates, 6 other escort ships and several smaller vessels like patrol boats,

minesweepers, etc. Its aircraft included Seahawk Alize. The manpower was 17,845 only(26).

The Indo-Pak War 1965, exposed lingering shortcomings in the Indian defence policy and defence forces. The Pakistani submarine Ghazi had threatened the Indian coastal shipping and this called for further strengthening of the Indian Navy. Besides measures had to be taken to protect the Indo-Pak border by strengthening the ground and air forces. Thus, as a consequence of the 1965 War, a revised and more balanced plan of modernising all the three Services emerged.

One of the obstacles in connection with the modernisation of the Indian forces was the US decision of not supplying arms to India after the Indo-Pak War 1965. Till then India had been to a great extent depending on imported equipment and arms, mainly from USA and UK. It was only in 1965 that a decision to tap sources outside UK and USA in a big way was taken. Consequently India began to import equipment and arms from USSR and some other countries which were prepared to assist India in modernising her fighting machinery. In addition, India began to reduce her dependence on imported military hardware by laying emphasis on indigenous production.

1966-71:

The build-up of the Indian armed forces from 1965 onwards till the outbreak of the Indo-Pak War 1971, was qualitatively significant. In the Indian land forces, the strength increased marginally. In 1971, the total number of men in the ground forces was 833,835, excluding non-combatants(27). The armoured units remained one armoured division and three armoured brigades. The infantry added four divisions and two para brigades, thereby bringing the total to fourteen infantry divisions, ten mountain divisions and two para brigades(28). There were now 927 medium tanks(29), including Centurian MK 5/7, Shermans T-54/55 and Indian made Vijayanta. In addition it had 3,000 artillery pieces. The army also possessed twenty anti-aircraft artillery units(30).

The Indian Air Force also developed significantly. By 1971, its strength according to foreign estimates, had gone up to eighty thousand(31), though the number of squadrons remained at 100 (including transport squadron)(32), with 625 combat aircraft. It consisted of three light bomber squadrons of Canberra B(i), five fighter-bomber squadrons of Su-7, two fighter-bomber squadrons with HF-24 (Marut 1A), six fighter-bomber squadrons.

inter F-56, two fighter-bomber squadrons of Mystere, seven interceptor squadrons of MIG-21, eight interceptor squadrons of Gnats, one recce squadron of Amberra PR-57, one maritime recce squadron with 1049 Super Constellation. Its fleet of transport craft of over 450 included fifty-five C-47, sixty 119, twenty Il-14, thirty An-12, twenty-five Otter, twelve HS-748 and fifteen Caribou with eighty MI-14, one hundred and fifty Alouette III, ten Bell-47, plus a few Mi-8 helicopters(33). It had established a radar network to detect any hostile approach early enough, if the intruder was not flying low.

However, it was the Indian Navy which expanded more than the Indian Air Force and the Indian Army between 1965 and 1971. The British had left a very small Indian Navy in 1947(34).

Soon after Independence, the Government of India thought of a naval expansion programme, taking into consideration the strategic importance of the Indian peninsula in the Indian Ocean. Subsequently it was dropped as it was thought that such an expansion was beyond the country's immediate resources and needs(35). This thinking continued till early 1960s. The only development during the early 1960s was the acquisition of an aircraft carrier - the INS-Vikrant. In 1963 the Indian assessment changed as a result of Pakistan's attempt to expand her navy. Next year when Pakistan acquired a submarine and China embarked on a policy of expansion of her navy, India tried acquiring frigates and submarines from UK and USA. However, due to the indifferent attitude of both the countries and the pressing need for fortifying the country's northern frontiers, the Indian Navy remained on low priority. During the Indo-Pak War 1965, when the Pakistani submarine Ghazi prowled around the Indian coast, India felt the pressing need for a strong Navy. Consequently, in 1966, a decision to build indigenously the first warship of Leander class was taken. At the same time the search for submarine in the over-seas market was intensified. In 1967, it was decided that submarine would be acquired from the Soviet Union. The decision to replace the ageing aircraft of INS-Vikrant by new fighter planes was also taken. The year 1968 is an important landmark as in this year the Indian Navy acquired the first submarine Kaveri, and the first Indian built frigate INS-Nilgiri(36). It also acquired sophisticated radar system for the base at Dabolim. In 1969, two new destroyers, INS-Kamorta, and INS-Kadmata were added. In 1970, INS-Vikrant received Sea-King helicopters for anti-submarine warfare. It was also expected to receive eight missile boats by early 1971(37). These eventually reached a little before the war(38).

Commands were also reorganised. The Southern Naval Command at Cochin was placed under a Rear Admiral and the Eastern Fleet with headquarters at Vishakhapatnam was formed to operate in Eastern Waters. These were in addition to the Western Fleet with headquarters at Bombay(39). Just before the commencement of Indo-Pakistan War 1971, the Indian Navy consisted of forty thousand men and included the aircraft carrier INS Vikramaditya, four submarines, two cruisers, three destroyers, nine destroyer escorts (including five ex-Soviet Petya class vessels), one general purpose frigate, five anti-submarine frigates, and three anti-aircraft frigates, apart from lesser vessels like patrol boats, minesweepers and seaward defence boats(40).

Thus, the Indian armed forces developed considerably between 1947 and 1971. The colonial army was primarily designed to guard the north-west frontiers and to cater for the imperial needs in the east. Hence, it was not developed beyond a certain stage. Its limitations were evident whenever it faced a well-equipped and well-trained modern force. After Independence it had to protect India's frontiers against its neighbours like Pakistan and China. The commitment of the Indian armed forces increased for the protection of India's national interests against the activities of her neighbours and the super-powers. This enlargement of commitment demanded proportionate increase in their fighting capability. Fortunately, by 1971, their efficiency and strength had increased just enough to meet the challenge.

War Approaching Again

The vortex of the Bangladesh crisis had sucked in India also. The humanitarian considerations, economic burden and resulting social tensions, have already been mentioned in the previous chapters. A large number of Pakistani agents, along with the refugees, had entered into India, who tried to cause communal strife and indulge in sabotaging activities. By the end of August 1971, at least four hundred trained Pakistani agents had been rounded up in Assam and Meghalaya(41). While the Pakistani agents were busy in dislocating the Indian system through their activities, the Pak Army's intrusions into the Indian territory while pursuing the Mukti Bahini further increased the threat to India's security.

Hence it was natural for India to be worried over the developments in East Bengal. Pakistan's friendly relations with China and the US aggravated the security problems of India. India's concern was further aroused by the secret visit of Henry Kissinger to China via Pakistan in the summer of 1971 and the

announcement that President Nixon would pay a visit to India. But the gravest threat to India's stability and prosperity arose from the massive and unending influx of millions of refugees driven out from East Bengal, as already discussed at some length. Their permanent or indefinite stay in India was ruinous and therefore totally unacceptable to her. As the External Affairs Minister Swaran Singh told the UN General Assembly in September 1971, a political settlement acceptable to people of East Bengal was the only way to resolve the conflict and help the refugees return to their homes(42). Still later when Indira Gandhi went on a six-nation tour in November 1971, she made it clear at various places that India only desired the early return of the refugees under the conditions, acceptable to them. It is important to note that India had not laid down any condition for a political settlement; she only emphasised a settlement between the people of East Bengal and the Pakistan Government. She did not stipulate whether such a settlement could be within the framework of "United" Pakistan or outside it. India considered that the details of such a settlement could be left to the negotiating parties(43).

The foregoing chapters have already detailed the failure of India's sincere diplomatic efforts to persuade Pakistan to solve the problem by political compromise with the East Bengal leaders, so that about ten million refugees could leave India. When Islamabad realised that other nations were not doing anything except making weak verbal protests and that two big powers were maintaining pro-Pakistani stance, it became bolder in its inhuman attempts to crush all those East Bengalees, who were opposing the Pak military regime. Naturally, the Bangladesh crisis began to deteriorate further.

Soon, Pakistan began to build-up a war psychosis against India by accusing her of trying to dismember the Islamic state. She desired to step up the crisis to a level leading to major hostilities. An Indo-Pak War would convince other nations of the Indian involvement in the crisis. Islamabad further hoped that such a situation would immediately create international pressure for a cease-fire on the lines of the 1965 War. Thus, the basic aim of this strategy of Pakistan was to divert the attention of her people and other nations from the real problem.

Accordingly, Yahya Khan stepped up his activities to increase the probability of war. In July 1971, he said that if India tried to seize any part of East Pakistan, he would declare war(44). Obviously, he was hinting that India was trying to

grab the territory of East Bengal. Yahya Khan in an interview on 11 August with the Columbia Broadcasting System, USA, said that the two countries were very close to war(45). Pakistan also had started concentrating her troops all along the Indo-Pak border as early as June. From the beginning of October, the war preparations were further intensified. The Pakistani Army was put on a 12-hour alert on 5 October 1971(46). Two days later, Lt Gen A.A.K. Niazi declared that the war would be fought on the Indian territory(47). The Pakistani military regime started evacuating the civil population along the western border towns and villages. All along the western border and the Cease-fire Line, enormous quantities of defence stores were piled up. By the middle of October 1971, almost the entire military might of Pakistan had been deployed along Indian frontiers in operational readiness(48).

From October, serious skirmishes began between the Pakistani and Indian troops. On 25 October 1971, Pakistan was reported concentrating more infantry divisions backed up by heavy armour on Jammu border(49). During the next three days, Pakistani troops shelled Agartala airport, and on 29 October a heavy exchange of fire took place in Uri Sector in the west, and in north Tripura. On 3 November, four Pakistani Sabre jets entered into Indian air space in Punjab(50). This was the beginning of violations of Indian air space on a large-scale(51). In the heavy fighting near Boyra on 24 November, the Indian Army destroyed 13 Pakistani Chaffee tanks. On 26 November, in Hilli, town in West Bengal, 80 Pakistani troops and one Chaffee tank were lost(52). A day earlier President Yahya Khan had declared "I may not be here in Rawalpindi during the next 10 days. I may be fighting a war"(53). On 28 November, again an attack was launched by the Pakistani troops in the Hilli Area, in which they lost three tanks. As December dawned, Yahya Khan launched a full-scale war against India and thus started the Indo-Pak War 1971.

Pakistan had succeeded in her strategy of bringing the crisis to a stage where military option became a Hobson's choice for India. War was forced on her. Though a possibility of war between India and Pakistan could not be ruled out after March 1971, India had first tried all other means to solve the problem, although her leadership had the prudence to prepare for the worst if the worst came. A close look at the Indian response from 25 March to 3 December 1971, reveals that diplomatic efforts and the military preparations were undertaken simultaneously and in tandem.

It is also interesting to note that India had planned different levels of war-like responses, desiring only to use the minimum military force to achieve her political objective. In the beginning of March 1971, Indian government had ordered that the Border Security Force would only resist Pakistani attack on the Indian territory, but must not provoke the Pak forces(54). On 7 March, specific instructions were issued to the Border Security Forces that they were to avoid border incidents as far as possible(55). On 30 March, Eastern Command ordered its units to maintain close liaison with the Border Security Force. India, at this stage, did not want to give any pretext to Pakistan to attack and therefore, it was ordered that Bangladesh forces entering into India should be disarmed and interned. The Pakistani forces were also to be arrested in case they intruded. However, by mid-April, India realised the magnitude of the incipient threat, changed her strategy and decided to give a limited opportunity to the Mukti Bahini to fight against the Pakistani forces. They were now allowed to destroy bridges, lines of communication and airfields by sabotage as they were not fit to fight pitched battles(56). At the same time artillery was moved to give assistance to the Border Security Force to repulse Pak attacks. In May, the Mukti Fauj was assisted to establish training camps to train its soldiers(57). India also stopped the practice of allowing the Pak troops, who crossed into Indian territory to go back on tendering apologies. On 30 May, Indian troops were asked to arrest such Pak troops(58).

By June, the threat to Indian security had become more pronounced because of the pro-Pakistani attitude of China and the USA. The Chinese aid to Pakistan had considerably increased since the beginning of the Bangladesh crisis. Encouraged by this attitude of China, Yahya Khan said that if war came, Pakistan would not be alone(59).

Pakistan's unabated assaults on the East Bengalees, the Pak troop's intrusions into Indian territory and the support of USA and China to Pakistan brought home the fact to Indira Gandhi and her advisers that the possibility of war between India and Pakistan had considerably increased. On 13 July 1971, it was decided by the Government of India that though the diplomatic efforts for a political solution of the Bangladesh crisis should continue, preparations should also be made to meet any Pakistani aggression. A contingency plan was made to meet any emergency. In August 1971, regrouping of the Indian forces was envisaged as a result of Pakistan's forward defence posture. The boundaries of the Western and Eastern

Air Commands were revised to make them tactical units. Similarly naval groups were planned for the defence of the Indian coast. Methods for better coordination between the three Services were worked out. Considering the possibility of Chinese support to Pakistan, it was decided to keep a minimum strength of forces to defend India from the north. The call-up and training arrangements of the Territorial Army and the Reservists had been planned to make them available during the likely period of hostilities(60). To minimise the threat from the north, it was planned that if a war had to take place, it should take place during the winter, when the passes at the northern borders of India would be covered by snow and it would be difficult for the Chinese to attack Indian territory in full strength from there(61). However, at this stage, these contingency war plans were only a subordinate alternative to the political or diplomatic efforts.

The treaty with Russia, who had her own reasons to formalise Indo-Soviet friendship, also served to contain partially the threat from the Sino-US-Pak axis. Even in early November 1971, the attitude of the highest Echelon of the War Control Organisation at New Delhi was to take only limited local action in case of Pakistani provocations like recce flights over Indian territory, small under-water attacks in Indian harbours or attacks by ground troops from East Bengal. A general war or total retaliation should follow only serious air and naval attacks or all out ground attacks in the West.

RE-ORIENTATION-OF-DEFENCE-POSTURE

This time India had to completely reorient her operational and logistic preparations, as military operations were envisaged over a larger geographical area than any since Independence. The main operations were now expected to take place on the Eastern Front, with basically defensive or holding operations in the West. A 'volte face' and redeployment of defence forces was necessary. Logistic support for the expected military operations, had to be provided in a short time. To establish arms depots and advanced headquarters, new roads, railway lines, helipades, and airfields had to be constructed and old ones repaired. In August 1971, it was estimated that such tasks could take 3 to 4 months' time(62). The shifting of troops from other areas to Eastern Command involved long moves. Personnel, equipment, vehicles, guns and tanks were moved by rail. Where the distances were short moves were carried out by road, except for tanks, medium guns and engineering equipment, which were moved by rail. For reasons of security, the movement

forces was slow. Special trains were allotted and civilian trucks were also hired. Though the preparations for moving troops and equipment were undertaken as early as August(63), these were completed just before the outbreak of war. The hilly terrain in Meghalaya and Tripura added to the handicap of distance in a race with time. In the Eastern command area, the signal system also required much updating. This task was also fortunately completed before the outbreak of full-scale hostilities. To meet the man-power requirements, a number of units and HQ had to be raised and reorganised to ensure that the army was fully balanced. All these units were raised and reorganised within "the man-power ceiling" and at a short notice. In all 164 units in the Indian Army alone, large and small, were raised and reorganised and put into full operational readiness(64). In the other two Services too, raising and reorganisation of units took place. The shortage of officers posed another problem in all the three Services. Several measures were taken to meet this deficiency, including stoppage of premature retirement or release, extension of service of officers in the rank of Major upto the age of 50 years, termination of most of the courses at the training establishments so as to make both instructors and trainees available, curtailment of training of cadets at the IMA and CTU, and reduction in number of officers with the NCC and other extra-regimental employ. In addition, the reservists, both officers and ORs, were recalled on 22 October 1971(65).

The-Military-Plan

Around the month of October, with the situation deteriorating rapidly, India prepared a more detailed contingency plan for military operations, which had the following objectives :

- a) To assist the Mukti Bahini in liberating a part of Bangladesh, where the refugees could be sent to live under their own Bangladesh Government.
- b) To prevent Pakistan from capturing any Indian territory of consequence in Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab, Rajasthan or Gujarat. This was to be achieved by offensive-defence and not by merely passive line-holding.
- c) To defend the integrity of India from Chinese attack in the north.

The Western Front was divided into two Sectors- Northern Sector and Southern Sector. In the Northern

Sector, it was envisaged that Pakistan would launch a concentrated attack to capture Punch, and sufficient troops were provided in reserve to meet it(66). The Indian plan was to launch limited attacks to improve the defensive position of the Indian forces in this region. The Shyok Valley, Kargil, Chicken's neck, and the area west of Dera Baba Nanak bridge had been specially chosen for this purpose. A major thrust was planned in Chhamb, but cancelled at the last minute. An enemy attack was also anticipated on the lines of communication from Pathankot to Jammu. To foil this, a plan of an Indian attack with two thrust lines was evolved - one from the north between the rivers Basantar and Beas and the second from the river Ravi at Thakurpur(67).

In the Southern Sector, stretching from Ganganagar to the Arabian Sea, an attack was planned in the Barmer Sector along the rail line towards Naya Chor(68). A thrust towards Rahimyar Khan from Jaisalmer Sector was also planned(69).

In the Eastern Theatre, the strategy was to capture sufficient area bordering the Brahmaputra and Meghna river lines(70). It was also planned that the thrust lines in Bangladesh should isolate and by-pass the Pakistani forces, so that the objectives should be achieved at the earliest. The whole country was divided into four Sectors - North-western Sector, Western Sector, Eastern Sector and North-eastern Sector. In the North-western Sector, it was decided to advance up to Bogra, which was the main communication centre, and pin down the enemy forces there. In the Western Sector, the objective was to capture the major communication centres at Jessore and Jhenida. In the Eastern Sector, it was planned to occupy the Meghna bulge between Chandpur and Ashuganj. The three key points along the Meghna river to be captured were Chandpur, Daudkandi and Ashuganj. Chittagong port was to be dealt with by the Indian Navy. In the Northern Sector, a thrust was to be made along Jamalpur-Tangail line to secure this area(71).

The design for the military operations envisaged joint action by all the three Services to ensure the achievement of the military objectives within the shortest possible time. Hence, in conjunction with the land forces, the IAF and the Indian Navy were assigned suitable tasks keeping in view the master plan.

The-IAF-and-IN-prepare-for-action:

The vital importance of inter-Service cooperation and of joint planning was realised for

beginning. Though adequate institutionalised set for this was not created then, cooperation in actual practice was achieved to a large extent. The exceptionally mature and intelligent personalities of three Service Chiefs served to smoothen out all frictions. During the formulation of the war strategy, constant inter-Service discussions at various levels ensured coordination.

The Indian Air Force was assigned the usual tasks in the military operations of 1971 - to support Indian ground and naval forces in their offensive and defensive operations, to transport the Indian troops, to protect the Indian strategic areas and points from Pak Air attacks, and to attack Pakistan's strategic targets(72). Concomitantly, the Pakistan Air Force was to be prevented from fulfilling a similar role. It was basically the task of achieving Air superiority. An additional and novel task was to train the air elements of the Mukti Bahini.

To fulfil its role vis-a-vis the Indian Navy, the IAF was assigned reconnaissance duty in the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea in addition to the above mentioned tasks.

Quite distinct from these supporting roles was the air war that the IAF had to fight. The plan envisaged attack on major bases of the Pakistan Air Force in the east and west. The purpose of these attacks was to check or to reduce PAF use of its aircraft against the Indian forces or bases. Deep strike missions were envisaged to destroy the airfields and the aircraft camouflaged or lying in pens. It was also planned to hit economic targets in Pakistan to break her will to fight. Air Defence Control Centres were also established for the protection of Indian air space. The three Commands - Western, Central and Eastern - were invested with the air defence responsibility of their areas. A sufficient number of aircraft were to be kept in reserve to meet any challenge from the north because of the pro-Pakistani attitude of the Chinese in the Bangladesh crisis(73).

As the possibility of war increased, the infra-structure of IAF was improved. The Commands were reorganised as mentioned earlier. Ageing runways were repaired and reactivated. Steps were taken to effectively camouflage airfields, runways and radar establishments. The Maritime Air Centre at Bombay was augmented with two more Centres, one at Cochin and the other at Vishakhapatnam, for better control and coordination of maritime air operations. The IAF also had to provide protective cover for naval ships

carrying out strike missions, particularly in the west. In addition, the IAF was to provide cover over the Indian coasts and Indian merchant ships.

In the Eastern Theatre, the Indian Air Force aimed to achieve total air supremacy at the earliest and then to devote all efforts to hit the enemy defence positions, guns, tanks, troops and vehicles and to cutting his lines of communication and curbing all his movements. Helicopters and transport aircraft were earmarked for the Indian Army to increase the speed of the advance. Similarly, in the west, the Indian Air Force was to provide protective cover and give offensive air support to the Indian troops fighting on the ground. The wings and squadrons allotted for the offensive air support tasks were familiarised with their likely tasks and the assigned sectors in advance. The targets here included Pakistan's fortified positions, guns, tanks, vehicles and lines of communication(74).

Pens were constructed for the protection of aircraft. Capacity of bulk petroleum installation (BPI) at various airfields, particularly in forward areas, was augmented; airfields were widened and maintenance facilities of aircraft were improved. Anti-aircraft defences were modernised and strengthened. Surface-to-air guided weapon complexes were installed in vital areas. Radars were established at strategic points(75). Operational preparations were also intensified. Intensive training was imparted to aircrew with special emphasis on night flying and on use of new armaments like the 'Y' bomb, especially designed for rendering the runway unusable. Ammunition, explosives and aircraft spares were brought upto authorised scales on priority. Essential spares required from abroad were air-lifted. In tactics, a feature that deserves special mention was the employment of An-12 and Caribou aircraft in night bombing. This was perfected and practised prior to the outbreak of hostilities(76).

A large-scale increase in manpower in a short time for IAF was not feasible, but certain steps were taken in October-November 1971 to increase effective manpower to the maximum extent possible under the circumstances. Personnel from training institutes and units located in non-sensitive areas were moved to the operational Squadrons, wings and units(77).

The Indian Air Force also provided training to the air force personnel of the Mukti Bahini. For this purpose, a quick short training course of the duration of about two months, was designed. Just before the war, the air force of the Mukti Bahini, tiny as it

became operational to participate in the war(78):

As regards the Indian Navy, this was the first military operation since Independence in which it was fully involved. Unfortunately, the Indian defence planners had not given earlier the due emphasis to the development of the Navy, though India has a long coast-line of over 6,000 km. The gravest threat from Pakistan as well as China certainly demanded priority for the needs of the Indian Army and the IAF. However, about a year before the outbreak of the 1971 war, the Indian defence planners began to take serious measures to develop the Indian Navy. The Indian Fleet was divided into two parts - Eastern Fleet and Western Fleet - for the protection of the long coast-line in the east and in the west. In April 1971, the intelligence set-up of the Indian Navy was strengthened to get the desired information continuously about the enemy(79).

To maintain and repair ships, the Naval Maintenance Section was also strengthened.

In addition, the logistic problem was looked into, and essentials procured well in advance. Ships were earmarked to carry out patrolling in the Indian territorial waters and on the high seas; preparations were also made to foil any attack by the Pak submarines.

The Indian Navy planned to carry out a five-fold task in the coming operations - protection of the coast-line and sea lanes, protection of the Indian merchant ships on the high seas, blockading the Pak ports to stop all her sea-borne traffic, striking her vital naval and industrial targets, and training the naval elements of the Mukti Bahini. Some Bengalee personnel of the Pakistan Navy who had managed to escape formed the nucleus of the Mukti Bahini Navy(80). The training provided by the Indian Navy enabled even the new recruits to fight efficiently against the Pakistan forces.

The task given to the Eastern Fleet was to establish a complete blockade of the East Pakistan coast and ports. For this purpose, it was planned to use planes of the Vikrant to bomb the Naval bases of Pakistan, and mines were to be laid around her ports. Aircraft of the Vikrant would scour the skies over the Bay of Bengal and ensure that no ship slipped in or slipped out undetected from East Bengal. Also, the Vikrant, liable to frequent engine trouble, would be less exposed to enemy air or submarine attacks in the Bay of Bengal, compared to the Arabian Sea. Surface vessels also would intercept any enemy ship

venturing out of her ports, and even neutral ships carrying contraband. The Western Fleet also assigned similar tasks to immobilise completely the Pakistani Navy. Moreover, in both the theatres of war, the Indian Navy was assigned to strike vital installations of Pakistan around her sea coast. Naval aviation was assigned the task of providing air cover to the ships on the deep strike missions and to carry out maritime reconnaissance, besides protecting the Indian coast. A new element in the Indian Naval plan was to take the new missile boats near the enemy's coast on the Western Front for launching heavy attacks.

THE ALLOCATION OF FORCES:

Keeping in view the over-all strategy, units of the three Services were suitably allocated between the two fronts. As a decisive offensive was to be carried out in the east, a preponderant force of six divisions and one infantry brigade under a Communication Zone HQ was deployed on the eastern front. It was divided into three corps and a Communication Zone under the Eastern Command - 2 Corps comprising 4 Mtn Div and 9 Inf Div with Hq at Krishnanagar was deployed in the west of East Bengal; 33 Corps comprising 20 Mtn Div with Hq at Siliguri was deployed in the north-west of East Bengal; 4 Corps with Hq at Teliamura and comprising 8, 23 and 57 Mtn Div was deployed in the east of East Bengal; and a force called 101 Comn Zone Area comprising 95 Inf Bde (and 167 Inf Bde inducted subsequently) with Hq at Tura was deployed in the north of East Bengal(81).

In the Northern Sector of the Western Theatre three corps were deployed along the border - 15 Corps comprising 3, 10, 19, 25 and 26 Inf Divs, HQ 'V' Sector, HQ 121(I) Inf Bde and HQ 3(I) Armd Bde; 1 Corps comprising 54, 36 and 39 Inf Divs, HQ 16(I) Armd Bde and HQ 2(I) Armd Bde(82), and 11 Corps comprising 7, 14 and 15 Inf Divs, 1 Armd Div, 14(I) Armd Bde and 'F' Sector. The Southern Command was given the responsibility to defend the area from Ganganagar to Rann of Kutch(83) with 11 and 12 Inf Divs and about one brigade. On the Western Front, therefore there were thirteen infantry divisions, three independent infantry brigades and four independent armoured brigades, besides the formidable armoured division, to cope with the bulk of the Pakistan Army kept in West Pakistan. In addition, some troops were stationed for protection against any attack across the northern borders(84).

Ten squadrons of fighter and fighter-bombers of the IAF were allotted for operations in East Bengal.

In addition, one Canberra squadron from Gorakhpur was made available for operations there. The allotted squadrons had MiG-21, Hunter, Gnat, Su-7, and Canberra aircraft based at Gauhati, Kalaikunda, Dum Dum, Hashimara, Bagdogra, Nal, Agartala, Panagarh and Gorakhpur. Besides, some Mi-4 helicopters and transport aircraft were placed at the disposal of the Indian Army for transportation of troops quickly. For the Western Front, twenty-two fighter/bomber squadrons (plus two squadrons which were transferred later from the east to the west) and four light bomber squadrons were deployed on rear as well as forward airfields. The squadrons for this side had MiG-21, Canberra, Hunter, Gnat, Su-7, HF-24, Mystere, Vampire and Harvard aircraft, based at Srinagar, Adampur, Pathankot, Amritsar, Chandigarh, Ambala, Bikaner, Sirsa, Hindon, Jodhpur, Jaisalmer, Uttarlai, Jamnagar, Ahmedabad, Halwara, Rajouri, Bombay, Pune and Agra(85).

The Indian Navy was also suitably deployed keeping in view the main objectives. The Eastern Fleet which operated in the Bay of Bengal was armed with the aircraft-carrier to establish a tight blockade and prevent escape as well as reinforcement of the Pak troops in East Bengal. The Western Fleet was armed with missile boats to carry out deep strike missions. Both the Fleets, in addition, had the usual quota of cruisers, destroyers, frigates, etc.

THE PAKISTAN ARMED FORCES:

In 1971, the strength of the Pakistan Army was about 365,000 men including 25,000 POK troops. In addition to this, the strength of its para-military forces was about 280,000. Besides, Pakistan had raised a new force called the East Pakistan Civil Armed Force. Her regular army according to foreign experts, consisted of two armoured divisions, twelve infantry divisions, one independent armoured brigade and one air defence brigade. Two more infantry divisions were being raised hurriedly. The Pakistan Army's equipment included one hundred M-47, one hundred M-48, one hundred T-54, fifty T-55, and two hundred twenty-five T-59 medium tanks; two hundred M-24, seventy-five M-41, and twenty PT-76 light tanks; and three hundred M-113 APC. Its artillery included nine hundred 25-pr guns, 105 mm, and 125 mm howitzers, and two hundred 130 mm guns. It also possessed Cobra anti-tank guided weapons, and twenty H-13 helicopters(86).

The Pakistan Air Force too had considerably improved its strike power since 1965. In 1971, its strength was about 17,000 men with 273 combat

aircraft, in 13 squadrons. The PAF was organised into one light bomber squadron with B-57, one fighter-bomber squadron with Mirage III, seven fighter-bomber/interceptor squadrons with F-86, three interceptor squadrons with MiG-19, and one interceptor squadron with six F-104.

Similarly, the Pakistan Navy had grown considerably since 1965. In 1971, the strength of the Pakistan Navy was about 10,000 men. It had four submarines, one light cruiser, two destroyers, three destroyer escorts, two fast frigates, and six patrol boats (including two small) and eight coastal minesweepers. It also had 2 VH-19 air-sea rescue helicopters(87). In addition, it had two oil tankers(88).

It is important to note that the POK troops were as good as regulars, especially if employed in Jammu & Kashmir(89). The East Pakistan Civil Armed Force was also given proper training and was able to play an effective role, particularly in holding defensive positions.

These armed forces were allocated suitably between the Eastern and Western Wings of Pakistan. The defence planners at Rawalpindi had to take into account the unique disadvantage of the two wings being separated by 1600 km of Indian territory. Even the long sea route was liable to be cut by India, so switching large forces between the two wings during active hostilities was problematical. And West Pakistan was the real heartland, and the power base of the military junta ruling Pakistan. Moreover, Pakistan's basic strategy was to defend the east by an attack from the west. The location of forces was therefore weighed heavily in favour of the Western Wing.

Taking into consideration all these factors, two armoured divisions, two independent armoured brigades, ten infantry divisions, and seven 'Azad Kashmir brigades were deployed in the Western Wing. The PAF had approximately 12 squadrons with an estimated strength of 254 combat aircraft located in West Pakistan. The main air bases were Sargodha, Peshawar, Mauripur/Masrur, Chaklala, Mianwali, Shorkot Road and Murid(90). The main strength of the Pakistan Navy was also harboured around Karachi. The four Pakistani submarines were probably evenly divided between the Eastern and Western Wings(91). However, the Pakistan Navy was in no position to put up its best showing, as Bangladeshis enjoyed a significantly larger representation in the Pakistan Navy compared to other Services, and many of them escaped to join the

liberation war before December 1971:

East Pakistan was garrisoned by more than four infantry divisions, having about 70,000 men. The East Pakistan Civil Armed Force of about 21,500 men was also available there(92). The Pakistan Air Force had located nineteen F-86 Sabres at Tezgaon airfield near Dhaka. Three RT-33, some transport aircraft and helicopters were also available in East Pakistan(93). Most of the Naval craft located in the East Pakistan were small vessels, gun-boats and patrol craft capable of operating deep inside the innumerable rivers and creeks.

PAKISTAN'S STRATEGY AND PREPARATIONS:

Much before December 1971, Pakistan had made a contingency plan against India. This plan was put to test in August 1970, by organising a war game lasting four days(94). As a result of this exercise, certain defects in the Pakistani planning came to light and consequently, her army was reorganised(95). A reserve force of two existing armoured divisions and three infantry divisions was created. In addition, two armoured brigades were formed by withdrawing integral armoured regiments from some of the existing infantry divisions(96). This exercise also revealed the necessity of air cover during ground operations and, therefore, it was decided that cooperation of the Pakistan's Air Force should be ensured in all subsequent operations(97). Another exercise was organised in February 1971(98). These exercises, it appears, centered round launching of the offensive on India's Western Front.

From February 1971 onwards, Pakistani's main concern became the East Bengal crisis. The interrogation reports of the Pakistani officers, who surrendered later revealed that initially Pakistan did not expect a major war with India just then. She also estimated that the East Bengal crisis would be short-lived and it could be easily dealt with by force(99). Consequently, Pakistan began to send troops to East Bengal to keep effective control down to the villages(100). However, as the crisis continued and a large number of people began to flee from East Bengal into India, the Pakistan Govt. changed its plan. It appears that to confuse the issue, Pakistan decided to blame India for the crisis, hoping that it would mislead the international community that India was inciting the people of East Bengal to revolt. And an anti-India tirade could also bring internal unity. The Mukti Bahini was active all along the borders. Keeping all this in view, Pakistan began to launch raids against the Indian borders on

the pretext of capturing the bases of the "raiders" or "terrorists" in India. However, the situation did not improve for Pakistan. Hence, in mid-summer 1971, Pakistan made operational plans to seal the borders with India(101) to deny entry to the Mukti Bahini. A forward posture of defence was adopted(102). A large number of border out-posts (BOPs) were established. The concept of forward defence posture envisaged a ring of border posts backed by strong points and fortified defence as far forward as was tactically possible on all major land approaches from India to East Bengal. These defences were to be stocked with supplies and ammunition varying from 7 to 15 days, with 15 to 30 days reserves held in the rear areas(103). To meet the manpower shortage, new units were raised. By the time war came, the Pak Army in East Bengal had the 9, 14, 16, and 39 Inf Divs at hand, plus the 36 Inf Div with only one brigade operational(104). At the same time, the war hysteria against India was also stepped-up in West Pakistan to keep the Indian forces tied along the Western Front.

Further deterioration in the East Bengal crisis made Pakistan realise that it would be difficult for her to crush the people of East Bengal. From August onwards, while strengthening the forward defence posture, Pakistan began to plan for a full-scale war against India. A new plan for the defence of East Bengal recommended by Lt Gen A.A.K. Niazi was finalised in September 1971. The strange operational plan that emerged for the defence of East Bengal envisaged a number of offensive actions to take the war into the Indian territory. A large number of raids, ambushes and attacks were planned and executed(105). The Indian Army was equally willing to escalate the fighting along the borders. So the skirmishes soon turned into a continuous mini-war.

The forward defence posture was re-enforced when Pakistan Army intelligence reported that the Indian plan was to occupy a chunk of territory in East Bengal to provide a territorial base for the Bangladesh government. Not totally divorced from reality, this information may have been deliberately leaked by Army HQ at New Delhi. In any case, the Pakistan Army in the east thereafter strung itself out in a hard crust all along the East Bengal border, and reacted vigorously to any incursion by the Mukti Bahini aided by the Indian Army. The inevitable result was to deplete seriously the Central reserve, and to destroy the cohesion and striking power of the army formations by distributing the troops in penny packets. The forward defence posture in the east, therefore, proved disastrous for Pakistan when full-scale war finally came in December.

In the West, Pakistan had to mount a successful offensive to capture sufficiently valuable Indian territory to off-set losses in the east and to be in a favourable negotiating position when the cease-fire came. She hoped that China would be intervening actively in her support(106), and the UN would bring about an early cease-fire.

Plans for the offensive were updated by late October 1971. The Pakistan Air Force and Navy were to give active support to the Army, but these two Services were not involved in the planning of the operations(107). The two armoured divisions and ten infantry divisions available in West Pakistan were divided into what may be called a 'holding force' and a 'strike force'. Seven infantry divisions were to be used for holding the ground all along the J & K, Punjab, and Rajasthan border. At New Delhi, available intelligence reports indicated that the 12 and 23 Inf Divs were deployed in "Azad Kashmir"(108); 8 and 15 Inf Divs with 8 Indep Armd Bde were located between the Chenab and the Ravi rivers, 10 and 11 Inf Divs, 3 Indep Armd Bde and 105 Indep Bde Gp were in the Lahore - Bahawalpur Sector, and 18 Inf Div was stationed in Sind, facing the Rajasthan border. These formations would not merely hold the ground but would also attempt limited and local offensive thrusts, to tie down Indian troops and assess their strength in different sectors. The formidable strike force was made up of two armoured divisions and three infantry divisions. The 6 Armd Div and 17 Inf Div made up the 1 Corps, the 1 Armd Div and 33 Inf Div formed the 2 Corps, while 7 Inf Div could join either or act independently.

Indian intelligence sources could give no clear indication of the location of these offensive forces. After the war, it was learnt that 1 Corps was hiding in Gujarat - Kharian area, 2 Corps was in Multan Bahawalpur area and the 7 Inf Div at Peshawar, moving later on to Mandi Sadiq Ganj - Bahawalnagar Sector. But the uncertainty about the locations of these large and powerful formations gave many sleepless nights to the Indian commanders during the war, and compelled them to hold back adequate reserves in many different sectors. The Pakistani 7 Inf Div came to be known as the "Phantom Division" as its presence was reported from many different far-flung places from western POK to Punjab-Sind border.

Pakistan also planned to induct about 10,000 Mujahids into the Kashmir Valley to harass and tie down the Indian forces. As later events showed, Punch was to be captured by regular Pak troops, and major thrusts were to be made in Chhamb-Akhnur and

Ramgarh-Jaisalmer axes. For various reasons discussed later, the main offensive by the armoured divisions or the 'strike force' was never launched.

As already mentioned, the Pakistan armed forces acquired military hardware from many foreign countries to increase their fighting capacity. It was reported that arms and equipment including wireless sets in significant numbers were imported from China(110). China also supplied a large number of tanks in mid-1971, as revealed in the interrogation of Pak POW after the war. From USA, Pakistan imported arms and equipment in at least two ships - Sunderbans and Padma. It was reported that those ships brought spare parts for aircraft and ships, naval stores, and tanks(111). Senator Church was reported to have said that equipment worth \$35 million was in the pipeline in July 1971(112). Intelligence sources reported that Pakistan received substantial aid from USA even after July 1971. It was also reported that Pakistan received spare parts for tanks even from the USSR after the outbreak of the crisis(113). It is possible that these had left Russian ports before 25 March 1971. France supplied helicopters, helicopter spares, torpedoes and operational missiles to Pakistan. A Daphne Class submarine from France, purchased earlier joined the Pakistan Navy in July 1971(114). Pakistan was reported to have received 35 F-86 aircraft from Saudi Arabia during the conflict. In addition, she received military hardware in considerable quantities from Iran and Turkey(115). These, it appears, belonged to USA. For the USA it was a common practice to send her arms and equipment through a third party, and she had resorted to this little trick in cases of certain European countries also. In this manner, Pakistan acquired substantial quantities of sophisticated arms and equipment after the outbreak of the crisis, and even during the war.

Besides, Pakistan made diplomatic efforts to keep the Indian army tied down at the Sino-Indian border as mentioned earlier. Lt Gen Niazi later on revealed that most of the Pakistani officers were under the impression that in case of a war between India and Pakistan, China would definitely intervene by attacking India from the north(116).

To meet the manpower requirements of the coming war, Pakistan raised additional units. The number of recruits was increased and the training period was reduced. The East Pakistan Civilian Armed Force was raised for the support of the regular army in East Bengal. Leave of all officers and other ranks was cancelled in April 1971. Release and retirement of army personnel was also stopped. The Pakistan

ment issued the order of general alert on 9
1971(117):

Improvements were made in the logistic system, particularly in East Bengal. In West Pakistan the Pakistan Army had started taking steps in this direction since 1965, and by 1971 it had established a good network of roads and railway lines. However, further improvements were made in 1971. Along the entire western border, the Pakistan Army had made preparations to check the Indian forces by laying mines, erecting obstacles, large-scale dumping of munition and defence stores, and had deployed artillery guns. Water obstacles, new bunkers and pill boxes were also constructed there(118). In East Bengal, arrangements were made to make available to the army units the country boats and rafts(119). Wherever possible, temporary bridges were built. Concrete and wooden platforms for guns were made. Observation posts on tree tops and house tops were established. Bunkers were concealed and dummy tanks were placed to deceive the enemy(120).

The interrogation reports of officers revealed that certain exercises were carried out to achieve Army/Air Force cooperation in the military operations(121). It appears that though there was lack of joint planning at higher level, efforts were made to achieve cooperation between the different services at the tactical level. The soldiers were also imparted training in night operations.

By beginning of December 1971, the Pak military Junta considered the Pakistan armed forces sufficiently well prepared to fight India successfully, at least in a short war and with active Chinese participation on their side. And this assessment was not as unreasonable or unrealistic as would appear from a comparison of India's population of 557 million with Pakistan's 126 million, or of India's total armed forces of 980,000 with Pakistan's 392,000 men(122).

Due to a number of reasons, India was able to field in the west only thirteen infantry divisions against Pakistan's ten, and only one armoured division and four independent armoured brigades against Pakistan's two armoured divisions and two independent armoured brigades. There were twenty-two fighter-bomber and four light-bomber/PR squadrons of the IAF against twelve squadrons of PAF in the West. In the East, six Indian infantry mountain divisions faced four Pakistani infantry divisions. The Indian over-all superiority therefore was only of the order of 1.5:1, when a successful offensive is generally

considered to require a superiority of 3:1. It should be noted that the Pakistani Army units have one-and-a-half-times the small arms and anti-tank fire power of Indian Army units, as the proportion of LMC and RCL guns was much higher in the Pakistan Army units(123). Pakistan, therefore, confidently expects to fight India on more or less equal terms till the inevitable cease-fire came after a few weeks.

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