

Pakistan's Forgotten Genocide— A Review Essay

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Gary J. Bass, *The Blood Telegram: Nixon, Kissinger, and a Forgotten Genocide* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2013)

Gary Bass's *The Blood Telegram: Nixon, Kissinger, and a Forgotten Genocide* constitutes a vital contribution toward explaining the genocide of Bengalis in East Pakistan in 1971 and the U.S. role in the crisis.¹ Bass is the first to investigate in any detail the complicity of President Richard Nixon's administration in allowing the perpetuation of this tragedy. This essay discusses how Bass's book contributes to scholars' and policymakers' understanding of the genocide and the subsequent war between India and Pakistan, as well as the role of the United States during the crisis. It then assesses the question of moral culpability and discusses the contribution of Bass's book to the literature on studies of genocide.

The Blood Telegram offers a useful reminder of U.S. foreign policy toward South Asia at a critical juncture in Indo-Pakistani relations. More important, however, is the way in which the book carefully traces the motivations, beliefs, and choices of key U.S. policymakers during this calamity. In the process, Bass shows how immediate U.S. geostrategic imperatives, a lack of concern about or knowledge of regional affairs, and the personal animus of President Nixon and his national security adviser, Henry Kissinger, toward Prime Minister Indira Gandhi of India, all converged to form a policy of utter callousness in the face of the massacre of hapless millions.

Background to a Crisis

In December 1970, Pakistan held its first free and fair election after decades of military rule. The results came as an unpleasant surprise to the domi-

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1. Gary J. Bass, *The Blood Telegram: Nixon, Kissinger, and a Forgotten Genocide* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2013). Subsequent references to this book appear parenthetically in the text.

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nant party in West Pakistan, the Pakistan People's Party (PPP). The Awami League (AL), located in the eastern wing, won 160 out of 300 seats in the National Assembly. Consequently the PPP would have to share power with the AL in the Assembly. Unwilling to do so, the PPP, with the tacit backing of the military establishment, reluctantly started negotiations with the AL about forming a new government.

The PPP's reaction to the electoral outcome was not surprising. Since the creation of Pakistan in 1947, West Pakistanis had treated the eastern wing of the country as a virtual internal colony. The bulk of industrial investment was in the west; most foreign aid was dispersed in the west; and the Bengali-speaking population of the eastern wing was woefully represented in the national civil service and the military.² The unanticipated outcome of the 1970 election placed both the military establishment and the PPP in a quandary. For the first time in the history of the state, West Pakistan would be forced to treat the eastern wing with a semblance of equality.

The negotiations between the PPP and the AL to form a new government reached an impasse in early March 1971. In the wake of this deadlock, AL supporters increasingly took to the streets in the East Pakistani capital of Dhaka (then Dacca), staging strikes and demonstrations. Very quickly, the original demands of the AL, which had included greater autonomy for East Pakistan, were replaced with calls for secession. Faced with these growing demands and fearful of the possibility of the country breaking up, the dictatorship of Gen. Yahya Khan began making plans for a brutal military operation, code-named "Searchlight," to suppress the protests. On March 25, military units in Dhaka and its environs began killing civilians, shooting down students in university dormitories, and raping women, instilling terror among the province's defenseless Bengali population. The careful targeting of Bengalis indicated that the goal of this operation was genocide.

The crackdown forced some 10 million East Pakistanis to flee into India. After seeking diplomatic alternatives to ensure the safe return of the refugees and finding little global support, Prime Minister Gandhi launched a covert war against Pakistan, using the Indian military to train East Pakistani rebels. In response to substantial Indian support for an indigenous East Pakistani guerilla movement throughout much of 1971, Pakistan ordered an air assault on India's northwestern air bases on December 3 of that year. Indian forces, which

2. For accounts of the lopsided features of the two wings, see Raonaq Jahan, *Pakistan: Failure in National Integration* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970); and Robert Jackson, *South Asian Crisis: India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1975).

had carefully prepared for a ground invasion of East Pakistan, seized Dhaka within two weeks. Following the unconditional surrender of all Pakistani forces, India became the first country to recognize the new state of Bangladesh, despite facing widespread global opprobrium for having breached the sovereignty of another state.³

During the crisis, President Nixon's administration blatantly tilted toward Pakistan, despite awareness of the participation of the Pakistani military in the genocide.⁴ The administration stonewalled attempts by U.S. officials and Indian interlocutors to bring pressure to bear on the Khan regime. Instead it chose to dismiss the crisis as Pakistan's internal affair.

A Forgotten U.S. Role

Bass's marshaling of evidence about the 1971 genocide and the roles of President Nixon and National Security Adviser Kissinger yields two crucial findings. First, Nixon and Kissinger should be held at least partly responsible for the large-scale massacre of civilians in East Pakistan. Second, key individuals within the U.S. State Department acted honorably and courageously, quietly but firmly challenging the administration's position through official channels, despite the likely costs to their professional prospects.

Evidence of the genocide was made available to the Nixon administration by the U.S. consul general in Dhaka, Archer Blood, and several of his close associates. Blood's telegram, to which Bass's title refers, described in graphic detail the genocidal behavior of the Pakistan Army shortly after the military crackdown in Dhaka and the abject lack of a U.S. response. As the dissenters wrote in the telegram: "We have chosen not to intervene, even morally, on the grounds that the Awami conflict, in which unfortunately the overworked term genocide is applicable, is purely an internal matter of a sovereign state" (p. 78).

Subsequently, during a visit to Washington, D.C., U.S. Ambassador to India Kenneth Keating emphatically reinforced the views of the U.S. consulate in Dhaka, especially Blood's. Keating's language was equally unequivocal: "Am

3. For an account that describes and analyzes the decisionmaking leading up to the war, see Richard Sisson and Leo E. Rose, *War and Secession: Pakistan, India, and the Creation of Bangladesh* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991). A more recent treatment is offered by Srinath Raghavan, *1971: A Global History of the Creation of Bangladesh* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2013). Raghavan's central argument is that the separation of East Pakistan and the emergence of Bangladesh were not inevitable. He contends that a series of contingent choices culminated in the breakup of Pakistan.

4. Christopher Van Hollen, "The Tilt Policy Revisited: Nixon-Kissinger Geopolitics and South Asia," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 20, No. 4 (April 1980), pp. 339–361.

deeply shocked at massacre by Pakistani military in East Pakistan, appalled at the possibility these atrocities are being committed with American equipment, and greatly concerned at United States vulnerability to damaging allegations of associations with the reign of military terror" (p. 61).

Another American, Sydney Schanberg, the *New York Times* India correspondent, managed to cross the border covertly into East Pakistan and filed a series of accounts documenting the horrific actions of the Pakistani military (p. 98). No, Nixon and Kissinger did not lack information about the role of the Pakistan Army in this developing tragedy.

ENABLING GENOCIDE

Bass's meticulous scholarship demonstrates how both Nixon and Kissinger, because of their unwavering support of the Khan regime, their flawed view of India as a Soviet stooge, and their hatred of Indira Gandhi, became witting accomplices to this genocide. At various stages, they had both the knowledge and the resources to rein in Pakistan. Instead, as Bass shows, they justified a policy that did nothing to stop the carnage. In fact, they tacitly approved of the actions of Pakistan's military regime.

Moreover, as Bass demonstrates in considerable detail, Nixon and Kissinger sought to intimidate the courageous men and women in the U.S. Foreign Service who dared to challenge their flawed analysis of the politics of the subcontinent and sought to change their morally bankrupt policies. A quote from Nixon is especially telling: "When a bureaucrat deliberately thumbs his nose, we're going to get him" (p. 116). Even Ambassador Keating, the well-respected former Republican senator from New York, discovered that the Nixon White House had ignored his candid assessment of the developments in East Pakistan. Not content with their attempts to stifle dissent, Nixon and Kissinger also demonstrated contempt for U.S. domestic law by seeking ways to circumvent an arms embargo placed on Pakistan (and India) by the United States in the aftermath of the 1965 Indo-Pakistani war over Kashmir. To this end, they enabled the transfer to Pakistan of U.S. weaponry from pliant U.S. allies such as Iran, Jordan, and Turkey. The U.S. State Department suggested that further weapons shipments might be withheld until it had assessed their impact on military action in East Pakistan. Kissinger urged Nixon not to authorize even a temporary suspension of the weapons transfers. And, in a misguided attempt to intimidate India and ostensibly prevent it from attacking West Pakistan, Nixon and Kissinger ordered the U.S. Seventh Fleet into the Bay of Bengal as Indian forces were approaching Dhaka, despite the absence of evidence that India's war plans included an attack on West Pakistan. Ultimately, the belated

entry of the U.S. naval task force into the Bay of Bengal served only to alienate Prime Minister Gandhi's government from the United States.

KNOWLEDGE AND RESPONSIBILITY

What explains Nixon and Kissinger's actions given the overwhelming evidence of a genocide taking place in East Pakistan? As Bass demonstrates, their unwillingness to pressure Yahya Khan stemmed from two important sources. First, Khan had arranged a secret diplomatic channel to Beijing that enabled the president and his national security adviser to pursue their vaunted "opening" to the People's Republic of China. Nixon maintained that if the United States did not stand by Khan, it would lose all possible leverage with Pakistan and risk the collapse of U.S. efforts to engage China. He also argued that Pakistan, as a sovereign state, was at liberty to make decisions about its own future. To this end, Nixon asserted: "We will not measure our relationship with the government in terms of what it has done in East Pakistan. By that criterion, we would cut off relations with every Communist government in the world because of the slaughter that has taken place in the Communist countries" (p. 215).

Second, Nixon had come to despise Prime Minister Gandhi. In his prior limited contact with the Indian prime minister, he had found her cold and calculating, unlike the Pakistani generals, whom he found more appealing. Kissinger rarely lost an opportunity to stoke the president's animosity toward the Indian leader (pp. 206–207). As a sign of their mutual dislike, Nixon and Kissinger encouraged China to move troops along the 1,500-mile Sino-Indian border to exert military pressure on India, a contingency dreaded by Indian policymakers whose country had barely recovered from the debacle of the 1962 Sino-Indian border war (p. 292). China might have responded favorably to this U.S. encouragement were it not for a treaty that India had signed with the Soviet Union in August 1971 that contained an implicit security guarantee.

The evidence that Bass has amassed regarding Nixon and Kissinger's knowledge of the genocide and unwillingness to intervene to stop it challenges the arguments of their apologists. For example, in a deftly argued but ultimately flawed essay that seeks to absolve Kissinger of any malfeasance, Robert Blackwill, a former U.S. ambassador to India, makes two especially dubious claims. The first involves the decision mentioned above to send a U.S. task force into the Bay of Bengal toward the end of the crisis. Ostensibly, the deployment was designed to prevent India from attacking West Pakistan and contributing to the breakup of the country. Blackwill repeats this claim

and argues that this action, along with U.S. efforts to induce Jordan and Iran to supply Pakistan with advanced U.S. fighter jets, was necessary to prevent “a war in which India was considering a drive for total victory and an all-out destruction of the Pakistani armed forces.”⁵ Yet he offers no evidence to bolster this assertion. Second, Blackwill attempts to undermine Bass’s portrayal of Nixon and Kissinger’s actions as a callous response to the genocidal policies of the Khan regime in East Pakistan. His evidence, however, merely underscores the anodyne nature of the administration’s efforts to bring any meaningful pressure to bear on the regime. A military dictatorship that had engaged in the perpetuation of genocide against its own population was certainly not about to prove responsive to mere calls for the imminent restoration of peace on the subcontinent. Ultimately, the material that Blackwill presents in defense of Nixon and Kissinger’s actions does little to challenge Bass’s conclusions.

Unlike Blackwill, Harold Saunders, a member of the National Security Council Staff in 1971, provides a more nuanced assessment of Bass’s book and Kissinger’s role in the crisis in an essay in *Foreign Affairs*. Saunders underscores the animus of Nixon and Kissinger toward Indira Gandhi, their staunch loyalty to Yahya Khan, and their unwillingness to rein in the Pakistani military. He does not exculpate Nixon or Kissinger for the dubious choices of either individual during the crisis. He does, however, argue that “policymaking is itself the process of determining which moral principles or strategic objectives to prioritize.”⁶ In Saunders’s judgment, the Nixon administration had decided that preventing mass repression (and ultimately genocide) was a lower priority than protecting China’s opening.

India’s Dilemma

While on a state visit to the United States, in November 1971, Prime Minister Gandhi had tried to apprise Nixon and Kissinger of the humanitarian crisis on India’s doorstep—a crisis that threatened to overwhelm parts of her country. Nixon promised to provide relief assistance, but cautioned that “[i]t would be impossible to calculate with precision the steps which other great powers might take if India were to initiate hostilities” (p. 254).

5. Robert D. Blackwill, “In Defense of Kissinger,” *National Interest*, January/February 2014, <http://nationalinterest.org/article/defense-kissinger-9642>.

6. Harold H. Saunders, “What Really Happened in Bangladesh: Washington, Islamabad, and the Genocide in East Pakistan,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 93, No. 4 (July/August 2014), p. 41.

Nixon's intransigence toward India and his unwillingness to restrain Pakistan convinced Gandhi that her only choice was to initiate a war against Pakistan to stem and eventually reverse the tide of refugees flowing into India. In this context, Bass argues that the interplay of three distinct pressures drove her toward the military option. First, India could ill afford to absorb close to 10 million refugees, especially in its highly volatile northeastern border states, where the influx of East Pakistanis threatened to change the delicate demographic balance. Second, Gandhi was faced with widespread pressure both from within the parliamentary opposition and from India's attentive public to act decisively to end the crisis. Here Bass once again makes an important contribution. Even though previous accounts discuss Indian domestic imperatives for intervening in East Pakistan, Bass provides detailed, granular evidence of internal debates and pressures on Gandhi to act decisively not only to stem the flow of refugees into India, but to end the slaughter of coethnics in a neighboring state. Most important, he demonstrates an extraordinary grasp of the internal politics of the country and the signal importance of the East Pakistan crisis for the politics of the adjoining state of West Bengal, which bore the brunt of the refugee crisis. Third, a small number of Gandhi's key foreign policy advisers counseled her to seize the opportunity to deliver a decisive blow to Pakistan. They came to this conclusion, however, only after it had become all but apparent that even India's friends in the global community, let alone the great powers, were unwilling to exert significant pressure on Pakistan to end the crisis and the concomitant flight of refugees into India. Despite widespread knowledge of the horrors that the Pakistan Army had visited on its citizenry in East Pakistan, the United Nations General Assembly in December 1971 voted overwhelmingly to condemn the Indian decision to intervene. Even key members of the nonaligned movement, of which India was a founder, evinced little sympathy for India's predicament. Moreover, they unanimously condemned India for its intervention in East Pakistan, even though it put a nearly immediate end to the mass slaughter. The reaction of the global community and the nonaligned movement, which Bass thoroughly documents, underscored the continuing adherence to the norm of national sovereignty even in the face of overwhelming evidence of genocide.

A Missing Piece

Despite its many contributions, Bass's book does not explain how the Pakistan Army could abruptly descend into an unapologetic massacre of its fellow citi-

zens. Professional militaries, though willing to inflict untold harm on external adversaries, do not routinely turn into cold-blooded killers of their own citizenry. In another important study of genocide, for example, Christopher Browning examines how a German police battalion in occupied Poland during World War II underwent a gradual process of brutalization before engaging in large-scale killing.⁷

Although Bass does not discuss the motivations of the Pakistan Army at any length, he does allude to how it could perpetrate such acts of wanton cruelty, suggesting three important sources. First, the Punjabi-dominated military had long internalized the British colonial assertion of the inherent martial attributes of certain ethnic groups in South Asia and the intrinsic nonmartial features of others. According to this anthropological myth, the Punjabis, among others, were imbued with martial qualities and the Bengalis were deemed largely effeminate and unsuitable for military service.⁸ Consequently, army personnel viewed many of their Bengali Muslim brethren with barely veiled contempt. Indeed, President Ayub Khan, Pakistan's first military dictator, had written of the Bengalis in the most condescending language in his autobiography, *Friends, Not Masters*: "East Bengalis, who constitute the bulk of the population, probably belong to the very original Indian races. It would be no exaggeration to say that up to the creation of Pakistan, they had not known any real freedom or sovereignty. . . . As such they have all the inhibitions of downtrodden races and have not found it possible to adjust psychologically to the requirements of new-born freedom. Their popular complexes, exclusiveness, suspicion and a sort of defensive aggressiveness probably emerge from this historical background."⁹

Second, the Pakistan Army directed its genocidal strategy primarily toward the Hindu population of East Pakistan. At the onset of the crisis, Hindus constituted nearly 13 percent of the population of the province. Bass provides incontrovertible evidence of the hatred that the West Pakistanis in general, and the military in particular, possessed for the minority population of the region. All of the accounts that Bass provides are reminiscent of other genocidal campaigns. Indeed, some depressing regularities seem to characterize genocide in the modern era. For example, Bass recounts the following observation of a U.S.

7. Christopher R. Browning, *Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1998).

8. Peter Robb, ed., *The Concept of Race in South Asia* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995).

9. Mohammed Ayub Khan, *Friends, Not Masters: A Political Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967).

Foreign Service officer in the Dhaka consulate, Desaix Myres: "The Army continues to check, lifting lungis (a kind of sarong worn by Bengalis), checking circumcision (practiced by Muslims but not Hindus), demanding recitation of Muslim prayers. Hindus flee or are shot" (p. 82).

Third, the Pakistani military's unrelenting hatred of the Hindu population was inextricably linked to its unremitting hostility toward India. Decades of domestic propaganda under two military regimes—ranging from the depiction of Hindus in civics textbooks as devious, cunning, and cowardly to their image in popular culture, especially in films and soap operas—had imbued the military with an inveterate loathing of Hindus.¹⁰ In the view of the Pakistani military, the Hindu minority of East Pakistan was little more than a fifth column ready to act at India's bidding. Once a handful of key individuals had decided to use substantial force against the restive population, the Pakistan Army could act without remorse or pity.

The pathway to genocide in East Pakistan partially supports Benjamin Valentino's argument about the perpetrators of mass killings. In his work on genocide in the twentieth century, Valentino eschews explanations based on regime type, collective psychology, or ethnic or racial hatred.¹¹ Instead, he argues that genocides in the twentieth century can mostly be attributed to leaders who considered them strategic tools to accomplish political ends. In this case, ethnic and racial hatred of the Bengalis was dispersed within both the Pakistani military establishment and Pakistani society. This hatred, however, had existed since the creation of Pakistan twenty-six years earlier. What triggered the genocide was the decision of a small group of individuals within the military to resolve at a critical juncture what they deemed a trying political issue: the presence of a hated, tiresome Hindu minority. When they perceived an opportunity to settle this political conundrum through the use of mass killing, they acted without hesitation.

A Sanitized History

Bass's evidence on the role of the Nixon administration in the 1971 genocide in East Pakistan stands in stark contrast to the sanitized accounts offered by

10. See, for example, K.K. Aziz, *The Murder of History: A Critique of History Textbooks Used in Pakistan* (Lahore: Sang-e-Meel, 2010).

11. Benjamin A. Valentino, *Final Solutions: Mass Killing and Genocide in the Twentieth Century* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2005).

Nixon and Kissinger. Bass shows that in his memoirs, Nixon deftly shifted blame for the crisis away from Pakistan and toward the Bengali rebels and India's subsequent intervention. Kissinger does not address the mass slaughter in East Pakistan, except to say that the atrocities were "clearly under [the Pakistani government's] domestic jurisdiction." He shifts blame for most of the controversial decisions to Nixon and dismisses the administration's domestic critics for lacking an understanding of an "essentially geopolitical point of view" (p. 142).

Given the relative geostrategic unimportance of Bangladesh to U.S. foreign policy, the accounts of Nixon and Kissinger have largely gone unchallenged until now. The significance of Bass's painstaking research and his scrupulous portrayal of the choices that created permissive conditions for the genocide should now lead to a much-needed reappraisal of the foreign policy legacies of both individuals. What distinguishes Bass's work, however, is his singular focus on a long-forgotten episode in U.S. foreign policy that had significant consequences in South Asia then and now.

India, the dominant regional power, chose to boost its nuclear weapons program and conducted its first nuclear test in 1974 in part because of the entry of the U.S. naval task force led by the USS *Enterprise*, a nuclear-powered aircraft carrier, into the Bay of Bengal.¹² Even today, some of the anti-Americanism that permeates India's political culture stems from this event. Despite the squalid record of Yahya Khan, the United States turned to another Pakistani military dictator, Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq, when it sought to dislodge the Soviets from Afghanistan. Subsequently, it made one of his equally duplicitous successors, Gen. Pervez Musharraf, the linchpin of its counterterrorism strategy in South Asia for more than a decade, with very mixed results.¹³

Ironically, despite Nixon and Kissinger's staunch support for the Khan regime, even today most Pakistani elites believe that the United States showed itself to be a fickle ally in the midst of an existential crisis. The U.S.-Pakistan relationship remains based mostly on exigent circumstances and mutual convenience. Bangladesh, even though it continues to grapple with the forces that led to its bloody birth, barely registers in the U.S. foreign policy calculus, barring humanitarian concerns and those pertaining to the rise of radical Islam.¹⁴

12. K. Subrahmanyam, "India: Keeping the Option Open," in Robert M. Lawrence and Joel Larus, eds., *Nuclear Proliferation: Phase II* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1974), pp. 112–148.

13. See, for example, Husain Haqqani, *Magnificent Delusions: Pakistan, the United States, and an Epic History of Misunderstanding* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2013).

14. Apart from humanitarian concerns, the only real U.S. interest in Bangladesh involves the emergence of radical Islam and the possible creation of terrorist havens. On the growth of Islamic

Conclusion

Gary Bass's *The Blood Telegram* makes three main contributions to three bodies of literature: U.S. diplomatic history, the question of humanitarian intervention, and studies of genocide. First, it provides an important discussion of a neglected phase of U.S. diplomatic history. It richly illuminates how the Nixon administration, in its quest for geopolitical advantages, refused to bring to bear the considerable diplomatic and material resources of the United States to contain a regional crisis. Worse still, in the face of overwhelming evidence of the atrocious behavior of its ally, Pakistan, the administration did little or nothing to curb its behavior. Instead, it sought to intimidate a fellow democratic state, India, which was attempting to end a reign of mass terror under extremely trying circumstances. The work is also a poignant reminder of how feckless U.S. foreign policy choices during the Cold War did little to burnish the image of the United States as genuinely committed to the promotion of democracy and human rights abroad.

Has much changed in the global order since the 1971 genocide? Certainly, the end of the Cold War has made it far easier for the United States to adopt a more robust and clear-cut position on the promotion of democratic values and human rights. The absence of a looming Soviet threat and communist subversion has freed the United States from supporting at least some anti-democratic regimes. Yet, strategic considerations continue to interfere with the adoption of a wholly consistent position on the protection of human rights beyond national borders. For example, the United States has done little to address widespread human rights abuses in Saudi Arabia, not to mention Pakistan.

Second, Bass's book is a reminder that fashioning a global standard for the prevention of mass slaughter remains a fraught endeavor. Indeed, despite various attempts to forge a new norm of a "responsibility to protect," states and international institutions continue to debate the merits of humanitarian intervention. A number of key states in the international system, including Brazil, China, India, and Russia, for both legitimate and self-serving reasons, have expressed considerable skepticism about the norm in the wake of the UN-supported intervention in Libya.¹⁵ India, in particular, has been highly critical that what was originally a UN mandate for alleviating human suffering in

militancy in Bangladesh, see Sumit Ganguly, "The Rise of Islamist Militancy in Bangladesh," Special Report 171 (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, August 2006).

15. Ramesh Thakur, "R2P after Libya and Syria: Engaging Emerging Powers," *Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 36, No. 3 (Spring 2013), pp. 61–76.

Libya metamorphosed into a policy that resulted in regime change. Of course, China, India, and Russia all face significant problems of domestic political unrest, have resorted to substantial force against restive minorities, and fear that support for the norm could come to haunt them in the future.

Third, Bass describes the conditions that can make genocide possible. The origins of the East Pakistan genocide can be traced to deep-seated racial and ethnic animosities, cultural prejudices, and vicious political objectives.

In the end, Bass's study underscores how the global community, because of an absence of any compelling strategic interests in South Asia and because of its adherence to the principle of national sovereignty, could remain oblivious to ending widespread human suffering.