

MEMORANDUM

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

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October 27, 1972

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

PARTICIPANTS: Iftikhar Ali, Foreign Secretary of Pakistan
Sultan Khan, Ambassador of Pakistan
Alexander M. Haig, Jr., Deputy Assistant
to the President for National Security Affairs
Harold H. Saunders, NSC Staff

DATE AND PLACE: Friday, October 27, 1972, from 12:00 noon
to 12:25 p.m. in General Haig's Office

The Ambassador of Pakistan had requested appointments with Dr. Kissinger and General Haig on behalf of the visiting Foreign Secretary of Pakistan. In view of Dr. Kissinger's heavy involvement with the situation in Southeast Asia, General Haig agreed to see the Foreign Secretary.

One subject was disposed of in the anteroom with Mr. Saunders before General Haig was available. Ambassador Khan asked Mr. Saunders when an answer could be expected on President Bhutto's request for 400,000 tons of wheat under PL-480.

Mr. Saunders replied that an answer was imminent--within the next day or two. Mr. Saunders then went on to explain the intensive exercise that the NSC Staff and the Office of Management and Budget had gone through in connection with responding to Pakistan's request and others like it. He explained that the US in this situation faces three main problems: (1) There is the overall problem of limitations on our own budget since the President is making a major effort to hold spending under control. (2) Then there is the question of physical availability since the US has been called on to make unexpectedly large sales to the Soviet Union. (3) Finally, there is the problem which is related to availability, of maintaining a large enough stock in the United States to keep grain prices within reason for the American consumer as well as for purchasers from abroad. Mr. Saunders commented that this last problem is very similar to the problem that the Government of Pakistan faces, which is the reason for the Pakistani request.

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DECLAS - Date impossible to determine.

BYAUTH - Major General Alexander M. Haig, Jr.

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At that point the group moved into General Haig's office.

Foreign Secretary Ali began the conversation by thanking the US and the President for past support. He said that the Pakistani Government "looks forward to what happens after November 7th."

General Haig said that we have made strong statements of support in the past and the President intends to live up to them. The President hopes that a decisive victory in the November 7 elections will provide a political base--most notably in the composition of the Congress--that will make a helpful Presidential decision easier. The primary question for the President is what is politically possible.

The Foreign Secretary thanked General Haig for that comment and said that President Bhutto had asked him to mention the subject.

The Foreign Secretary then went on to describe the state of Pakistan's diplomatic maneuvers with Bangladesh, especially at the United Nations. He indicated that there is some possibility that Pakistan would "settle with Bangladesh out of court, so to speak." He said it was his feeling that no one in New York is keen on a major debate in the General Assembly over the South Asian issue. In any case, debate seems likely to be put off until after discussion of the Middle East item at the end of November or in early December.

The Foreign Secretary described some of the efforts now going on to attempt to encourage a settlement before that debate, and he noted Robert Jackson's mission to Dacca and visit with Bhutto as well as the efforts of the Muslim group at the UN trying to win Bangladesh acceptance for a Pakistani package. So far this group has been rebuffed.

The Foreign Secretary described the package which the Pakistanis have put together as follows:

--Bangladesh, for its part, would remove its veto on repatriation of Pakistani prisoners of war, except for those few cases against whom there is evidence which requires a war crimes trial. He spoke of the number of possible crimes as "one-hundred." He said that the number had started out at 1500 but was now down as low as 100.

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--Pakistan would then send back the 30,000 odd Bengali soldiers who had been in the Pakistan army before the separation; the 10-12,000 Bengali civil servants and their families from Pakistan; and would lift the ban on the return of all Bengalis in Pakistan who wish to return to Bangladesh, some 300-400,000.

--If the above exchange could take place, Pakistan and Bangladesh could negotiate the handling of the remaining 100 Pakistan prisoners of war. They could either be tried in Bangladesh or returned to Pakistan for trial.

--Then it would be possible to move on to recognition and to other outstanding questions such as the division of debts and financial assets and liabilities.

So far, Bangladesh had no great enthusiasm for this process. But intermediaries are trying to see how such a package might be worked out.

The Foreign Secretary continued that he had been in authorized but unofficial contact with representatives of Bangladesh in New York. He said that they appeared to be desperate about getting into the UN and establishing contact with China. They do not want to be over-dependent on India and the USSR. They have the US in Dacca but obviously they do not want to neglect the Chinese. They seem to be looking with greater eagerness on any reasonable package.

The Foreign Secretary said that, at the UN, no one seemed keen on another polemical match between the USSR and China. The Yugoslavs are backing down on the resolution that they had previously thought of pressing on the General Assembly. They apparently now see no virtue in a General Assembly Resolution recommending that the Security Council reconsider Bangladesh membership. The Chinese will continue to veto until the December 1971 resolutions are carried out. Therefore, even the Yugoslavs seem prepared to settle for a bland resolution expressing the hope that the provisions of the December resolutions will be carried out. The Bangladesh government does not seem to have the support for a strong resolution. In the meantime, there is hope that there may be a breakthrough in the Bangladesh-Pakistan negotiations.

General Haig replied that it is encouraging that there is constructive thinking and diplomatic activity. He said he was not surprised that Bangladesh would be concerned about total dependence on India and the USSR.

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Ambassador Khan said it was "inevitable that they should talk with us." There are many issues such as the common financial problems and the desire to re-establish reciprocal markets that need to be discussed.

General Haig said it was not surprising that, following a change in relationship of this importance, that the implications of the change would take time to sink in.

The Foreign Secretary, turning to relations with India, described how the implementation of the agreement with India had been delayed. Having agreed on a line of control and having agreed that maps would be exchanged on October 21 and that troops would be withdrawn within ten days thereafter, the Indians are now insisting that there be demarcation of the new line on the ground. The result has been to delay withdrawal of troops.

The Chinese had asked him at the UN why the Indians are delaying in this way. He felt there were a couple of explanations. He felt that, first, if there was a Pakistani breakthrough with Bangladesh, India would then set forward further conditions of its own in order to delay further. The Indians would require that Pakistan first recognize Bangladesh. The reason he felt they were requiring demarcation of the line of control on the ground is that they would later require Pakistan to recognize it as the international border. That is why they are being so careful now.

General Haig noted that perhaps the Indians also have some interest in keeping the external issue alive at the time when the Indian government is facing domestic dissatisfactions.

The Foreign Secretary agreed and said that, in contrast, there had been a significant breakthrough on domestic issues in Pakistan.

General Haig began to wind up the conversation by, first, apologizing that the White House was so heavily preoccupied with Southeast Asia at the particular time of the Foreign Secretary's visit. General Haig then asked the Foreign Secretary to take President Nixon's best wishes to President Bhutto. The President recalled the promises made to President Bhutto when he was in Washington. General Haig said he is confident that there is no equivocation on those promises. There is very strong admiration in Washington for the statesmanlike way Pakistan has proceeded--with great care and caution but not out of weakness. He felt that it was extremely important that Pakistan not act out of weakness. In the long run a firm position executed with patience would bring the kind of results that everyone wants.

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Ambassador Khan said that, conversely, Pakistan wishes President Nixon success in bringing the war in Southeast Asia to a close. He felt that Dr. Kissinger's briefing of the press the previous day had been very hopeful. Pakistan very much hopes that the US will achieve the objectives that it has set out for itself.

General Haig replied that we are confident that those objectives can be achieved if the same good will that has existed since October 8 persists. However, as agreement comes closer, the little things begin to appear more important. However, we remain optimistic.

Ambassador Khan asked whether an agreement seemed likely before election.

General Haig said that this is probably not likely, but the President has made very clear that no arbitrary deadlines are to be set. When the agreement is right, there will be no delay in signing it. The President felt that the worst thing that could happen is for us to be driven by artificial deadlines. He felt that nothing would be worse than being saddled with an agreement that was imperfect. Even North Vietnam did not have an interest in that.

The meeting concluded at that point.

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During a lunch hosted by Under Secretary Alexis Johnson, the Foreign Secretary elaborated on some of the above points to the following extent:

--He seemed to indicate that the package he had outlined earlier was subject to negotiations and that recognition could be placed in the scenario earlier than he had indicated. This was subject to discussion.

--There is no substantial political pressure yet in Pakistan for return of the POWs. The families of the prisoners are accustomed to having their men away for a whole year at a time, and their incarceration in India has not been an unusual circumstance for those families. There have only been one or two demonstrations and the Foreign Secretary acknowledged that "frankly, the government has stimulated them."

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--The most pressing issue politically in Pakistan is the withdrawal of the Indian troops because that would permit the return of 1.5 million Pakistanis to their homes. Unless they go back in the next few weeks, they will have missed the winter planting season.

--Recognition of Bangladesh is a potentially sensitive issue in Pakistan, but if the context is right, it is manageable.

--In his long discussions with the mainland Chinese, he had not heard the Chinese indicate that their opposition to Bangladesh admission to the UN related in any way to their concern about Taiwan. They were taking a stand that they felt would cause Bangladesh to recognize that China is a factor that Bangladesh must reckon with. China has political assets in Bangladesh which it can influence--not Bashani, whom the Chinese think is a "fool" but Maoists and other political elements who are responsive to China. While the Chinese are very much concerned about the faithful implementation of the UN resolutions and will press this matter of principle, they are also interested in establishing themselves as a political force that Bangladesh must take into account.

Harold H. Saunders

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