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military cooperation with the Soviet Union. The debate on Bangladesh at the United Nations was caught in the imbroglio of the East-West ideological divide. The US and its allies of the West saw the crisis as an internal affair of Pakistan and pursued a ceasefire throughout the entire duration of the war to preempt the birth of the sovereign state of Bangladesh. China also took Pakistan's side on account of the chill in Sino-Indian relations since the 1962 war. Pakistan's role in facilitating the rapprochement between the US and the People's Republic of China in 1969, that paved the way for the latter to become permanent member of the UN Security Council, was a factor for sympathising with Pakistan. Pakistan's hopes were buoyed when the US had moved the US 7th Fleet and the USS Enterprise carrier group to the Bay of Bengal to intimidate India in November/December 1971. China was also reported to be amassing troops along NEFA for similar reasons. India might have partially called the US bluff and Chinese belligerency. However, with the Soviet Union also deploying its battle ships in the area and its military movement along the Sino-Russian border,

The debate at the United Nations notwithstanding, Bangalee diplomats were successful in motivating global public opinion against the Pakistani propaganda that alleged that our

whatever apprehensions India might have had abated. I believe that Pakistan was too naïve to seriously believe actual military intervention by US and China would take place when Pakistan had for all purposes, lost the war.

The Soviet Union, the only other superpower of the time, staunchly supported the Bangladesh cause by

vetoing the ceasefire resolutions until the Pakistanis surrendered to the Allied forces of Bangladesh and India on December 16, 1971. The debate at the United Nations notwithstanding, Bangalee diplomats were successful in motivating global public opinion against the Pakistani propaganda that alleged that our liberation struggle was a secessionist war when in reality it was a legitimate struggle for self-determination. The spontaneous and generous help of expatriate Bangladeshi communities was also not to be undermined as they provided fillip to the diplomatic efforts to agitate the international media and human rights activists to sensitise the carnage and human rights abuses in East Pakistan and to exert pressure on their respective government to recognise independent Bangladesh. A large section of the American people and the US Senate as well as the British MPs openly came out in favour of recognising Bangladesh. With the pressure of global public opinion in favour of Bangladesh growing by the day, British, French and other western governments were increasingly softening their earlier positions on the ceasefire as was apparent

by abstentions in the vote on the ceasefire resolution in the UN.

Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto's speech at the UN Security Council on 15th December 1971 was rhetoric of his own political aspirations of post-1971 Pakistan. The quoted excerpts will validate my premise: "For four days the Security Council has procrastinated. Why? Because the object was for Dacca to fall. That was the object... So what if Dacca falls? So what if the whole of East Pakistan falls? So what if the whole of West Pakistan falls? So what if our state is obliterated? ... We will build a new Pakistan". Bhutto's words were so prophetic! The Pakistan of 1947 was obliterated the following day when our victory was proclaimed with the surrender of the Pakistani army.

The entire nation is indebted to the Bangalee diplomats who risked everything to join the Liberation War. Their service was one of valour and I would urge the government to honour the living and the posthumous, to recognise the gallantry with which they fought the war of independence, in the most honourable and appropriate manner it deems fit.

The writer is a retired Ambassador.



Meeting in front of Trafalgar Square with Justice Abu Syed Chowdhury.