



## The United Nations' Involvement in Bangladesh's Liberation War: A Detailed Analysis

Md. Firoz Al Mamun<sup>1</sup>, Md. Mehbub Hasan<sup>2</sup> & Md. Ruhul Amin, PhD<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, Islamic University, Kushtia, Bangladesh

Email: [firoz.gnp35@gmail.com](mailto:firoz.gnp35@gmail.com)

<sup>2</sup> Researcher and Student, Department of Government and Politics, Jahangirnagar University, Savar, Dhaka-1342 Email: [mehabubju@gmail.com](mailto:mehabubju@gmail.com)

<sup>3</sup> (Corresponding Author), Associate Professor, Department of Public Administration, Comilla University, Cumilla, Bangladesh Email: [rubelcou@gmail.com](mailto:rubelcou@gmail.com)

### Abstract

*On March 26, 1971, the Bangladeshi independence struggle against domestic imperialism and ethnic discrimination in Pakistan got underway. March 26, 1971, saw the start of the Bangladeshi independence movement against domestic imperialism and ethnic discrimination in Pakistan. The United Nations gave relief and humanitarian activities first priority starting in the Liberation War and continuing until November. The UN Security Council was called in when India and Pakistan entered the Liberation War on December 3. The Security Council meetings continued as different suggestions and counterproposals were presented. In the Security Council, there was a clash between the USSR and US. While the USSR helped Bangladesh, China and the US helped Pakistan. Keeping their positions neutral, France and Britain did not cast votes in the Security Council. The Security Council could not therefore come to an agreement. On December 6, after discussion and an official decision, the Security Council sent the agenda to the General Assembly. On December 7, a resolution headed "Unity Formula for Peace" was overwhelmingly approved at the General Assembly. As India and Bangladesh rejected this idea, the US called a second Security Council session. Sessions of the Security Council were held at various intervals between December 12 and 21. Everything changed dramatically when Bangladesh gained its independence on December 16. The protracted Bangladesh war was essentially resolved on December 21 when the Security Council unanimously approved a ceasefire resolution.*

### Keywords

Liberation War, Bangladesh, United Nations, International Intervention, Conflict Resolution.

### Introduction

The 1971 Bengali nation's armed struggle for independence took on an international dimension; as the conflict came to an end, India and Pakistan got directly involved, and the major powers and their powerful allies started to actively compete with one another to establish an independent state of Bangladesh. This effort included international and multinational aspects in addition to bilateral and regional forms (Jahan, 2008:245). The bigger forum in this instance, where the major powers and stakeholders participated in various capacities, was the UN. The major powers usually agree on decisions made and carried out by the United Nations, a global institution. The decision-making process is primarily a reflection of how the major powers see a given situation. The UN Security Council may reach an impasse, in which case the General Assembly may adopt certain restricted actions. Everything that occurred in 1971 took place during the Bangladesh crisis (Matin, 1990: 23). With Bangladesh's ascent on December 16, the subcontinent's map underwent a reconfiguration. Furthermore, the United Nations' involvement in these matters has primarily been restricted to humanitarian efforts and relief activities. The Pakistan military attempted to stifle the calls for freedom of the people of East Pakistan by genocide and ethnic oppression, which was thwarted by the

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establishment of Bangladesh, under the standard pretexts of national integrity, internal affairs, etc. For this reason, it is plausible to argue that Bangladesh's establishment following the dissolution of the post-World War II state structure was a highly justifiable event. Following its declaration of independence, Bangladesh joined a number of UN bodies in 1972 and attained full membership status in 1974 (Hussain, 2012:189). There is a dearth of scholarship on the United Nations' involvement in the Great War of Liberation. The discussion research is highly significant, and the author has logically made a concentrated effort to examine and unearth material on the role of the organization in charge of maintaining world peace and security throughout the Great War of Liberation.

**Research Methodology**

The article titled 'The Role of the United Nations in the Great Liberation War of Bangladesh: An Analysis' has all of the basic aspects of social research. Data was gathered from secondary sources for research purposes. The research was done using both qualitative and quantitative methods. The research paper titled 'Role of the United Nations in the Great Liberation War of Bangladesh - An Analysis' was analyzed using the 'Content Analysis Methodology'. Basically, the study effort was done using secondary sources to acquire and analyze data and information.

The research relies on secondary sources, either directly or indirectly. The study was done by gathering information from worldwide media coverage, UN documents, publications, research papers, reports, archives relating to the liberation war, and records housed in the museum during Bangladesh's War of Liberation (1971).

**The Role of the United Nations in the early stages of the Liberation War**

All UN employees were evacuated from Dhaka on March 25, 1971, the night the Pakistani armed forces declared the liberation war through "Operation Searchlight." But it has not moved to halt the atrocities against human rights and genocide in East Pakistan. On April 1st, nonetheless, the Secretary General sent an emergency humanitarian offer to the Pakistani government for the inhabitants of East Pakistan. Nevertheless, the Pakistani government turned down the offer of humanitarian assistance and even forbade the Red Cross relief aircraft from landing in Dhaka (Hossein, 2012: 150). President Yahya Khan gave the UN authorization to carry out rescue operations after the UN Secretary General appealed to the Pakistani government on April 22 for immediate humanitarian aid. Beginning on June 7, 1971, the United Nations started assistance efforts in East Pakistan. The acronym UNROD stood for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for East Pakistan. United Nations recognized the name "Bangladesh" on December 21 and dubbed the rescue agency "UNROD" (Time Magazine, January 1, 1971). The surge of refugees entering India on April 23 was the reason the Indian government made its first plea for outside assistance since the start of the liberation struggle. Coordination in this respect was taken up by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Other than UNHCR, UNICEF and WFP are involved in Indian refugee camps actively. The World Bank estimates that the Indian government spent \$1 billion on refugees overall up to December, of which just \$215 million came from UN assistance. By far the biggest airlift in UN history (International Herald Tribune, July 8, 1971). India's committed and received monies from the UN and other sources up to June were:

**International Aid to India (June, 1971)**

United Nation	Other Sources	Total
9,80,00,000	16,50,00,000	26,30,00,000

Source: International Herald Tribune, 8 July, 1971.

**United Nations product aid to India**

Topics	Quantity
1. Food Aid	6267 tons
2. Vehicles	2200 piece
3. Medical supplies	700 tons
4. Polythene for making shelters	What is needed for 3 million refugees

Source: Rahman, Hasan Hafizur (ed.) (1984) Bangladesh Liberation War Documents, Volume- 13, Dhaka: Ministry of Liberation War Affairs, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, page 783-87.

Though the UN participated in the relief effort, until September, no talks on matters like the liberation struggle in Bangladesh, genocide, abuses of human rights, etc. were held in the UN. Even Bangladesh was left from the September UN Annual General Discussion agenda. Still, throughout their statements, the leaders of several nations brought up Bangladesh.

### **Proposal for deployment of United Nations observers in East Pakistan**

Early in the Liberation War, India asked the UN to step in and handle the refugee crisis and put an end to the genocide in East Pakistan. Yet, at first, Pakistan opposed the UN's intervention in the refugee crisis, viewing any UN action as meddling in its domestic affairs (Hasan, 1994: 251–53). However, Yahya Khan consented to embrace all UN measures as of May on US advice. Pakistan started participating actively in diplomatic efforts in a number of UN forums during this period, with support from Muslim nations and the United States.

In order for India to be compelled to cease aiding Bangladesh's independence movement as a result of UN pressure. Acknowledging this, India vehemently objected to the UN's political role, which it concealed behind humanitarian endeavors. Despite the fact that the UN Secretary General has mostly been mute on ending genocide and breaches of human rights since the start of the Liberation War, on July 19 he suggested that "UN peacekeepers or observers be deployed on the India-Pakistan border to resolve the refugee problem." But the UN Secretary General's plan to send out troops or monitors was shelved after the Mujibnagar administration and India turned down this offer (Hossein, 2012: 87).

### **According to Article 99 of the United Nations, the initiative of the Secretary General**

The UN Secretary-General, U Thant, submitted a memorandum under Article 99 to the president of the Security Council and member nations on July 20, 1971, the day following the request for the deployment of observers. There were eight paragraphs or suggestions in the Secretary General's letter. "Obviously, it is for the members of the Security Council themselves to decide whether such consideration should be taken place formally or informally, in public or private," he stated in the note (UN Doc, A/8401).

India, the primary backer of Bangladesh's independence movement, was put in a humiliating position by the Secretary General's suggestions. The Soviet Union supported India in this circumstance. India's principal foreign benefactor in the wake of the Soviet-Indian alliance's signature was the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union asked the Secretary-General on August 20th not to call a meeting of the Security Council to discuss the East Pakistan issue. As a result, the Security Council did not meet, even on the Secretary General's suggestion. Major nations and interested parties maintained their diplomatic efforts in anticipation of the United Nations General Assembly's 26th session, which is scheduled to take place on September 21 (The Year Book of World Affairs, 1972).

### **United Nations Intervention in the Question of Bangabandhu's Trial**

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman is set to face trial for treason in the final week of July, as reported by many media sources. The Mujibnagar government promptly raised alarm following the publication of this news. Sheikh Mujib is the unquestionable leader of Bangladesh's liberation movement. Consequently, the Mujibnagar government formally requested the international community and influential nations to ensure the safety and well-being of Sheikh Mujib's life (Joy Bangla, July 30, 1971). The trial of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman commenced on August 9, 1971, under the authority of the Pakistani government. On August 10, U Thant, the Secretary General of the United Nations, intervened in the Pakistani military junta's attempt to bring Sheikh Mujibur Rahman to trial. The Secretary General stated clearly that the topic at hand is highly sensitive and delicate, and it is the responsibility of the legal system of Pakistan, as a member state, to handle it. It is also a subject of great curiosity and worry in several spheres, encompassing both humanitarian and political domains. The Secretary General has been regularly receiving expressions of grave concern from government representatives regarding the situation in East Pakistan. It is widely believed that unless some form of agreement is reached, the restoration of peace and normalcy in the region is unlikely. The Secretary General concurs with several members that any advancements about the destiny of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman would undoubtedly have repercussions beyond the borders of Pakistan. The article is from The International Herald Tribune, dated August 10, 1971.

### **Delegation of Bangladesh to the United Nations**

The United Nations General Assembly meets every September. On September 21, the Mujibnagar administration (1st government of independent Bangladesh) agreed to dispatch a 16-member team led by Justice Abu Saeed stationed in London. On September 25, the Bangladesh delegation convened and nominated Fakir Shahabuddin as the party's member secretary. Bangladesh was not a member of the United Nations before then. In this situation, the delegation had a tough time entering the UN building. Pakistan, in particular, tried to label the delegation as rebellious elements. Even in this

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hostile climate, this group continued to engage in creative and intellectual activities as the Mujibnagar government's representation on the United Nations premises. Currently, the President of the United Nations Association of Journalists. Yogendranath Banerjee assisted the team in entering the United Nations building. at October, the Bangladesh delegation conducted a plenary news conference at a space at the Church Center, located on the west side of 777 United Nations Plaza. As a result, the Bangladeshi representation to the United Nations actively participated in mobilizing global opinion on Bangladesh's favor.

**The 26<sup>th</sup> meeting of the General Assembly**

The latter portion of the September 1971 UN headquarters conference focused on the membership of the People's Republic of China and the status of Bangladesh. The 26th session failed to resolve the issue of the 'Bangladesh dilemma'. Bangladesh has been cited in the annual report of the Secretary General and in remarks made by national representatives. In his report, UN Secretary-General U Thant emphasized the imperative for the international community to provide comprehensive assistance to governments and peoples in the event of a large-scale disaster. In UN Document A/8411, I have asserted that the only viable resolution to the underlying issue lies in a political approach centered around reconciliation and humanitarian principles.

This session's official and informal assembly of country representatives at the UN headquarters focused on China's UN membership and Bangladesh. New Zealand, Madagascar, Luxembourg, Belgium, Norway, and Sweden stressed the subcontinental situation before the UN General Assembly and demanded a quick settlement. Pakistan was told to restore a popular administration in East Pakistan by France and Britain. The Soviet Union no longer regarded the situation a Pakistani issue. Pakistan only had ambivalence and leniency from the US. Luxembourg's delegate asked, "When we witness millions of people suffering indescribably, being brutally punished in the guise of national security, and civilized society's weakest losing their rights, In the sake of national sovereignty and security, should such cruelty continue? On Sept. 29, Canadian Foreign Minister Michelle Sharpe said, "When an internal conflict is moving so many nations so directly, would it be right to consider it an internal matter?" Pakistan was advised to be flexible by Sweden. He remarked that "it would behove Pakistan to respect human rights and accept the public opinion declared through voting". The US sessionally backed Pakistan and said, "Pakistan's internal issues will be dealt with by the people and government of Pakistan."

The East Pakistan problem had generated a worldwide catastrophe, and Pakistan's ruthlessness had caused millions of refugees to cross the border and seek asylum in other nations. In session, the French foreign minister remarked, "If this injustice cannot be corrected at the root, the flow of refugees will not stop." Belgians repeated Schumann's query, "Will the return of the refugees be possible?" He noted "a political and constitutional solution to this crisis must be found". This remedy should come from public opinion. Only when they are confident in the future that human rights will not be abused will refugees return home. British Foreign Secretary Sir Alec Hume was clear about the solution (Muhith, 2014). The statements of these countries are arranged in a table and some important questions are answered for it. These are:

- a. States that have identified the Bangladesh question as a political issue;
- b. b. States that have termed it only as a humanitarian problem;
- c. States that have identified the matter as Pakistan's internal affairs;
- d. Only those countries that have spoken of genocide and human rights violations;

<b>Country</b>	<b>Problem description</b>	<b>References to both political and humanitarian aspects</b>	<b>Paying attention to humanitarian issues</b>	<b>Internal Affairs of Pakistan</b>	<b>Genocide and human rights violations</b>
Afghanistan	*	*			
Albania					
Algeria	*			*	
Argentina	*	*	*		
Australia	*	*	*		
Austria	*		*		
Bahrain					
Barbados					
Belgium	*	*			
Bhutan					

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Bolivia			
Botswana			
Brazil			
Bulgaria			
Burma			
Burundi			
Belarus			
Cameroon			
Canada			
Central African Republic			
Sri Lanka (Ceylon)	*	*	
Chad			
Chile	*		*
China	*		*
Colombia			
Congo			
Costa Rica			
Cuba			
Cyprus	*	*	
Czechoslovakia			

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**Secretary General's Good Office Proposal**

At the 26<sup>th</sup> General Session, governments, the international media, and the people put pressure on UN Secretary General "U Thant" to take a new crisis action for Bangladesh. On October 20, he gave India and Pakistan his good office. The Secretary General said, "In this potentially very dangerous situation, I feel that it is my duty as Secretary General to do everything I can to help the government immediately concerned avoid any disaster." I want you to know that my offices are always open if you need help (UN Doc, S/10410:6).

This letter of the Secretary General implies that he views the matter as an India-Pakistan war. President Yahya Khan also wanted a Pak-India confrontation. Yahya Khan informed the Secretary General a day later that Pakistan had accepted this idea. I appreciate your willingness to provide your good offices and hope you can visit India and Pakistan immediately to negotiate force withdrawal. I am convinced this will benefit and advance peace. UN Doc, S/10410: 7

However, India did not reject the UN Secretary General's 'good office'. According to the status of UN Secretary General and diplomatic etiquette, India could not reject this plan outright, therefore it rejected it indirectly. The Secretary General's recommendation came as Indira Gandhi was touring the world to promote Bangladesh's liberation fight. Upon returning from abroad, he informed the Secretary General on November 16 that the military rule of Pakistan was a severe threat to national life and security.

Indira Gandhi said that Pakistan wants to make problems within Pakistan into problems between India and Pakistan. Second, we can't ignore the reason why people are crossing borders as refugees. Indira Gandhi kindly told the Secretary General that instead of India and Pakistan meeting, Yahya Khan and the leaders of the Awami League should do it. "It's always nice to meet you and talk about our ideas," she said. We will back your efforts to find a political solution in East Bengal that meets the stated needs of the people, as long as you are ready to look at the situation in a broader context (Keesings, 1972).

In his response, the Indian Prime Minister said that the UN Secretary-General was guilty. In order to protect the Pakistani junta, the Secretary General is avoiding the main problem. In a message to the Prime Minister of India on November 22, the Secretary-General denied the charges, saying that good office requires everyone to work together. In this very important and complicated case, there doesn't seem to be a reason for the Secretary General to help. 10 (UN Doc S/10410). The UN Secretary-General's "Good Office" project in the subcontinent stopped when this message was sent.

**1606<sup>th</sup> Session of the Security Council (December 4, 1971)**

On December 3, India entered the Pakistan War, threatening peace and stability in one of the world's most populated areas. Both nations reported the incident to the UN Secretary General on December 4. After thoroughly evaluating the problem, the Secretary-General requested a Security Council session from Council President Jakob Malik (Soviet Union) (The New York Times, 4 December 1971).

The 1606<sup>th</sup> Security Council session (5 permanents—US, Soviet Union, China, UK, France—and 10 non-permanents—Argentina, Belgium, Burundi, Italy, Japan, Nicaragua, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Syria) meets on December 4, 1971. Justice Abu Saeed Chowdhury, the Bangladesh delegation leader, asked the Security Council President to advocate for the Mujibnagar administration before the meeting. The Security Council President proposed listening to Justice Abu Saeed Chowdhury's remarks as Bangladesh's envoy at the start of the meeting.

A lengthy Security Council debate on hearing Justice Abu Saeed Chowdhury's remarks from Bangladesh. The council president presented two ideas in response to criticism.

- a. Permit the letter to be circulated as a Security Council document from Justice Abu Saeed Chowdhury, the representative of Bangladesh.
- b. The council should allow Justice Abu Saeed Chowdhury to speak as a representative of the people of Bangladesh.

The majority of nations did not object to the speech's delivery on the grounds of principle, thus the Council President issued an order granting the request to present the resolution. However, because to a lack of required support, the President rejected Justice Chowdhury's second motion to join the Security Council debate (UN Doc, S/PV/1606).

The Security Council extended an invitation to the representatives of India and Pakistan to make remarks. The first speaker was Agha Shahi, Pakistan's Permanent Representative to the UN. He charged India with breaking Articles 2(4) and 2(7) of the UN Charter in his long statement, and he called on the UN to take responsibility for safeguarding Pakistan's territorial integrity (UN Doc, S/PV/1606: 49–148). In his remarks, Samar Sen, India's Permanent Representative to the UN, stated, "The enemy is sidestepping the core problem and falsely condemning India. According to him, this problem has resulted from the strategy of putting seven crore Bengalis under weapons control. Despite the fact that Sheikh Mujib was predicted by Yahya Khan to become Pakistan's prime minister, nobody is certain of his current whereabouts. Bengalis have won elections but have not been granted authority, which is why Samar Sen supports their independence. This led them to launch nonviolent movements as well, but these were also put down by massacres. They are therefore quite justified in demanding their right to self-determination. According to UN Doc, S/PV/1606: 150–85, he stated that the ceasefire should be between the Pakistan Army and Bangladesh, not between India and Pakistan.

#### **1. *The United States of America's Security Council Resolution (S/10416)***

Following the keynote addresses by the Indian and Pakistani delegates, US Representative George Bush Sr. charged India of aggressiveness. 'Immediate ceasefire between India and Pakistan, withdrawal of the armies of both countries to their respective borders, deployment of United Nations observers on the India-Pakistan border, taking all necessary steps for the repatriation of refugees' (UN Doc, S/10416) was one of the seven points of his resolution. Every Security Council member participated in the discussion of the US proposal.

#### **2. *Belgium, Italy, and Japan's Proposals (S/10417)***

Belgium, Italy, and Japan submitted a five-point draft resolution to the Security Council in response to the US proposal. In line with the UN Charter's tenets, the draft resolution calls on "the governments of both countries to immediately cease hostilities and all forms of hostilities and to take necessary measures for the rapid and voluntary repatriation of refugees" (UN Doc, S/10417).

#### **3. *The Soviet Union's Security Council Resolution (S/10418)***

At opposition to the American plan, the Soviet Union put out a two-point draft resolution at the UN Security Council's 1606th resolution calling for an end to hostilities in East Pakistan. "A political solution in East Pakistan, which would end hostilities there and at the same time stop all terrorist activities by the Pakistan Army in East Pakistan," was what the Soviet proposal demanded (UN Doc, S/10418).

#### **4. *The Argentine, Nicaraguan, Sierra Leonean, and Somalian proposals (S/10419)***

Argentina, Nicaragua, Sierra Leone, and Somalia sent the Security Council a two-point draft resolution (S/10419) at the Soviet Union's advice. Under the draft resolution (UN Doc, S/10416), both nations must "immediately ceasefire and withdraw" and the Secretary-General is to "keep the Security Council regularly informed of the situation."

The Security Council heard four resolutions during its 1606th meeting. Following a thorough discussion and debate, the president of the Security Council presented the US proposal—one of four draft proposals—for voting among the Security Council's member nations for acceptance.

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**1<sup>st</sup> veto of the Soviet Union in favor of Bangladesh in the Security Council (S/10416)**

<b>In favor of the US proposal</b>	<b>Abstain from voting</b>	<b>Against the US proposal</b>
Belgium, Burundi, Italy, Japan, Nicaragua, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Syria.	United Kingdom, France	Soviet Union, Poland

When the US accused India of withdrawing soldiers in the Security Council, 11 voted yes and the Soviets and Poland no. Neither the UK nor France voted. Permanent Security Council member the Soviet Union vetoed the motion. Soviet Union's 106th UN Security Council veto (UN Doc, S/PV/1606: 357-71).

**1607<sup>th</sup> Emergency Session of the Security Council (December 5, 1971)**

The Security Council convened its 1607th session on December 4 at 2.30 p.m. on December 5. The fact that Tunisia from Africa and Saudi Arabia from Asia, neither Security Council members, can speak makes this session unique. They attended at the Security Council President's request. I.B. Tarlor-Kamara (Sierra Leone) chaired this Security Council session (UN Doc, S/PV/1607).

**The Resolution of China (S/10421)**

This session featured a Chinese resolution draft. China's plan termed India an aggressor and chastised it for establishing Bangladesh. China "demands the unconditional and immediate withdrawal of the Indian army occupying Pakistani territory" (UN Doc, S/10421).

After China's draft proposal, the Tunisian ambassador spoke for Africa. He said, "The Security Council should also call for a ceasefire, so that peace can be established according to the various clauses of the Charter". The Asian Saudi representative then spoke. According to Saudi envoy Jamil Baroodi, "He called for a meeting of Asian heads of state on the subcontinent to get rid of the politics of the big powers." After the Saudi delegate, the Soviet representative mentioned a draft proposal (S/10422, December 5, 1971).

The Soviet Union said a 'ceasefire may be a temporary solution but a permanent one would need a political accord between India and Pakistan'. The Soviet delegate accused the US and China of disregarding two major issues for "temporary interests". Pakistan and India spoke in the Security Council after the Soviet representative. After Pakistan and India spoke, the Council President informed the Security Council that the Council now has three resolutions: S/10418 (Soviet Union), S/10421 (China), and S/10423 (8 Nations). S/10417 and S/10419 are no longer before the House since the same state presented the 8-nation resolution (S/10423), which complements them. The Council President voted on the Soviet proposal first (UN Doc, S/PV/1607:75-201).

**Consequences of the Soviet Union's (S/10418) proposal**

<b>In favor of the Soviet Union</b>	<b>Abstain from voting</b>	<b>Against the proposal Soviet Union</b>
Soviet Union, Poland	United States, United Kingdom, France, Argentina, Belgium, Burundi, Italy, Japan, Nicaragua, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Syria	China

The Chinese veto caused the idea to be rejected. The majority of members were not convinced by this suggestion either. Furthermore, throughout the speech, those who chose not to vote expressed their opposition to the idea. When the Chinese proposal (S/10421) was put to a vote by the Council President following the vote on the Soviet proposal, the Chinese delegate stated that they were still in consultation with other Council members. No vote was held on the Chinese proposal as China indicated no interest in holding a vote on it. The eight-nation draft proposal, headed by Argentina, was then put to a vote by the Council President.

**2<sup>nd</sup> veto of the Soviet Union in favor of Bangladesh in the Security Council (S/10423)**

<b>In favor of the 8 nation proposal</b>	<b>Abstain from voting</b>	<b>Against the US proposal</b>
USA, China, Argentina, Belgium, Burundi, Italy, Japan, Nicaragua, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Syria.	United Kingdom, France	Soviet Union, Poland

This idea received 11 votes. UK and France refused to vote. Soviet and Polish votes were no. After the Soviet Union vetoed it again, the eight-nation armistice failed (UN Doc, S/PV/1607: 230-331). The French delegate called such motions and counter-motions 'presumptive' after the 8 Nations' resolution voting. After voting on the 8 Nations resolution, the Council President notified the Council of two further resolutions (S/10421) and (S/10425). The Security Council President exhorted member nations to find a solution and postponed the discussion until 3.30 pm the next day.

**The Proposals by 8 Nations (S/10423)**

In this session of the Security Council, the 8 member states of the Provisional Council (Argentina, Belgium, Burundi, Italy, Japan, Nicaragua, Sierra Leone and Somalia) led by Argentina put forward a proposal of three points. The resolution called for a ceasefire and the creation of an environment for refugee return (UN Doc, S/10423).

**The Proposals by 6 Nations (S/10425)**

At the 1607<sup>th</sup> session of the Security Council, six nations—Belgium, Italy, Japan, Nicaragua, Sierra Leone and Tunisia—proposed another three-point resolution. This proposal states-

- a. Urges governments to immediately implement a cease-fire.
- b. Request the Secretary General to update the Council on the resolution's implementation.
- c. The UN Doc, S/10425, recommends continuing to consider methods to restore peace in the region.

**1608<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Security Council (December 6, 1971)**

The 1608<sup>th</sup> Security Council session was place at 3.30 pm on December 6, 1971. This session, like the previous ones, allowed India, Pakistan, and Tunisia from Africa and Saudi Arabia from Asia to debate. I.B. Tarlor Kamara (Sierra Leone) convened this Security Council session (UN Doc, S/PV/1608:1-5).

**Soviet Union Resolution (S/10426)**

Soviet delegate offered a new resolution with two revisions to the six-nation draft resolution (S/10425) early in this session. (In operative paragraph 1, replace 'the Governments concerned' with 'all parties concerned' and add 'and cessation of all hostilities').

**Peace Proposal Unity Formula (S/10429)**

In the wake of Security Council impasse, the 11 member nations discussed bringing the issue to the General Assembly informally. Following discussions, Argentina, Somalia, Nicaragua, Sierra Leone, Burundi, and Japan presented a draft resolution (S/10429) to the Security Council, recommending a special session of the UN General Assembly if permanent members failed to reach consensus at the 1606<sup>th</sup> and 1607<sup>th</sup> meetings. This proposal followed the 3 November 1950 General Assembly decision [377 A (V)]. Many call it 'Unity for Peace Exercise'. Since the UN Security Council is deadlocked, the General Assembly implements portions of this formula for world peace and security.

**Soviet Union Resolution (S/10428)**

The Soviet Union introduced another draft resolution late in this session. In a five-point draft resolution, the USSR urged that "all parties concerned should immediately cease hostilities and implement a cease-fire." The 1970 elections called for a political solution in Pakistan to cease hostilities. The UN Secretary-General should execute this decision and continue peace talks in the area. After briefly discussing the draft resolutions in the Security Council, the President decided to vote for the Unity Formula for Peace resolution (S/10429) to take initiative because the Soviet and Chinese resolutions (S/10428) and (S/10421) would fail.

**Consequences of the Unity Formula for Peace proposal in the Security Council**

<b>In favor of the US proposal</b>	<b>Abstain from voting</b>	<b>Against the US proposal</b>
USA, China, Argentina, Belgium, Burundi, Italy, Japan, Nicaragua, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Syria	***	United Kingdom, France, Soviet Union, Poland

After this proposal was passed, the United Nations started to implement the Unity Formula for Peace (UN Doc, S/PV/1608) with the aim of ending the war in the subcontinent. To protect Pakistan, China took the initiative to send this proposal to the UN General Assembly.

**26<sup>th</sup> (Special Session) of the General Assembly**

According to the Security Council's December 6 decision, the 26<sup>th</sup> extraordinary session of the General Assembly was convened at the UN on December 7. The 26<sup>th</sup> Special Session of the General Assembly saw three proposals:

- A. Proposal by 13 nations (A/L/647).
- B. The 34-nation Argentine-led plan (A/L/647 Rev.) and Soviet proposal (A/L/646) were detailed. For 12 hours on December 7, the General Assembly considered 3 draft proposals. debate included 58 of 131 General Assembly nations.

**The Resolution of 13 States to the General Assembly (A/L/647)**

Thirteen member states introduced a draft resolution for General Assembly debate at the start of this session. The 13 states' suggestions mainly included the following:



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- a. Urge Pakistan and India to immediately halt hostilities and return their soldiers to their respective boundaries.
- b. Boost attempts to repatriate refugees.
- c. (c) The Secretary-General will urge that decisions of the Security Council and the General Assembly be implemented.
- d. In view of the existing resolution (UN Doc, A/L 647), urge the Security Council to respond appropriately.

**The Resolution of 34 States to the General Assembly (A/L/647 Rev-1)**

The General Assembly received a draft resolution from 34 governments, chaired by Argentina and backed by the US, Muslim nations, and China. 'Immediately effective Indo-Pakistani ceasefire and evacuation of Indian troops from East Pakistan, respecting the concept of the integrity of Pakistan' was the 34-state resolution's heart.

**The Resolution of Soviet Union (A/L/648)**

The Soviet Union's proposal states, "Ceasefire may be a temporary solution, but a permanent solution requires a political agreement between India and Pakistan" (UN Doc, A/L 648).

**Countries Participating in the Debate in the Special Session (26th) of the United Nations General Assembly**

Asia	Africa	Europe	Middle and South America	Others
Bhutan	Algeria	Albania	Argentina	Australia
Sri Lanka	Burundi	Bulgaria	Brazil	Fiji
China	Chad	Czechoslovakia	Chile	New Zealand
Cyprus	Gabon	Denmark	Ecuador	United States
India	Ghana	France	Mexico	
Indonesia	Ivory Coast	Greece	Nicaragua	
Iran	Madagascar	Italy	Peru	
Japan	Mauritania	Netherlands	Uruguay	
Lebanon	Sierra Leone	Poland		
Malaysia	Somalia	Portugal		
Mongolia	Sudan	Soviet Union		
Nepal	Tanzania	Sweden		
Pakistan	Togo	Britain		
Saudi Arabia	Tunisia	Yugoslavia		
Turkey		Hungary		
Jordan				
Quake				
<b>17 country</b>	<b>14 country</b>	<b>15 country</b>	<b>8 country</b>	<b>4 country</b>

Source: Prepared by reviewing various UN documents.

Following deliberation in the General Assembly, the President of the Assembly, Adam Malik (former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia), approved the motion put up by 34 nations, spearheaded by Argentina, for vote in the General Assembly (amended). This decision was made in accordance with Rule 93 of the Rules of Procedure, which governs the process.

**Voting results on 34 state resolutions in the General Assembly**

34 in favor of the State proposal	Abstain from voting	Against the proposal of 34 states
104 states	11 states	16 states

It was supported by 104 nations, Negative vote from 16 nations and 11 nations cast no votes. General Assembly resolution sent to Security Council for execution same day. UN Under-Secretary-General telegraphed India and Pakistan of the General Assembly's resolution (UNGA Resolution, 2793).

**1611<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Security Council (December 12, 1971)**

While the UN General Assembly adopted the ceasefire resolution, the battle continued and Pakistan soldiers in Dhaka fell. On December 12, George Bush (Senior) requested a quick ceasefire from the Secretary General in the Security Council (S/10444). Thus, the 1611th Security Council meeting took place at 4 p.m. A large delegation from India led by Foreign Minister Sardar Swaran Singh attended this summit. Pakistan sent a mission led by recently appointed Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto to boost diplomatic efforts (UN Doc, S/PV/1611).

**The Resolution of the United States (S/10446)**

The US proposed a draft resolution to a Security Council emergency meeting on 12 December. The seven-point resolution demanded 'prompt ceasefire and army withdrawal' (UN Doc, S/10446). In this Security Council resolution, the US and USSR had opposite stances. The US and China publicly supported Pakistan. The council president adjourned the meeting at 12.35 pm to meet again the next day.

**1613<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Security Council (December 13, 1971)**

The Security Council had its 1613th session at 3 p.m. on December 13. In addition to Security Council members, India, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and Tunisia attended this meeting. The meeting opened with US draft resolution (S/10446) talks. The Council president let Poland's representative speak first. George Bush, US representative, said, India bears the major responsibility for broadening the crisis by rejecting the UN's efforts to become involved, even in a humanitarian way, in relation to the refugees, rejecting proposals like our Secretary General's offer of good offices, which could have defused the crisis, and rejecting proposals that could have started a political dialogue. (UN Doc, A/PV 2002: 130-141).

Chinese envoy Chiao remarked, "India conspires with Bengali refugees like Tibetan refugees." He called India a "outright aggressor" pursuing South Asian domination. He further said the Soviet Union is the principal backer of Indian aggression. China wants a ceasefire and the evacuation of both nations' forces (UN). Doc, A/PV 2002: 141-146).

In his speech, the Soviet Union delegate observed, "The businesspeople and fanatics who brought this subject before the General Assembly have blinded their eyes to the true situation in the Indian subcontinent. They are concealing the major reasons of the dispute without examining the issue. He dubbed this project China-US Collude. China asserts it uses the forum for anti-Soviet propaganda (UN Doc, A/PV 2003: 173-185). The President of the Council voted on the United States' updated draft resolution (S/10446/Rev.1) for Security Council approval after debate. The third veto by the Soviet Union, a permanent UN Security Council member, reversed the cease-fire resolution (UN Doc, S/PV/1613: 174).

**3<sup>rd</sup> veto of the Soviet Union in favor of Bangladesh in the Security Council (S/10446/Rev.1)**

<b>In favor of the US proposal</b>	<b>Abstain from voting</b>	<b>Against the US proposal</b>
USA, China, Argentina, Belgium, Burundi, Italy, Japan, Nicaragua, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Syria	United Kingdom, France	Soviet Union, Poland

**The Proposal by Italy and Japan (S/10451)**

After voting on the US proposal, Italy and Japan jointly presented another draft resolution at this session of the Security Council. There were total of nine points in this proposal. The main point of the resolution was to 'maintain the national integrity of Pakistan and reach a comprehensive political solution to this crisis' (UN Doc, S/10451).

**The 1614<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Security Council took place on December 14, 1971.**

The 1614<sup>th</sup> Security Council meeting commenced at 12.10 pm on December 14<sup>th</sup>. The meeting did not achieve a consensus. Britain engaged in discussions with other members of the Council, namely France, in order to develop a new proposal that would meet the approval of all parties involved. Poland has presented a draft resolution (S/10453) to the President of the Council, outlining a six-point plan for a ceasefire.

Here, the Security Council meeting system was addressed. After discussing their recommendations, Britain and Poland requested that the conference be deferred until the next day for government orders. All Council members agreed, save China's moderate reservations. To permit formal deliberations on the British-French and Polish proposals, the Council President postponed the meeting (UN Doc, S/PV/1614: 49).

**1615<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Security Council (December 15, 1971)**

The 1615<sup>th</sup> Security Council meeting was conducted at 7.20 pm on December 15. At the Council President's request, India and Pakistan delegates attended this meeting. Meeting attendees discussed four draft suggestions. Polish proposal (UN Doc, S/10453/Rev-1), France and Britain's resolution, Syria's resolution, and Soviet Union's resolution. Polish proposals included 'ceasefire and departure of West Pakistani soldiers from East Pakistan'. "Pakistani political prisoners should be released, so that they can implement their mandate in East Pakistan" declared the Syrian draft resolution. After negotiations, the UK and France proposed a Syrian-like draft resolution. The concept addresses

ceasefire in the east and west of the subcontinent individually. The idea called for political settlement discussions with elected officials. Britain, France, and the Soviet Union made similar proposals. The Soviet Union demanded a thorough political solution with East Pakistan's elected representatives. A cease-fire must also be announced (UN Doc, S/PV/1615).

The Chinese representative began with a speech. China's representative said, 'The Security Council should respect Pakistan's independence, sovereignty, national unity and geographical integrity' (UN Doc, S/PV/1615: 13). The President of the Council asked the Sri Lankan representative to speak after the Chinese speaker (UN Doc, S/PV/1615: 13). The Council President invited the Sri Lankan delegate to speak after the Chinese representative. Sri Lankan representative: "Sri Lanka seeks a neutral solution. He said, 'This solution should be one where triumph is devoid of difficulties, loss is without consequence and above all peace prevails' (UN Doc, S/PV/1615: 22). Pakistan's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's statement on these suggestions was spectacular. The Security Council was strongly criticized in his passionate address. He called the Security Council stage of deceit and farce' He instructed the Security Council to legitimize every unlawful occurrence until December 15, establish a harsher treaty than Versailles, and legalize the occupation. We will fight without me. I shall withdraw but fight again. My country calls. Why waste time on the Security Council? I refuse to participate in such a disgraceful surrender of my nation. He urged the General and Security Council to remove the 'monument of failure' He concluded his Security Council remarks. They rip up draft resolutions of four nations, including Poland, and I go (UN Doc, S/PV/1615: 84). Pakistani delegates left the Security Council. Pakistani delegates left the Security Council. Accepting Poland's suggestion (UN Doc, S/10453) may have benefited Pakistan. India 'although grudgingly' approved the idea with Soviet help. The Pakistani military would not have surrendered humiliatingly if the delegates had accepted the idea.

The Council President called Poland's proposal timely out of 4 drafts. The Security Council discussed four draft ideas, but none of the member nations indicated interest in voting. Instead, they continued to deliberate. Thus, the Council President adjourned the meeting till 10.30 am on December 16 (UN Doc, S/PV/1615:139).

#### **1616<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Security Council (December 16, 1971)**

The 1616<sup>th</sup> Security Council meeting was conducted at 10:30 am on December 16. The Security Council President invited Indian Foreign Minister Sardar Swaran Singh, Saudi Ambassador Mr. Jamal Baroodi, Tunisian representative, and Sri Lankan representative to this meeting. The President stated that five draft resolutions await decision before the Council: Italy and Japan (S/10451), Poland (UN Doc, S/10453/Rev-1), Syria (UN Doc, S/10456), France and Britain (UN Doc, S/10455), and the Soviet Union (UN Doc, S/10457). The Chinese and Soviet draft resolutions (S/10421) and (S/10428) were not vetoed (UN Doc, S/PV/1616: 3).

Indian External Affairs Minister Sardar Swaran Singh read Indira Gandhi's statement after the President's opening remarks. This statement included two main points.

- a. Pakistani army surrendering in Dhaka created Bangladesh.
- b. India's Western Front ceasefire (UN Doc, S/PV/1616:5).

At 1.10 pm, the 1616th Security Council meeting finished.

#### **1617<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Security Council (December 16, 1971)**

The Foreign Minister of India proclaimed the creation of Bangladesh via the surrender of Pakistani soldiers in Dhaka at 3.00 pm in the 1616<sup>th</sup> and 1617<sup>th</sup> Security Council meetings. Besides Security Council members, India, Pakistan, Tunisia, and Saudi Arabia attended this meeting. A Soviet draft resolution (S/10458) welcomed India's ceasefire proposal during this conference. Japan and the US presented a seven-point draft resolution (S/10450) on Geneva Conventions (1949) compliance, including refugee safe return, during the conference. It then proposed S/10459/Rev.1, revising this plan. Meeting terminated at 9.45 pm without Security Council resolution (UN Doc, S/PV/1617).

#### **1620<sup>th</sup> meeting (Final meeting) of the Security Council (December 21, 1971)**

The UN Security Council was unable to achieve a compromise despite the increasing tensions in Bangladesh and the unilateral ceasefire declared by India. Argentina, Burundi, Italy, Japan, Nicaragua, Sierra Leone, and Somalia together presented Security Council resolution S/10465 on December 21. The resolution sought to 'monitor a cessation of hostilities and encourage all relevant parties to comply with the provisions of the Geneva Conventions'. During the plenary session, the

resolution received support from 13 states, but the Soviet Union and Poland chose not to vote (UN Doc, S/PV/1620).

**Consequences of the provisional 7 state resolution of the Security Council**

<b>In favor of the proposal</b>	<b>Abstain from voting</b>	<b>Against the proposal</b>
United States, China, United Kingdom, France, Argentina, Belgium, Burundi, Italy, Japan, Nicaragua, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Syria	Soviet Union, Poland	***

The Security Council eventually approved the ceasefire. The eventful 26th (special) General Assembly session ended on 22 December after the Security Council passed the resolution. Bangladesh attained independence without UN assistance.

**Conclusion**

The Bengali liberation war with Pakistani forces in besieged Bangladesh lasted from March 26 to December 16, 1971. The UN did nothing to address genocide and human rights in East Pakistan during the Liberation War. Due to its dependency on the US, the UN could not address East Pakistan's genocide and human rights abuses. The UN's good contribution in alleviating refugees' immediate concerns in India has always been noted. The UN's greatest refugee aid effort in Bangladesh occurred in 1971. At the time, the UN did not prioritize political issues in establishing a lasting refugee solution. Major nations preferred geopolitical and national solutions outside the UN. Bangladesh has not been resolved by the UN Security and General Assembly. The US and China had a 'leaning strategy' toward Pakistan and the USSR toward India. The Soviet Union's veto has frequently thwarted China-US Security Council efforts to unify Pakistan and prevent Bangladesh's accession. Pakistan's statehood was supported by 104–11 votes in the UN General Assembly's Bangladesh resolution. The vote supported national integration (United Pakistan) in 1971. However, superpowers like France and Britain remained neutral, helping Bangladesh gain independence. Bangladesh became independent on December 21, 1971, when the Security Council passed an anti-war resolution (S/10465) without UN involvement.

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