

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

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THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN... *A/*

INFORMATION  
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February 22, 1971

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: Henry A. Kissinger *A/*

SUBJECT: Situation in Pakistan

The chances seem to be increasing that we might before long be faced with an internal crisis in Pakistan that could over time have far-reaching implications for our interests in South Asia. I have ordered some contingency planning and want to describe the situation as it now stands.

The immediate potential for trouble arises from the hard negotiations that are about to begin over writing a new constitution for Pakistan. As you know, the main issue is the power relationship between East and West Pakistan.

The dominant political leaders in East (Mujibur Rahman<sup>m</sup>) and West (Zulfikar Bhutto) Pakistan have failed so far to forge even the beginning of an informal consensus on the new constitution. President Yahya remains committed to turning his military government over to the civilian politicians, but maintains that he will not preside over the splitting of Pakistan.

The constituent assembly is now scheduled to meet March 3, after which it will have 120 days to draft a constitution subject to the President's approval. The odds, however, seem to be increasing against the constituent assembly's being able to come up with a constitution acceptable to each of the major parties--Rahman, Bhutto and Yahya. Rahman is now planning to stick with his demands for the virtual autonomy of East Pakistan and if he does not get his way--which is very likely--to declare East Pakistan's independence. This may be a negotiating ploy on his part, but strong and growing provincial nationalism limits Rahman's flexibility and he has considerable organizational momentum behind his maximum demands. Further evidence of his intentions can be seen in recent approaches he has made to U.S.

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and other diplomats to play a peacemaking role to avoid an East-West civil war if he does not get his way and makes a unilateral declaration of independence.

The highly uncertain internal situation in Pakistan has forced us to walk a very narrow tightrope. We are not the controlling factor by any means, but our influence and support is sought by the major political leaders. We do have some important interests, and our posture at this juncture is critical to how these interests will be protected in the future.

The U. S. position has been that we support the unity of Pakistan. This has not been gratuitous. Some Pakistani politicians have charged -- for their own purposes -- that the U. S. is plotting East Pakistani secession, and we have taken the obvious position in denying these charges. Thus, our Counsel General in Dacca has urged Rahman to seek a constitutional decision and has scrupulously avoided any implication of U. S. intervention if Rahman opts out of a unified Pakistan.

However, we could before long be faced with a declaration of East Pakistani independence. Although there is a large negotiating element in current threats of secession, we may face that situation. That raises the issue of whether or not we should be adopting a more neutral stance toward Rahman, who is basically friendly toward the U. S., as a hedge against the day when we might have to deal with an independent East Pakistan. A realistic assessment would seem to recognize that there is very little material left in the fabric of the unity of Pakistan. This would argue for adjusting our posture, but against that is the fact that the division of Pakistan would not serve U. S. interests.

At a minimum, it would seem imperative that, in the face of the growing possibility that East and West Pakistan will split, we draw together our contingency planning on how best to protect U. S. interests. In the context of a larger study of South Asia policy already underway, I have ordered a special contingency plan so that we will have something on hand if we need it.

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*not yet -  
Correct - but not  
any position which  
encourages secession*