

Scowcroft R

MEMORANDUM

NSA, Memcons, Box 4, 5/23/74

SECRET/XGDS - 3

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

PARTICIPANTS: President Nixon
Lt. General Brent Scowcroft, Deputy Assistant to the
President for National Security Affairs
Aziz Ahmed, Minister of State for Defense and
Foreign Affairs, Pakistan

DATE & TIME: Thursday - May 23, 1974
10:30 a.m.

PLACE: The Oval Office
The White House

Ahmed: It is kind of you to receive me. I bring regards from Prime Minister Bhutto. We and the people of Pakistan are distressed about Watergate. It is very disturbing to us that it has been dragged out.

President: Don't you worry about that; we will take care of that.

Ahmed: You know our situation, but let me bring you up to date. Our prisoners are back and we thought we could move to normalization with India. There still were a couple of problems. India's defense budget is the highest ever; the Soviet Union ships arms to India; Brezhnev's visit has resulted in more arms -- including SAM-6 and 7s. After Swaran Singh's visit to Moscow, 400 officers went to Moscow for training, and after he went to Afghanistan, 300 Afghans went to India.

These developments disturb us. They are building their army, but not to attack the PRC.

And we have no designs on Afghanistan. If the Soviets give them arms, it helps them with their irredentist aims. The Soviet Union tries to show they are not behind the Baluchistan movement.

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And while we were wondering why there is this Indian buildup, here comes the nuclear test. We were not surprised, but shocked. There is a tendency to play it down in some quarters, and Mrs. Gandhi says it's 'peaceful.' We think the Soviet Union will enable them to build nuclear weapons. This detonation we think is just a first step in the development of nuclear weapons and a delivery system.

The timing of the explosion is interesting. The Prime Minister was in Peking a week ago. The PRC said they are ready now to establish relations with all states in the subcontinent. Why this timing? Is the Soviet Union or Mrs. Gandhi trying to prevent better relations with the PRC?

Apart from the indirect pressure by the Soviet Union on us -- and on Iran through Iraq -- the idea is to get control of the Gulf, so we must be brought to heel.

Iran has moved to placate the Soviet Union. The Shah supported the South Asian security pact and said he would help implement it. On 14 March the Soviet Union sent this message to Bhutto [He reads from note at Tab A]:

"Pakistan's membership of CENTO and the activation of its participation in the military activities of the bloc is, in our opinion, an anachronism and it can scarcely meet the interests of the peace-loving countries of this region interested in making the process of relaxation of tension irreversible." The message also refers to Asian Collective Security in Asia and asks Pakistan to consider supporting the idea and making a statement on the question.

So then the Soviet Union is getting more and more specific about the Asian Security System. We have no desire to be drawn in.

So here we are. Two things worry us. We are still weak. The provision of tanks is helpful and we are grateful we won't have to pay. But that doesn't add to our arsenal. We need defensive weapons -- SAMs and anti-tank missiles. It is only for defense against India -- and Afghanistan, which might not stand aside in another war.

The Prime Minister would like some help soon. And could the nuclear powers give a guarantee to the non-nuclear powers against nuclear attack? You gave one guarantee to India when China attacked. We think it would be helpful, not just for us but also for many others if more countries get nuclear weapons. A system which would rule out blackmail would reduce the incentive to get nuclear weapons. It is an immediate problem for us, but a general one for all.

[REDACTED]

We are worried. We are holding out, trying to work for peace. You have been very kind and gracious.

President: But not able to do very much. We must begin with an assessment -- you should make one also -- on the implications of the Indian nuclear weapons. We will keep you informed on our analysis.

If it is, as you describe, a Soviet attempt to encircle Pakistan and a move to another partition -- as a part of a move to the Indian Ocean -- we must assess that also.

Another point is what the U.S. can do. You know what restrictions have been put on us. We have done what we could on tanks and will continue. We will see on defensive capabilities what we can do directly or indirectly.

We will do what we can with India. We are starting a dialogue with them. Now, India in the past has not been easily dissuaded. But I think you know it is better for the U.S. to have some influence with India rather than leave it to the Soviet Union. The independence of Pakistan is a principle to which we are committed. We will use our influence to help you defend that independence, both by getting you the means and helping with other countries.

The Afghanistan thing is worrisome. An irresponsible Afghanistan could be the last cannon on the deck. You couldn't fight on two fronts. Of course, our position on the Asian Security system is the same as yours.

I would summarize thus: we will help as we can with military equipment, but we can't promise. Secondly, we will use our influence with India and the Soviet Union to restrain them. Third, your concept of a guarantee for the non-nuclear countries is one we must assess. We must hold this close -- who knows who could be next?

The Prime Minister is very sophisticated, both about his neighbors and about what we could do to affect the actions of those neighbors. We will make clear with the Soviet Union our determination about Pakistan. India needs our help and we will use our influence to focus India's energies internally and not externally.

It seems to me that the non-nuclear countries need some sort of guarantee. We may not be able to put it in a treaty.

Ahmed: But the nuclear countries must know it.

[REDACTED]

President: The PRC is your friend. They don't want an expanded India. We will keep in close touch with the Chinese on this. The PRC already has some nuclear capability. Your best hopes are the PRC and the United States -- not in collusion but cooperating together, and by the U.S. playing a strong diplomatic role with the Soviet Union and India.

How we implement this we must work out. Trust what I told you at the time of the previous war. We did it with little support. But our actions then -- and now -- reflected our policy.

We are doing an assessment on these developments; you do likewise, and we will keep in close touch on what steps to take -- publicly and privately -- to ensure Pakistan's survival.

I am under no illusions about the Soviet Union -- or India. Nor about Afghanistan, since they may be a Soviet puppet. But keep close lines to the PRC. They can't help much now.

Ahmed: Thank you, Mr. President. Let me make just one or two brief comments. You should have influence with India, and with the Soviet Union. But India has gone to war when you had good relations with them. And the Soviet Union is unscrupulous. I don't know if they would stop in a crunch. And what do we tell our people? Not to worry? And for our armed forces: Everyone on both sides of us is rearming; only we can't get arms. We try to get something from France but it's only on tough financial terms. We are getting a few things, but the price has gone up 100% during our negotiations. Since we have no alternative, we have to pay the price. Our position is difficult.

President: I hate to have such a serious problem raised without being able to reassure you. I am seriously concerned, and we will take up at the highest level what we can do. We understand your assessment and we see what your neighbors are doing. I have no answers now, but we will try to develop answers at the highest level to the new situation. We don't want to promise what we can't deliver. Maybe your guarantee idea has merit. I promise we will look into it.

Ahmed: Thank you, Mr. President.