NSC

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

9 December 1971

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Implications of an Indian Victory over Pakistan

1. An intelligence report [redacted] dated 7 December 1971, from a reliable source, says that Prime Minister Indira Gandhi has indicated that India's war objectives are:

A. Liberation of Bangla Desh

B. The incorporation into India of the southern area of Azad (Pakistani-held) Kashmir

C. The destruction of Pakistani armored and air force strength so that Pakistan can never again threaten India.

In the following we assume that these objectives have been achieved, and discuss their implications in the subcontinent and for other powers.

The General Postwar Situation in the Subcontinent

2. India would, of course, be the dominant power in South Asia. But its formidable economic problems would have been

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aggravated by the war and its need for outside economic assistance increased. Further, though the military power of Pakistan would be destroyed, both the former east and west wings of that country would emerge gravely troubled from the war and their difficulties are likely to spill over, sooner or later, into India itself.

3. Bangla Desh would probably emerge under a kind of Indian tutelage. India will be in a position to exert paramount influence, but it does not desire and could not maintain outright control. Already impoverished and overcrowded, Bangla Desh's economy and social structure have been badly damaged by civil war and by Indo-Pakistani hostilities. The Bengali propensity for extremism, radicalism, and violence, already apparent in the Hindu Indian state of West Bengal, is likely to manifest itself in Muslim Bangla Desh in fairly short order. And the troubles in that new country and in West Bengal are likely to reinforce and stimulate one another. We do not, however, believe that a new Bengali nationalism (working for the secession of West Bengal from India and its incorporation into Bangla Desh) is likely to be an effective force for the foreseeable future; Hindu-Muslim antagonisms remain too intense,

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and Indian military power too great to permit such a contingency. But the two Bengals will create considerable trouble and consume much of New Delhi's efforts and resources.

4. What is now termed West Pakistan will also face an uncertain future. Though the Indian military would have withdrawn after its victory, the area would also probably have suffered considerable damage during the fighting. Much would depend on the extent of damage to such important and expensive Indus valley hydroelectric and irrigation projects as the Tarbela and Mangla dams and on the industrial plant, centered mostly in Karachi.

5. Beyond this, West Pakistan might fall apart politically. The area suffers from regional antagonisms and hostilities; a major defeat could permit the emergence of centrifugal forces which could shatter West Pakistan into as many as three or four separate countries, successors to the four states which now make up most of that nation.* Of the four the Punjab has traditionally

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* *The four are the Punjab, Sind, Baluchistan, and the predominantly Pushtu speaking Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP). Of West Pakistan's roughly 55 million people, some 66 percent are Punjabis, 13 percent are Sindis, 10 percent Pushtuns, and 3 percent Baluchis. The remainder are principally Urdu-speaking refugees from India.*

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dominated the army and the government of Pakistan, so far without major challenge. But if this army is not just defeated, but disintegrates, at least some of its often disaffected fellow nationals might seek to break away -- each in its own individual fashion. These possibilities are discussed in more detail in an annex.

6. It should be noted that the possible breakup of Pakistan is based on the assumption that the Pakistani army is not simply defeated but virtually ceases to exist in the West as well as in the East. Despite Mrs. Gandhi's defined objectives, it is doubtful that India will (or that it can) impose such a total defeat on Pakistan. In other words, the Pakistani army in the West will still probably be in being when the cease-fire sounds and, as such, more likely than not able to contain or deter any breakaway tendencies in the West. Yahya and his associates would probably be so discredited by the defeat that someone else would head the government, but except in the very worst case, the army could probably be counted on to hold West Pakistan together. Nonetheless, such a government would be under heavy pressure from radical political forces, long at odds with the military establishment, seeking access to power.

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Outside Powers

7. Moscow has apparently been convinced for some time that a close association with India is central to its long-term interests in South Asia. The USSR supported diplomatically and materially New Delhi's "policy of pressure" on Pakistan prior to the outbreak of hostilities and has backed it vigorously in the UN. The USSR stands to emerge, therefore, as even more influential in South Asia after the fighting stops than it has been. It will, as a consequence, continue to have large and growing demands in terms of economic and military aid to India and also to Bangla Desh. Even if it were able and willing to meet such demands, the USSR could not be sure of getting all it wants in the area as a result of its prestigious position. India, no longer faced by a strong and hostile Pakistani military machine, would feel less beholden to the Soviets than today, less amenable to Soviet requests which offend its sense of dignity or sovereignity. Indian gratitude is not a very enduring matter.

8. Whether Soviet-Indian relations are characterized by intimacy and (on the Indian side) dependence in future will be determined largely by how China and the US define their attitudes toward Delhi. If Indian-American relations are not repaired and

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economic aid is cut back, India will place greater reliance on the USSR. If China's current hostility to India is sustained, the same would be true. In this case, Moscow would have greater leverage in Delhi and could drive hard bargains, for example, for naval facilities. But if China eventually accepts the new situation in South Asia and moves to normalize its relations with Delhi, the latter would probably welcome the chance to diminish its dependence on the USSR.

9. India's achievement of its objectives would be a matter of serious concern to China. Peking would fear some loss of face internationally simply because it had failed to take effective action to support a friend of long standing. More serious from Peking's point of view would be the implications of this event for its contest with the USSR.

10. In its statements at the UN and on Radio Peking, China has stressed two major propositions: that the USSR is shielding and supporting India's "armed aggression" against Pakistan and attempting thereby to control the subcontinent and the Indian Ocean; and that there is no guarantee for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of various countries if India, with Soviet support, is permitted to use the "pretext" of self-defense to commit "armed aggression" against Pakistan.

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11. Both of these propositions are designed to embarrass the USSR and to gain credit for China as a "principled" defender of Third World interests against the machinations of the Great Powers. But they almost certainly reflect a genuine and deep-seated concern that the USSR will make an important advance in position and influence in the subcontinent, adding to the "encirclement" of China, and providing in the longer run a military and political base for further expansion of Soviet influence in the Indian Ocean and Southeast Asia.

12. If China accepts the Indian *fait accompli*, its concern will still remain and it will have to devise longer range and more sophisticated means for limiting or undermining Soviet/Indian collaboration. Basically, its alternatives would be to try gradually to strengthen West Pakistan and to weaken India via subversion or in time compete for influence in New Delhi with the Soviets. This latter course may eventually appear attractive; Delhi may not relish too close an embrace with the USSR and thus might be disposed to welcome Chinese overtures.

13. But the Chinese may be in no hurry to shift the focus of their efforts in the subcontinent. They will not wish to appear as "fair-weather" friends, they have gone on the record

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with very strong condemnations of India, and they don't *like* Indians particularly. India is potentially a big power rival and the Chinese may have serious doubts that any Sino-Indian rapprochement would serve any purpose other than permitting India to gain more aid from all sides and hasten the growth of its economic and military power. For these reasons, we believe that Sino-Indian relations will remain tense for some time.

14. Of the regional powers, Iran much more than Afghanistan has involved itself in Pakistan's struggle with India. The Shah would probably provide a defeated West Pakistan with oil, some money, and some military equipment. He might even see Iran's interests served by moving to exert deeper influence in Pakistan's affairs, but, at least initially, we doubt that he would devote much of his real resources to such a project. More generally, however, the defeat and dismemberment of Pakistan would clearly enhance Iran's importance in the Persian Gulf-Indian Ocean area. As a result, other governments may eventually come to take Iran at something closer to the Shah's valuation of his country as one of the world's major regional powers. Pakistan's defeat would also reinforce the Shah's view that he must rely on himself as far as possible to gain his foreign policy objectives.

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Wider Implications

15. As indicated, the successful achievement of India's political-military objectives would alter power relations in the subcontinent in a highly visible way. Because the USSR would have helped to bring about this result by overt diplomatic, propaganda, and material support to India, an impression would be left in many quarters that Soviet power and policy were effective and had served the USSR's ally well. Since US policy would have suffered a reverse and since US power and influence tend to be measured relative to that of the USSR, some in other states might think that they should take into account in their own calculations some revised judgment of the US-USSR power equation.

16. Such impressions and calculations are often transitory in effect, though in this case a widely held impression that Soviet weight in the world is growing would no doubt be reinforced in some degree. It is another thing, however, for states involved in confrontation situations in other areas, say the Middle East or Southeast Asia, to draw concrete inferences and to act in different ways than they are now acting. It is unlikely that Egypt would conclude that the USSR would be willing to take greater risks on its behalf; if it did so, Moscow would be quick to disabuse

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Cairo of the notion. The states in Southeast Asia which are concerned about US disengagement from that area would find new reason for concern and perhaps would lend a readier ear to Soviet efforts to build influence there, but they would be most unlikely to undertake any sharp turn of policy.

17. The key factor determining wider effects of the current events in South Asia would be what the Soviets think these events mean. In a general sense Moscow would be encouraged to think that its power and influence were growing and that it could entertain the idea of playing a stronger hand in some other contexts. But the Soviets are unlikely to abandon the careful calculation of risks they customarily bring to particular situations. Moreover, they would not wish to compromise the general line of their current foreign policy which, vis-a-vis the West, operates under slogans of detente, negotiations, etc. This would be especially the case if the current developments in South Asia, as seems likely, deepened their quarrel with China.

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ANNEX

Possible Breakaway Elements in West Pakistan

1. The eight million Sindhis, residents of the southern part of West Pakistan and centered around the cities of the Hyderbad and Karachi, often hostile to the Punjabis, could declare their independence. Indeed, West Pakistan's principal civilian political figure, Z. A. Bhutto is a Sindhi, and though the recipient of a heavy electoral mandate in December 1970, has never been permitted to take office by the Punjabi military. Undoubtedly resentful, he could in extreme circumstances seize the initiative and secede, preferring the leadership of a small, weak, comparatively unimportant country to remaining out of power.

2. The predominantly tribal residents of the NWFP have long been objects of international contention. They have close ties with Pushtu speakers in eastern Afghanistan. Kabul has long believed that the Pushtuns belong together, and that the present Afghan-Pakistan frontier is a line arbitrarily and unfairly drawn by the British raj. Their claims on this area have led them in the past to quite serious confrontations with the Pakistanis. Indeed, were Pakistan to begin to fall apart, the Afghans would

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probably help the process along by moving to detach the NWFP and bringing it under their protection.

3. Baluchistan, primitive, frequently lawless, and isolated, is not likely to be able to assume the status of an independent state. It could thus remain attached to the Punjab, though it is conceivable that it would be absorbed by either Afghanistan (giving that landlocked country an outlet to the sea) or by Iran. Both these countries already have Baluchi speaking residents.

4. The Muslim Punjab, with its capital in Lahore, would remain a not inconsiderable country of over 30 million people. Provided it had not been too badly damaged, it would probably recover economically fairly rapidly. It would remain the focus of bitterly intractable anti-Hindu, anti-Indian sentiments. But if Mrs. Gandhi's objectives above are met, the Punjab -- either as the dominant figure in a still united West Pakistan or as a separate country -- would no longer pose a threat to India. Nor would it have the international stature previously enjoyed by a united Pakistan. Rather it would probably be viewed by most powers as a state on the order of Afghanistan: remote and of no great consequence.

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