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March 2, 1971

ANALYTICAL SUMMARY

Contingency Study on Pakistan

At the next sub-tab is a contingency study of the alternative U. S. postures toward a possible move by East Pakistan toward secession. This paper has been staffed by the IG/NEA and, as directed in NSSM 118, is primarily aimed at preparation for possible decisions that might be necessary in the near future. Longer range U. S. policy toward Pakistan is being considered within the framework of NSSM 109 (Policy on South Asia).

Background

As you know, on Monday President Yahya postponed the convening of the constituent assembly until a "later date." He cited the inability of East and West Pakistani politicians to agree on the balance in the constitution and the refusal of the major West Pakistani party to attend. Yahya characterized the situation as Pakistan's "gravest political crisis."

East Pakistani reactions to Yahya's move will be crucial in determining Pakistan's future. As you know, Mujibur Rahman, the leader of East Pakistan's dominant political party (the Awami League), controls a majority of the seats in the constituent assembly and is insisting on a constitution that would limit the central government's responsibilities to essentially defense and foreign affairs. Yahya and West Pakistan political leader Z. A. Bhutto are both opposed to Rahman's plan but they have different and conflicting bases of support and ideological outlooks that prevent them from working effectively together.

Unless a compromise formula can be devised, secession by the East Pakistanis or separation of the two wings of Pakistan by mutual consent are real possibilities. Rahman, because of his popular mandate, has little flexibility or desire to modify his program for virtual autonomy, although he may still prefer a loose confederation to an open and complete break. Bhutto and his followers, on the other hand, may be prepared to let the East Pakistanis secede--leaving themselves to govern a residual state in West Pakistan--rather than accept a weak confederation. Yahya because of the popular backing that Rahman and Bhutto have in their respective wings and the concern of the military-economic establishment that he is endangering their vested interests, has very little scope to arbitrate the outcome.

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Rahman has scheduled a major speech for Sunday, March 7. That could be the turning point.

There is one other issue that you should be aware of but need not deal with here: The IMF has been informed that Yahya has finally decided to go ahead with devaluation on March 12. Everyone is puzzled by the political implications of this move in the current context. You will recall, however, that the President promised Yahya a \$20 million loan in support of this move.]

U. S. Interests and Policy Limitations

We have so far attempted to remain neutral and uninvolved. Our line has been that we favor the unity of Pakistan and that it is up to the Pakistanis to determine the future of Pakistan. The IG paper states that this policy has been based on the following major considerations:

- An independent East Pakistan, State claims, would be more vulnerable to internal instability, economic stagnation and external subversion than an East Pakistan affiliated with a stronger West Pakistan.
- The East Pakistanis provide a moderating influence on West Pakistani hostility toward India since they are relatively unconcerned about Kashmir and favor a general normalization of relations.
- We have up to now seen no realistic alternative to support of Pakistan's unity if we are to maintain satisfactory bilateral relations with the present regime.
- Our ability to influence the course of events is very limited, State feels. [CIA feels less so.] We might be able to affect the timetable on modalities of East Pakistani secession but we could not deter it nor do we really have much influence with the West Pakistani politicians.
- Finally, in State's view, Yahya seems to be doing everything possible to preserve a unified state and there is little we could effectively do to help him except to maintain our general posture of cooperation with his government and encourage him to carry on as long as there appears to be reasonable chance of success.

While we have regarded our interests until now as best served by a unified Pakistan, it is necessary at this point to give serious consideration to how we should posture ourselves toward the emergence of two separate states. There are three general situations considered in the contingency paper:

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1. U. S. posture toward Pakistani unity while East Pakistani separation is uncertain. This is essentially the current situation, although we may be on the verge of going beyond this point.

2. If East Pakistani secession becomes imminent.

--U. S. political posture. We may soon be faced with the situation where we judge separation to be imminent but East Pakistan has not declared its independence. This will require some quick adjustments in our posture.

--U. S. posture if West Pakistan intervenes militarily. If it comes to secession, Yahya may well decide to let the East Pakistanis go their own way, but we can not rule out an irrational action that could precipitate a major upheaval. The U. S. might in their situation be able to play a major peacemaking role.

3. Actions to be taken after separation is an accomplished fact. The problems here are essentially the nuts and bolts of diplomatic recognition, aid, representation and the disposal of treaty relationships, ongoing negotiations, and aid programs.

Issues

Of the four situations that we might conceivably face only the two concerning separation are relevant at this point. It is, of course, necessary to plan ahead concerning the actions to be taken after separation but this is not the primary focus of our attention now and should not color the judgments made at this point. There is a minor area of disagreement at the IG level between State and CIA concerning what we should be doing in the present situation-- "separation uncertain"--that you should be aware of in case Mr. Helms decides to raise it at the SRG meeting.

1. Current Situation ("separation uncertain"). With the exception of CIA, there is general agreement at the IG level that unless and until separation seems certain it is desirable to maintain a balanced posture between East and West supporting the unity of Pakistan and saying that in the final analysis this is a Pakistani problem. CIA, however, leans toward a more activist approach of maintaining our present public position but privately urging Yahya to reach an accommodation with Mujibur Rahman which would enable a single Pakistan to continue even though its federal power were limited to defense and foreign affairs and even if Bhutto's party refused to cooperate in the process of government.

The arguments for the CIA approach are:

- The other possible outcomes are either repressive military rule or a split into two nations with West Pakistan dominated by an anti-West demagogue.
- In a confederation reserving foreign policy and defense, Bhutto's pro-Chinese and anti-Indian policies would be checked and he would not control the armed forces.
- Some Pakistani military men are apprehensive about Bhutto coming to power in a separate West Pakistan and see new virtue in even a loosely-knit confederation, while at the same time Rahman is openly seeking reassurance from the U. S. This may mean that the U. S. could have substantial influence on the side of the only possible course giving some hope of leading to a united and constitutional government with a moderate foreign policy.

The arguments for the State approach are:

- Yahya already knows our position favoring unity and is doing all he can on his own initiative to bring about an acceptable compromise between Rahman and Bhutto. It is therefore not necessary for us to shift to a more activist posture at this point.
- We can realistically offer little or nothing that will materially affect the situation and any effort by us to urge compromise could be resented as unwarranted interference in Pakistan's internal affairs and jeopardize future relations with the West. It is therefore undesirable for us to become involved in this way at this point.
- A Yahya-Rahman agreement would run the risk of setting off uncontrollable and destructive developments in the West, since Bhutto has the masses on his side.

2a. Separation Appears Imminent. If we judge separation to be imminent, but East Pakistan has not declared its independence, the following U. S. postures could be considered. (We could, in fact, be faced with this situation at any moment and would probably have to make a quick decision before events rapidly passed us by.)

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Option 1: No change in either our current public and private posture of remaining uninvolved and stating it is a Pakistani problem.

Option 2: Let the East Pakistani leaders know we would be prepared to recognize an independent state of East Pakistan and conduct normal diplomatic relations, while at the same time informing the West Pakistani leaders we are watching the situation closely and are prepared to adapt to it.

Option 3: Depending on the circumstances, we could go one step further and acknowledge that we would consider sympathetically requests for economic assistance for the new East Pakistan regime.

The paper proposes that Option 2 should be adopted "if separation becomes imminent, but before it is announced."

The arguments for are:

-- To continue to adhere to the present approach (Option 1) would unnecessarily alienate the East Pakistani leaders with whom we would want to be on good terms in the near future.

-- The shift toward East Pakistan would afford us a psychological gain in the East with a limited risk in the West if indeed separation were imminent.

The arguments against are:(the paper does not include any):

-- We could be vulnerable to the charge that at a critical point in Pakistan's history we deserted the West in favor of the East.

-- It is at least questionable as to how much we would gain by in effect jumping on the independence bandwagon at the last possible moment. The new leaders of both countries might later ask where we were when they needed us most.

-- Whatever we might do at this point that did not involve our economic assistance, which is vital to both the East and the West, would have very little, if any, real impact and would be regarded as simply a token gesture.

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--East Pakistan at this point would be most interested in our playing a peacemaking role to prevent any possible West Pakistan military action.

2b. West Pakistan Military Intervention. The judgment in the paper is that it is "very unlikely" that West Pakistan would intervene militarily to preserve the unity of Pakistan by force. The risks of military intervention are thought to be too high, given the anticipated vehemence of the East Pakistani response, the limited strength of the West Pakistani forces now in the East, and logistical problems. Moreover, it is thought that there would be a general lack of interest among the public and political elements and a preference to let the East go its own way rather than fight it. There would also be the possibility that the Indians might take measures to assist East Pakistan. Yet an irrational action is always possible and should the West Pakistani military intervene, we might be able to play a crucial peacemaking role. The following alternative U.S. posture could be considered:

Option 1: Take no action other than to protect U.S. personnel and property.

Option 2: Urge Yahya to cease military action on the grounds that this is futile, could provoke Indian intervention and result in needless loss of life.

Option 3: Consult with the Indians, pointing out that our mutual interests indicate that outside military intervention should be avoided since it is (a) unlikely that the West Pakistani force can prevail for long; (b) Indian military intervention could provoke an India-West Pakistani conflict and (c) intervention could be exploited by the Chinese.

Option 4: In concert with the British and other interested powers be prepared to use the threat of sanctions, including the cessation of economic aid and military supply.

Option 5: In the extremely unlikely event that the Chinese would intervene unilaterally across Indian or Burmese territory, we would support the Indians and Burmese politically but, recognizing that the area is not vital to our security interests, would avoid direct military involvement ourselves.

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Option 6: If any type of hostilities should occur, we should support all appropriate international efforts, including with the U. N., to bring about an early cease-fire.

The paper proposes initially following options 2 and 3, urging Wahya to desist from military action and consulting with the Indians and, if this should fail moving on to options 4, 5, and 6 as the situation demands.

The arguments for are:

-- We have an interest in doing what we can to avoid bloodshed and to restore peace as well as in preventing the conflict from broadening beyond a purely East-West Pakistani clash.

-- A Pakistani civil war can only deepen the economic and political problems of both the West and the East.

The arguments against are (the paper does not provide any):

-- If we hope to prevent bloodshed, we should weigh in strongly from the beginning with the West Pakistanis, if necessary stopping economic aid and the supply of military equipment right from the start.

-- We might, if we approach the Indians properly, be able to direct their actions in such a way that we could safely remain on the sidelines.

3. When and if separation becomes an accomplished fact there will be a number of essentially technical problems concerning recognition, representation and our various aid programs to Pakistan. You need not focus on this in depth at this point and most of this can probably be safely left to State's discretion when and if the time comes. It should be noted, however, that how some of these issues will be handled will depend in part on how separation is accomplished--peacefully or via civil war--and the posture we assume now.

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