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January 17, 1972

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

Subject: Suggested NSC Meeting on
Indo-Pak Situation

I have been conducting with my staff an intensive review of the Indo-Pak situation. These discussions have focussed in large measure on the attached analytical paper. I am transmitting the paper to you not because I agree with everything in it, but because it does focus on some of the principal issues we will face in the coming weeks and months. The paper makes no recommendations but tries to sketch out some of the relevant factors and possible alternatives. This approach is in keeping with your desire to explore fully various points of view and alternatives.

I believe it would be desirable if such a paper were circulated to other members of the National Security Council and for a discussion to be held in the Council at some early, convenient date. I do not necessarily foresee that there would be any need for any definitive decisions to be taken as a result of such a National Security Council meeting, but rather it would afford you and others the opportunity to focus on some of the principal factors, and some general guidelines might emerge.


William P. Rogers

Attachment:

Analytical Paper on
Indo-Pak Situation.

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US INTERESTS AND POLICY OBJECTIVES
IN SOUTH ASIA

I. Introduction - Current Situation

The Indo-Pakistan war has altered the political, economic and security environment of South Asia. India has attained a preeminent position. The relative equilibrium between the external powers operating in South Asia -- China, the Soviet Union and the United States -- has been modified to the point where the Soviet Union has achieved a position of greater influence by having directly identified itself with Indian policies and aspirations. India has had to pay a price for her victory, particularly in terms of increased indebtedness to the Soviet Union, acceptance of Soviet influence in Bangla Desh, and growing fears of Indian dominance among its smaller neighbors.

Pakistan as a unitary state has been destroyed, although President Bhutto has not given up hope of some link between East and West. Pakistan has undergone military defeat, the elimination from positions of power of many of its senior military leaders, and the creation of the first civilian government in thirteen years. This new government has modified the Islamic and military focus of Pakistani political life, and it may be moving toward a secular socialistic state which is more preoccupied with domestic reform than

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with an Indian menace. It faces formidable problems given the bitterness and dissatisfaction engendered by the war and the intractable social, political and economic problems which remain. While the military will continue to be a key factor in the internal power equation, its image is tarnished and its self-esteem damaged. Nonetheless, traditional hostility towards India may reemerge as the controlling factor in Pakistan policy.

The Bangla Desh Government also faces extremely complex political and economic problems. Its long-term economic viability and its ability to evolve a political system based on moderate democratic forces remain in doubt, although it is committed to a secular and democratic system. Its problems are aggravated by the communal bitterness engendered in the nine-month struggle which began on March 25, 1971. It will probably have difficulty in establishing its national independence in the face of Indian influence and internal radical pressures. Even when the Indians withdraw there will be strains in the Indo-Bangla Desh relationship, for East Bengal has traditionally feared domination from Calcutta and latent suspicions over Indian policies are likely to increase.

The India-Pakistan war has altered the earlier mixture of external forces in which Pakistan was committed to foreign policy triangulation, balancing its relations between Peking, Moscow and Washington, and in which a "non-aligned" India tried to maintain a careful distance in its relations with both Moscow and Washington. These policies reflected basic interests as seen from New Delhi and Islamabad. While Moscow can be expected to seek to take advantage of its increased influence in South Asia and China will try to contain these efforts, India and Pakistan are likely to try to restore more balanced relations with Moscow, Peking and Washington over time. Bhutto has already indicated his intention of basing Pakistan's foreign policy on "geo-political realities," and India and Bangla Desh seem to be carefully managing their policies with us to avoid any step which would make impossible a more non-aligned posture between the US and the USSR. Interestingly enough, regardless of developments there remains a substantial reservoir of good will for the US among the Bangla Desh leadership.

However, now that Indian military and political superiority over Pakistan has been definitively established, India-China issues are likely to displace the India-Pakistan

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dispute as the dominant political factor in the Subcontinent. In such circumstances, India and the Soviet Union can be expected to continue to cooperate closely.

A further dimension of the present situation is the concern of the minor South Asian powers, particularly Ceylon and Nepal, for their own positions in the face of what they fear may become an increasingly assertive India. Both states, and perhaps others, such as Iran, Afghanistan and Burma, are apprehensive about the implications of India's power and the Soviet Union's growing influence. This concern could result in their seeking to balance India's increased power by closer relations with external powers such as the US and China. Finally, there also seems to be a need psychologically to strengthen our ties with Iran and Turkey, particularly since the latter is going to be under pressure to sign a Treaty of Friendship with the USSR during the Podgorny visit in April.

II. Chinese and Soviet Interests

Although the Soviet Union will probably continue to focus on its relations with India and Bangla Desh, it may also seek to improve its relations with Pakistan in order to put itself in a position where it can more effectively influence political developments and counteract Chinese influence throughout South Asia. Under such circumstances

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if we decided to follow a strategy designed to maximize our options in India and the smaller states simultaneously (see Option 3 below), despite a competitiveness of policy a certain degree of parallel approach to the problems of South Asia may replace the present limited confrontation between us.

On the other hand, with respect to China, the current parallelism between our policies and those of the PRC are likely to diverge. Having strongly supported Pakistan in the current crisis, Peking now sees a short-run opportunity to consolidate its relationship with West Pakistan even at the expense of an immediate relationship with Bangla Desh. Over the long-term, however, the Chinese probably hope that the politics of Bangla Desh will become increasingly radical and anti-Indian, as the full extent of the new nation's political and economic dependence on India (and perhaps the Soviet Union) becomes apparent to the Bengalis. PRC media have hinted that the Chinese may be looking ahead to a pan-Bengali movement which would threaten the integrity of Eastern India. The PRC may quietly provide support to separatist movements elsewhere in India, in accord with its presumed long range goal of political fragmentation of the Subcontinent. Thus, although the US and the PRC at present share a common interest in preserving the

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viability and national integrity of West Pakistan, in the long run our interests will probably diverge, as the PRC looks at India as a long range strategic and political opponent.

III. US Interests and Objectives

The United States continues to have no vital security interests in South Asia. No country in the area including India has or is likely to have the ability for many years to come to affect American security directly even if backed by the Soviet Union. On the other hand, developments in South Asia could affect our great interest in stability and impinge on other areas where our vital interests are engaged, i.e., the Middle East, Iran and Turkey and potentially in Southeast Asia as well. They also impinge upon our interests in the Indian Ocean area generally. To the degree that the recent war has created a political imbalance in South Asia in which India predominance has been accentuated and in which Soviet influence has increased at China's and our expense, it is possible that this change will also have destabilizing effects in areas to both the west and east of India by raising fears of a more aggressive Soviet or Indian role. Such concerns have already been expressed to us by the Shah of Iran and the King of Saudi Arabia.

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Turkey is also concerned that it will be pressured in April by Podgorny to sign a Treaty of Friendship.

It, therefore, should be a major US objective to restore an equilibrium among the major external powers concerned with South Asia. This objective is fully consistent with the long-standing US interest as set out in the Nixon Doctrine in preventing any outside power hostile to the United States from gaining a position of predominance. This interest has been adversely affected in India by developments since the signing of the Indo-Soviet Treaty in August. Soviet influence in the short run is likely to increase further in view of its support for Bangla Desh. The pursuit of this equilibrium of great power influence, however, does not imply an attempt to create a balance of power within South Asia between India and Pakistan and the other states of the region, comparable to that which existed in the late 1950s.

Secondly, the United States continues to have an interest in the economic, social and political development of the countries of the area, since such development contributes directly to our overall interest in peace, stability, and the preservation of the region free from outside domination. It is likely that Bangla Desh will soon have a democratic political system, as India now has,

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and it is possible that representative government will emerge in West Pakistan. It should be an objective of US policy to support these systems and, if possible, strengthen them against degeneration into radically authoritarian or militantly nationalistic regimes. Similarly it should remain an objective of US policy to encourage self-reliant economic development throughout the area at rates above population growth.

Third, the United States also has an interest in free access to the region in pursuit of normal economic, commercial and political-military interests. Our objective in this context should be to keep open as many of those ties with the South Asian states as possible. These include trade, investment opportunities, overflights, fleet visits and intelligence cooperation.

Finally, we will have a broad political and humanitarian interest in the welfare of one-fifth of mankind. Over the last nine months we have demonstrated our humanitarian concerns in a variety of ways. The suffering and damage caused by the war will create additional needs, which will require an American response.

IV. Alternate Outcomes

The situation in South Asia is a fluid one and may evolve in a variety of directions. In the period ahead

we will be endeavoring to use our influence and to shape our programs to support outcomes favorable to our interests, recognizing that to a considerable extent events in South Asia will be governed by internal dynamics over which we have little direct influence and by the actions and policies of other external powers.

There are essentially two broad alternate outcomes which bear on US interests: (1) a relatively stable system in which a powerful self-confident India is the keystone of such stability, and (2) a system of instability resulting from fragmentation, radicalization or Indian dominance. For a variety of reasons the first outcome would be more consonant with our interests than the second.

1. Stable System. For the creation of stability in South Asia, India will be the single most important factor. It has emerged from the Indo-Pakistan war powerful and self-confident, with enhanced prospects for political development and self-reliant economic growth. It has the capacity and perhaps also the desire to share its resources with its neighbors, particularly Bangla Desh, but also Nepal and Ceylon as well. For the system to be stable, however, it is not sufficient that India alone be viable, but that the other states in the region also develop confidence in their independence and viability. India's leading role would be acknowledged, without the smaller states having

a client relationship with India.

2. Unstable Systems. The emergence of a stable system is by no means assured, and various internal and external pressures will be at work which could lead to other outcomes, many of which are potentially injurious to US interests. The breakup of Pakistan as a result of Indian military actions could reinforce fissiparous tendencies in West Pakistan. Over time these could also adversely affect the unity and viability of India itself. The further fragmentation of the Subcontinent would almost certainly engender new intra-regional disputes and animosities.

At the moment the principal South Asian states all have civilian governments committed to parliamentary democracy. Pressures for more radical and perhaps authoritarian systems could develop in the coming years either as a result of economic failure or in response to Indian pressures or efforts to play a dominant role, particularly if backed by Soviet power. Almost certainly any long-term Indian attempt to create a system of satrapies or client relationships would feed existing fears in Ceylon and Nepal, create resentments and ultimately lead to unstable situations in other countries as well.

In the past the single most destabilizing feature of the South Asian environment has been the bitter

Indo-Pakistan hostility. The recent Indo-Pakistan war may reinforce this hostility, but it may also provide an opportunity for both India and Pakistan to resolve their differences and for Pakistan to become more self-consciously a part of a Middle Eastern system, for Bangla Desh to look to Southeast Asia, and for both to create relations of cooperative inter-dependence with India.

All of the policy strategies set out in Section V are designed to support the stable outcome which would appear to be most consonant with our long and short term interests in South Asia, and to minimize the likelihood that disintegration, radicalization or an aggressive India will lead to an unstable future in South Asia.

V. Strategy Options

Within this framework there are four broad strategies which we might follow to support our geopolitical and other interests.

(1) Support West Pakistan in order to circumscribe Soviet and Indian influence in South Asia in more or less tacit parallelism with China.

(2) Focus on promoting relations with Pakistan, Bangla Desh, and other smaller regional countries, while relegating relations

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with India to a secondary level of importance.

(3) Pursue in Pakistan, Bangla Desh and India a policy of selective engagement including efforts to find a satisfactory basis for relations with India and to encourage its neighbors in their sense of independence.

(4) Accept and support Indian leadership in South Asia while relegating relations with Pakistan and Bangla Desh to secondary importance.

1. Support for West Pakistan. In view of the degree to which India and the Soviet Union have developed common interests in South Asia, we might decide to accept this relationship as a fact of international life over which we have little direct influence. We might, therefore, determine that the only way of affecting the South Asian equilibrium was by direct and public support for the Government of Pakistan. Such a policy would not only attempt to make Pakistan as effective a counter to India as possible but would also seek to limit Soviet influence by close public identification with China on matters affecting South Asia. Such a strategy would not only require large inputs of

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economic resources but also probably the resumption of a major military supply relationship, and it could lead to a public commitment to support Pakistan comparable to that epitomized in the Indo-Soviet Treaty. We would seek, to the degree possible, to develop relations with China in ways that made clear our view that our interests in Pakistan's development and integrity and in limiting Soviet influence were complementary.

Advantages

-- A Pakistan, backed by strong commitments from China and the US, might be a partial buffer against Indo-Soviet hegemony in South Asia.

-- Would make clear to our allies the seriousness with which we intended to move to contain India and the Soviet Union.

-- Would therefore act as a positive factor in our relations with countries such as Israel, Greece, Turkey and Iran which are concerned about our future intentions in the face of Soviet gains in South Asia.

-- Would be welcomed by the other smaller states of South Asia such as Nepal and Ceylon and by some of the Muslim countries in the Middle East.

Disadvantages

-- Would minimize our flexibility in dealing with South Asia and leave us dependent upon a Pakistan of uncertain political stability, which could not become anything more than a partial counter to India.

-- Would be an overtly anti-Indian policy which would accentuate the existing polarization in South Asia, reinforce the Indo-Soviet relationship, and probably lead to a net increase of Soviet influence in the Sub-continent as a whole and hinder the development of cooperative relations with Bangla Desh.

-- Might have the effect of delaying or discouraging a reorientation of Pakistani policies away from its traditional anti-Indian focus and hence might revive and exacerbate Indo-Pak tensions.

-- In view of India's greater strength, it is unlikely, regardless of huge amounts of economic and military aid, that Pakistan could become a comparable balance to India.

2. Focus on West Pakistan and Bangla Desh. Rather than trying to develop a Sino-Pakistani orientation to our policy in order to counter Soviet and Indian influence, we might concentrate on our relations with the

two successor states of united Pakistan and with the other smaller countries of the region. Such a strategy would proceed from assumptions that (a) it would be difficult if at all possible to develop a close parallelism of long-term interest with China, and (b) Pakistan itself would accept US efforts to develop relations with Bangla Desh to counteract Indian and Soviet dominance. Under such a strategy we would attempt to support our South Asian interests by providing extensive assistance to Pakistan, while simultaneously developing relations with Bangla Desh. Such a strategy might also involve increased US support for other South Asian powers threatened by the growth of Soviet-backed Indian power such as Nepal and Ceylon.

This strategy would probably entail our developing working relationships with Bangla Desh officials at a relatively early date, agreeing to provide first humanitarian relief and later aid, and recognition once significant progress has been made toward (a) establishing an effective government, and (b) Indian troop withdrawal. Any US policy which recognized realities in East Bengal and resulted in significant US inputs to Bangla Desh would be acquiesced in by India, which would, however, be wary of any US effort to lessen Indian influence in Bangla Desh. In our bilateral relations with India

we would continue to maintain a degree of distance and would respond only selectively to Indian requests for assistance.

Advantages

-- Would provide somewhat greater flexibility in dealing with various South Asian countries and provide a broader basis for countering Soviet-Indian influence in the area than Option 1.

-- Would demonstrate our continued support for Pakistan's integrity and viability.

-- Would be welcomed by the smaller South Asian countries.

-- Would create the basis for a cooperative relationship with Bangla Desh.

Disadvantages

-- Would (as in Option 1) involve a considerable commitment to a West Pakistan which can create only a partial counterweight to India.

-- Would tend to reinforce the polarization of the Sub-continent and leave essentially unaffected the Indo-Soviet relationship.

-- By seeming to be a policy of active encirclement might make difficult the development of a viable Indo-American relationship.

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3. Selective Engagement with India, Pakistan and Bangla Desh. Rather than trying to balance Soviet and Indian influence through relations with Pakistan or with a broader spectrum of South Asian states, we might try to develop a pattern of stable US relations with all three principal entities in the Sub-continent. Such a course would seek to take advantage of the dynamics in South Asia as the situation evolves. For example, as India and Bangla Desh seek to balance their relationship with the Soviet Union we could be ready to be of assistance in meeting specific economic, technical or other needs. We would seek to maintain our present good relations with Pakistan, would provide economic aid to help Pakistan through its present difficult transition, but would limit our military supply relationship to what Pakistan required (beyond that obtained elsewhere) to maintain an adequate defense against India. We would encourage Pakistan to develop and expand its westward relations with Iran and Turkey rather than attempting to maintain a policy of confrontation with India.

In regard to India we would move only very slowly and in response to Indian requests for economic assistance and then only when a satisfactory political basis for our aid existed. But we would seek to make clear

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that we were prepared to help India when this basis existed. In regard to Bangla Desh, we would provide humanitarian assistance primarily through multilateral channels (and perhaps also development aid) in continuing increments at its request and when we were satisfied that a satisfactory basis for such assistance existed. Possible bilateral aid to Bangla Desh would also be considered in light of the fact that the Soviets are taking this route. We would not be in the early group to recognize Bangla Desh, but would look at this problem as relations developed.

Advantages

-- Would provide maximum flexibility in dealing with South Asia and contribute to the regional and external equilibria.

-- Would provide a basis for selectively promoting our relations with all the countries of the area without explicit commitment to any one.

-- Would provide the only comprehensive counter to both Soviet and Chinese influence.

-- Would provide a viable basis for supporting our humanitarian interests.

-- Would contribute to a reorientation of Pakistani and Bangla Desh policy away from their Indian preoccupations.

Disadvantages

-- Would not directly reassure other countries outside the Subcontinent of our intention to support our treaty commitments nor dramatically demonstrate our willingness to counter Soviet influence.

-- Would in the short run only marginally affect Soviet influence in India and Bangla Desh.

-- Might be seen in Pakistan as a lessening of our recent support.

4. Acceptance of and Support for Indian Leadership in South Asia. India has emerged as the preeminent power in South Asia and is likely to be the most stable and effective South Asian power over the next generation. It has historically tried to avoid dependence on any one external power and has sought through non-alignment to establish a balance in its external relations. Therefore while India will retain a substantial relationship with the USSR, it will also wish to improve relations with the United States to which we might wish to respond positively. Such a response might include development assistance, though probably not technical assistance which has created strains in our relations in the past, expanded technological relations in the nuclear and space fields and a return to the limited pre-December

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military sales policy. It would also imply a degree of political support for and recognition of India's legitimate interests in Asia.

Such a return to a substantial Indo-American relationship is not one which we could adopt immediately in view of our strong disapproval of recent Indian military actions. It could, however, be initiated once India had withdrawn from territory occupied in the December war and had removed itself from a position of direct governmental power in Bangla Desh.

A corollary of this policy would be the development of an early and economically supportive role in Bangla Desh, beginning with humanitarian assistance but going on to a more substantial development assistance relationship. Such a policy would support rather than try to exploit or diminish close Indo-Bangla Desh relations.

While we would seek to maintain good relations with Pakistan, we would have to recognize that we might only be able to do so to a limited degree, depending on the extent Pakistan would wish to maintain a relationship with us to balance dependence on China.

Advantages

-- Would restore United States influence with the largest and most powerful state in the region with

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which we have had a long-standing and loose relationship.

-- Would offer considerable opportunities for direct limitation of Soviet influence and enable India to resume a non-aligned posture.

-- Would provide the basis for a close and constructive relationship with Bangla Desh and limitation of Soviet influence there.

Disadvantages

-- Would be strongly opposed in Pakistan.

-- Would be seen as a direct repudiation of the policies pursued by us in recent months and might be seen by some US allies as a policy of expediency.

-- Would run risks of forcing Pakistan to turn decisively to China for support.

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