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MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

PARTICIPANTS: President Nixon
CENTO Foreign Ministers
Lt. General Brent Scowcroft, Deputy Assistant
to the President for National Security Affairs

DATE AND TIME: Wednesday, May 22, 1974
12:50 p. m.

PLACE: The Cabinet Room

(The Press came in for photos)

President: How have you been?

Callaghan (UK): I remember our seminar in Number 10 Downing.

President: That was Callaghan's job.

(The press departs)

President: I am delighted to meet with you. CENTO in the minds of the world has much less meaning than there used to be. Even here, the Turks and Pakistanis say "What good is it when we have a military problem? We just sit around and talk." Candidly, the Iranians' feeling is that they can take care of themselves.

Why continue CENTO? Let's start with the bottom line: As a military alliance, it isn't there -- it's not like NATO. But we have common interests including military concerns -- like the survival of Pakistan. For us, that is of vital importance. To

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have healthy, strong economies in this group of nations is vital. It is important in the future of South Asia, and the survival of each country with some sort of -- not guarantee -- but an added element to discourage those who might infringe on your sovereignty.

The United States is bilaterally committed to each of you -- not only to your survival but to cooperate economically for progress.

The fact that the U. S. has this commitment -- shared by Great Britain -- has a restraining influence on those who might be tempted-- to go under or over a border to destroy a country's independence.

So what we have should not be detracted. The situation is different from the Dulles days, but the need remains. Like the NATO situation has change, but if it weren't there, adventurism would be encouraged.

Callaghan: Don't even mention it.

President: But whatever the country in NATO -- Great Britain, France, Federal Republic of Germany, Italy -- if they didn't have association and the U. S. holding the ring against any super power -- if that didn't exist, the race to Moscow would go apace.

Callaghan: That's right.

President: Now individually. I wish we could have done more for Pakistan in the previous struggle. As far as the U. S. is concerned, one partition of Pakistan is enough. And, considering Congressional concerns, we will do whatever we can to support Pakistan's independence and strength. We have done something; perhaps we can do more. Pakistan's problem is most delicate. To the extent the U. S. reestablishes a dialogue with India, our influence will be to restrain India.

We don't want a monologue. We consider this alliance, which came in when the threat was very different... there have been many changes, with the Soviet Union, etc. Pakistan has had a tragedy. But no more.

What can CENTO do about all these things? What does the commitment mean if it is not backed up by military responsiveness? It does mean something, because if we share a common commitment we can be helpful to each other whatever the problem.

Assan: Thank you for seeing us. I know how busy you are. In the past two days we have referred more than once to the strong words you gave us last year. We all thank you for your strength and encouragement. We know the situation has changed but we think the need for the alliance continues. We have talked about tracing our course for the future. It has been a great meeting.

President: The original reason for CENTO -- like NATO -- was security. We now need more -- to broaden our relations.

If I could digress to the Middle East a bit. Basically in the Syrian-Israeli talks we have had a breakthrough. I have been bouncing messages to Israel and to a lesser degree to Syria over the past weeks. Secretary Kissinger has done a magnificent job. Disengagement will come -- maybe not this week. The major problem has been dealt with, but the lesser ones could hang us up -- they become relatively more important.

But disengagement is only temporary. And negotiations will now go forward in Geneva for a permanent solution -- like Jerusalem, that is the toughest nut. We are accused of playing a unilateral role by pushing others out.

The reason Secretary Kissinger is there getting a disengagement is because we are the only one who can broker it now. Our purpose is not to establish American domination or to exclude others from economic or political development in the area. Some other countries of the area don't want the Soviet Union, some may. Israel can't even talk to them.

The policy is to move all the parties to participate in a settlement. We carry the major burden because we can move Israel, and without that, no settlement can be made. For Israel, it is far better to have the U. S. as a friend of Egypt than an enemy of Egypt. Sophisticated leaders within Israel like Rabin understand; the Jewish community wants exclusive American support of Israel.

Israel feels that with arms they can win over the foreseeable future. Not as well as before, but they made it costly. But Israel's ability to survive must not depend on an acre of sand, but on the attitude of her neighbors and whether these neighbors make a confluence of power opposed to Israel's survival.

[REDACTED]

We feel the interests of us all here are served by our negotiating realistically with the Soviet Union. We have no illusions, nor do they. When the Soviet Union has to make a decision whether to meddle, they must weigh that against everything else they have on the plate with the United States. We need idealistic talk, but we have to be pragmatic.

In the Middle East, despite our different interests and vital as it is-- for the Soviet Union they see the resources and geographic position and their game is understandable; the US. has a special tie with Israel which has hurt us with the Arabs. This tie doesn't serve the United States. Looking down the road, the U. S., Israel and Arab interests will be served by the U. S. playing a constructive role and not tied just to Israel. As I told Prime Minister Wilson, there can't be permanent peace unless we are for it, to influence Israel. It can't be done if the Soviet Union is against it, because of their power.

Our policy is toward the whole world. With the Soviet Union, for example, we are working on SALT -- it is internationally important. Each of us can destroy the other within an hour. Neither one of us has illusions about the other, but if they are in isolation or in a posture of confrontation, they can't listen if we say "Don't push our friends around." But if they have some other things going....

With China, I am the original anti-Communist and Mao is the original Communist. But they are probably concerned about their isolation and possible threat from their neighbors. As they looked around, they saw India, with contempt, to the west the Soviet Union, to the east the United States, to the Northeast, Japan, an economic giant but economically a pygmy. Pragmatically they didn't want a hostile U. S. For the U. S. -- each of them has better relations with the United States than with each other -- right now the basic threat to survival is the US-Soviet conflict. But one fourth of the world is Chinese, and they have nuclear weapons. They are smart and energetic. In 20 years they will be a major nuclear power. Should we let them sit there in isolation? Or should we develop a dialogue? Now they need us; later they might not. We will try to play a constructive role in China's relations with its neighbors.

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We can't insure peace, but our purpose is -- we believe in the right of all to chose their own way -- to help them to be independent. We fought in Korea and Vietnam for that. But to do that effectively, we must talk to potential enemies to see if there are different incentives for them to pursue different courses. When we go to the Soviet Union and China, we do it to make the world a safer place for our friends.

Callaghan: Outstanding. If you weren't President, you would have made a brilliant Foreign Minister.

President: I have visited all your countries. I have a strong feeling for each of them. We want you to survive and we are for you. Sometimes we can do as much as we would like, but our dialogue with the opposition is in support of, not opposition to, our friends. But the Middle East, next to Central Europe, is a vital area for the super powers. Unlike Vietnam--the Cambodia mission, the December bombing--some said the Soviet Union and China would intervene. I didn't think so, because they wanted North Vietnam to succeed but not at the cost of confrontation with the United States. The Middle East is different and Europe especially so.

We must realize we are participating in decisions which could decide the peace of the world. We must trust each other. We will maintain our strength so that noone thinks he can bluff us or go to war with us without cost.

Callaghan: We need the NATO declaration and the trade bill.

President: Provided they work out the credit restriction. Otherwise tye can't get MFN.

Assar: This is my last year.

(Cuff links are passed out.)

President: I can tell you a story. Israel was asking for too many F-4's. I told Golda the main thing was trust, that we had problems and that we would do what we could.

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