

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

ACTION
1320 (Revised)
~~1407~~

Bangladesh

~~SECRET/NODIS~~

February 16, 1972
THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN 0.02021

MEMORANDUM FOR: THE PRESIDENT
FROM: HENRY A. KISSINGER *HK*
SUBJECT: US Recognition of "Bangladesh"

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You have asked for a possible timetable for US recognition of "Bangladesh." This memo sets forth the major considerations related to the timing of such a decision and to the interim steps that could be taken to buy the necessary time.

As you know, President Bhutto after his return from Peking told our Charge in Islamabad that he feels we should make official contact with the Bangladesh authorities, including Mujib, without delay and extend formal recognition soon, perhaps in early March. Bhutto said he does not want our position in "Bangladesh" or in India to be damaged any further by the recognition issue. He feels that we have a useful role to play in both places and that Mujib needs American help if he is to stay one step ahead of his extremists.

The passage of time has reduced the purely legal questions involved in recognition. With the return of Mujib to Dacca, the government began to act like a coherent body, and there seems to be a chain of authority reaching into the countryside either through bureaucratic or Awami League channels. It has now been announced that the Indian army (about 25,000 troops) will be withdrawn by March 25. For the moment, the Indian army is generally keeping in the background, rendering assistance especially in keeping order and in facilitating the return of refugees. The government is financially weak, but professes readiness to assume its international legal obligations. Recognition by over thirty nations indicates a growing international consensus that Bangladesh is functioning as a state.

There were initially three main considerations in delaying our recognition:

--President Bhutto when he was here in December asked for a month to begin sorting himself out. He has now had almost two months and has himself suggested that we recognize.

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cc: [unclear]

-- We did not want to move too quickly in blessing the fruits of India's action. However, one could argue now that this is perhaps properly handled in the pace with which we rebuild our relationship with India rather than in our relationship with Bangladesh since our argument is with the Indians rather than the Bengalis. In any case, Indian troops are scheduled to be withdrawn by March 25.

-- Having told the Chinese at earlier steps how we planned to proceed and having cooperated through the crisis at the United Nations, we judged that it would be appropriate to explain our thinking to the Chinese before changing our course, especially since your trip was so close.

Once the China trip is behind us, most of the foregoing considerations will have run one phase in their course, and longer-term considerations will come into play with regard to our relations with India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. These would seem to be:

-- As Bhutto himself has pointed out, the US can have an important role in providing Bangladesh with an alternative to dependence on India and the Soviet Union. Some dependence on India in the intermediate future seems built into the situation but the Bengalis seem interested in moving away from that. The Soviets will make the most of the opportunity, and the present Bengali leadership has no particular interest in being overly dependent on them.

-- Now that Pakistan has split, the Chinese can have the best of both worlds. Having supported West Pakistan during the conflict, China can now move to increase its influence among the more radical elements in Bangladesh. Whereas US and Chinese interests were parallel during the 1971 crisis, China will presumably have an interest now in increasing Bengali radicalism in the hope that it will spill over into West Bengal and weaken India. The US, on the other hand, will have an interest in greater stability.

-- Pakistan, as Bhutto said, will have an interest in cultivating a friendly Bangladesh as a potential counter to India. The Bengalis may recognize a reciprocal need.

In light of all these factors, it might be logical to time US recognition to coincide with final withdrawal of Indian troops the third week in March--a decent period after your return from China. If that were to be our timing, the problem would then become one of buying time until then. Some or all of the following steps could be taken to buy that time:

--Your Foreign Policy Report and the comments made in connection with it already provide some hint of our moving away from our present posture.

--Our spokesmen can change their public posture on recognition. Previously they were instructed to say that recognition is "not under active consideration." Now they can say that we will be considering recognition next month.

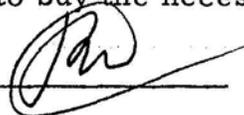
--Our Consul General in Dacca could be instructed to see the Foreign Minister to inform him of steps we are taking to provide food assistance through the United Nations. The mere fact of his seeking out the Foreign Minister would have implications to the Bengalis.

--If then it is still necessary to buy a bit more time, we could instruct the Consul General in early March to seek out Mujib and discuss with him the policy of the Bangladesh government before returning to Washington for consultations on recognition.

This week we should inform Bhutto of the elements in our timing so that he will know that we have not ignored his suggestion.

RECOMMENDATION: That you approve in principle recognition about the third week in March and that you approve steps such as those outlined above to buy the necessary time between now and then.

Approve



Other _____