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Authority NND 009021
By MW NARA Date 01/29/08

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A/ISS/IPS, Department of State
E.O. 12958, as amended
October 11, 2007

MEMORANDUM

NDD'S REVIEW

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

Reviewed by H. D. Brewster *HDB*

Date: 3-3 1978

PARTICIPANTS:

- Swaran Singh, Indian Minister of Defense
- T. N. Kaul, Indian Ambassador to the United States
- Two Assistants to Minister Singh
- Dr. Henry A. Kissinger, Secretary of State and Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs
- Amb. Daniel P. Moynihan, U.S. Amb. to India
- Peter W. Rodman, National Security Council Staff *PR*

CLASSIFIED BY FRANK WISNER *FW*
SUBJECT TO GENERAL DECLASSIFICATION
SCHEDULE OF EXECUTIVE ORDER 11652
AUTOMATICALLY DOWNGRADED AT TWO-
YEAR INTERVALS AND DECLASSIFIED ON
DECEMBER 31, -----

DATE AND TIME:

Tuesday, October 29, 1974
10:40 - 11:40 a.m.

PLACE:

Ministry of Defence
Secretariat, South Block
New Delhi, India

Singh: There is a lot of talk about a "Pentagon" here too. But it's more disciplined.

Kissinger: The Pentagon is more disciplined than the State Department. Or will be when I get through with it.

Moynihan: You will be, when the State Department is through with you.

Kissinger: Unless I last long enough. Our Foreign Service all think they should be Secretary of State, and if I don't do what they tell me, they go to the favorable newspapers and complain.

Singh: Our Army is more disciplined. And yours should be, because of your global responsibilities.

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Kaul: Hugh Sidey of TIME says that "democracy is a big leak."

Singh: Leaks are not unknown here.

I am still getting used to being in my new job and am still thinking like my old job. But they say external affairs and defense are really two sides of the same coin.

May I, Mr. Secretary, first of all express my pleasure to welcome you here. When we had contacts before, I used all my efforts to have you come here.

Kissinger: I remember.

Singh: I see your visit has gone well. I'm glad to say it will have a lingering effect and impact. You have brought a breath of fresh air. You have introduced new elements, in your inimitable manner. The effect will last.

Kissinger: I hope that will be true, because that was the purpose of my visit. I will follow it up in Washington. And your Foreign Minister is coming to Washington. Now these contacts are established.

Singh: We will lay the foundation brick by brick.

Kissinger: The only trouble is our two Ambassadors are not patient men.
[Laughter]

Singh: They have to flog both sides. I am glad Tikki Kaul is doing so well.

Kissinger: He is doing a superb job.

Singh: And Pat, of course, is making a refreshing contribution.

Kissinger: I had something to do with his appointment here, and it was one of the best decisions President Nixon made.

Singh: And his decision to accept.

Kissinger: I can say now that when I became Secretary of State I tried to get him to come back to Washington. He resisted. It was the right decision.

Singh: I read your speech. You gave an excellent expression to the possibilities and also to the limitations.

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Kissinger: I tried to.

Singh: My recollection is -- I'm trying to forget my Foreign Office mucking-up -- that this is the first Secretary of State to recognize non-alignment. We feel flattered you chose Delhi for saying that. We genuinely believe in nonalignment. It's not neutrality. We are not neutral between justice and injustice. Irrespective of who gets offended at what we say, we have to say what we feel. So I am glad the concept of nonalignment is no longer unacceptable in the State Department.

Kissinger: No.

Singh: It's a philosophy of nonalignment, not a slogan.

Kissinger: As I said, it would be a concern if it became an alignment like a bloc, with the same rigidity.

Singh: No, we wouldn't become part of such a bloc.

Kaul: Nehru said, "the nonaligned are also nonaligned inter se."

Singh: We greatly value your support for the process of bilateralism and the Simla spirit. I am a modest man but I can't help taking credit for India, that compared to other areas of tension, we have achieved something in resolving tensions. We can understand your saying all the countries contributed, but in the situation as it was thrown up after the war, all the give was on our side. Because we had their territory and their prisoners. It was a sensation in the international community. We did it not as a favor to Pakistan but because we thought it was a good thing. We never gave the Pakistanis a sense of being a defeated country. It had a psychological impact in Pakistan.

We have dealt with their military regimes -- Ayub, Yahya -- and democratic regimes. We are glad to see democracy emerge. We see even Zulfikar Ali Bhutto not hesitating to use a big stick.

Kissinger: Internally?

Singh: Yes, but we have educated our people and our press. We've taken care not to react unduly. For example, his actions on Pushtunistan, Punjab and Sind. We know that because the democratic system^{was} restored after some time, we can't expect him to act with the full balance of the democratic system.

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Kaul: The Secretary of State made a crucial contribution at a critical moment on the exchange of prisoners and Bengalis.

Kissinger: Yes, we exchanged some messages.

Singh: But we have the feeling that once he got a short-term advantage -- getting the territory and prisoners -- he's reverted to his policy of confrontation. He even wrote a book on it -- which we will give you. The concept was that for Pakistan to remain viable and have a valid entity for its people, a policy of confrontation was essential. At Simla he said, "I used to be a believer in confrontation, but after the wars, I see it helps you more." We took him at his word, but he reverts to it.

Kissinger: He told me he would recognize Bangladesh but first he had to go through a phase of confrontation with India internally. But then he would recognize Bangladesh, which he did.

Singh: But you should never encourage him in such a policy.

Kaul: After Simla he said he would do it in two weeks.

Kissinger: Yes.

Singh: Well, broken promises aren't something we pay much attention to because we're used to expecting it from him. Minor things are not a problem. When it comes to hard things -- that you recognize India as the major power in the region... And I also noticed you said any great country has to have a sense of responsibility -- we accept that. But you should study our attitude over the past five years, and the future, and I want to assure you we will be responsible. I don't want to dilate long on this.

On the north, there are two kingdoms, Nepal and Bhutan. On the east, Burma and the Communist system. We have a democracy. To the west, Pakistan. It's a diverse region. But we have never, I repeat, never, tried to impose our concept on others. I recall two instances. When Sri Lanka was in danger of a Communist takeover, in 24 hours we gave her all the assistance she required, and two naval ships started patrolling in 12 hours.

Kissinger: And we gave her help.

Singh: And she knew our help. So past experience shows we behave in a mature and responsible manner.

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Kissinger: I believe the Simla Process shows a sense of responsibility.

Singh: We thank you. We would like you to go a step further, and help the process of bilateralism. We firmly believe in this. If there is then similarity between our approach and the United States, then it will be seen and be reassuring.

Our general approach in the region is to have an understanding on the basis of mutual understanding and sovereign equality. Look at our approach to relations with Iran, and with Afghanistan; I sent a message to you from there. And similarly on the eastern side. Our objective is not hegemonistic. When the Chinese say this, we would like you to know of our policy. Perhaps a big country has a disadvantage in dealing with its neighbors; it has not only not to do anything, but to give the impression it's not doing anything. We would like you to ponder over this.

Kissinger: As I've pointed out in other meetings, we don't look at the area as one in which we're trying to create a balance of power. We don't consider Pakistan as in the same category as you, and our interest is in the integrity of Pakistan.

Kaul: As ours is.

Kissinger: All your Ministers have made this point. And we're not trying to create an arms race in the area.

Singh: The balance of power is irrelevant. My commitment to strengthening relations between India and the United States is the same as when I was in the other office. So any attempt to introduce arms in Pakistan will certainly wipe out our efforts. Perhaps sitting in an air-conditioned room and calculating 500 tanks and planes, it looks all right. But any introduction of arms to Pakistan from American sources would create an uproar here. People will say, "Henry Kissinger gives sweet words to India and arms to Pakistan."

Kissinger: I had a frank talk with the Prime Minister and told her exactly what the situation is.

Singh: I haven't had a chance to talk with her, but I know her mind.

Kissinger: I wish I could say the same in our Government. [Laughter]

Singh: You have inhibitions since you're going to Pakistan, but you shouldn't.

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Kaul: I had a problem with the Soviet Union in 1968. I said, "If you give arms to Pakistan, you will ruin India-Soviet relations."

Moynihan: That's not the most powerful precedent.

Kaul: But they learned the lesson and changed their policy in 1970.

Singh: I read over all my and my Ambassador's talks with President Ford, and I was satisfied with your assurances that you would not give arms to Pakistan. So I didn't mention it to the President. When I rode to the White House, I said to Tikki I didn't need to show excessive concern because we had these assurances from Henry Kissinger. But I owe it to ourselves. I read somewhere that you were making comparisons. And the Pakistanis were saying that losing Bangladesh increased, not diminished, their military capacity, because they were no longer split. And Bhutto is also on the record that "if we fight again we'll not be alone." He has said "we won't be in a war without firm commitments." This refers to China.

Kissinger: Not from us.

Singh: The Chinese have a minimum of 150,000 men on the border, notwithstanding their quarrel with the Soviet Union.

Kissinger: I'm told you're far stronger.

Singh: That was based on a British assessment. I want to discuss that analysis.

Kaul: The Institute for Strategic Studies.

Singh: They are only two days from reinforcing there. And they can build roads there, and we keep close watch. Even without completing the railway they're building, they can reinforce from Sinkiang as well as from the other side.

They think we're under the control of the Soviet Union.

Kissinger: That is their feeling.

Kaul: If they really feel it, they should try to wean us away. It's propaganda.

Singh: Because of 1962 we have to be careful.

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Even though Pakistan recognized Bangladesh, they keep saying India dis-membered Pakistan. They cling to this criticism, and this big stick.

We're forced to keep forces on the northern border, and because of the logistic situation, to match their 150,000 we have to keep 300,000.

Kissinger: You can't shift your forces.

Kaul: Ch'iao Kuan-hua told Marquis Childs, "India is going to disintegrate anyway, so why should we improve relations with them."

Singh: One of our journalists said a Chinese rang him up and said, "Your deadline of three months is over. India is not collapsing." [Laughter] So we have to keep resources there. We want to prevent a war. We can't repeat 1962. It is an historical fact, not a secret -- even when we were engaged in the Bangladesh War, we couldn't afford to move troops from the north.

Kissinger: I know that.

Singh: You have your sources. It's a serious matter. To take you in our confidence, there is a certain loss of credibility in China in Pakistan. During the Bangladesh War, we intercepted messages from Yahya in the East; he sent frantic messages: "You will receive help from the sea and from the north. Therefore don't lose heart. Stick on." We have these messages.

Kissinger: Given the incompetence of Yahya, he probably used the phone lines through New Delhi. [Laughter]

Kaul: He gave us 10 days notice in a talk to correspondents.

Singh: The Chinese can't wipe us out, but they can create a limited war. In Kashmir, there is a link road between Pakistan and Sinkiang. They can definitely create some problem. Our policy is, politically and militarily, to deter Pakistan from this. The Chinese won't do it alone because of other problems. To deter Pakistan, it is important that you live up to the assurances you gave to Tikki. Whether you do it publicly...

Kissinger: I told your Ambassador we had no arms programs under consideration. I told your Prime Minister that to redress the balance would be impossible; it would also require credits, which are also impossible. From time to time there are requests for cash sales.

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Singh: Like the \$300 million.

Kissinger: That was a previous commitment.

Kaul: A "one-time exception," it was called.

Kissinger: When it comes to cash sales, we can't be against cash sales. They don't have much cash.

Singh: Abu Dhabi, Iran, have it.

Kissinger: When there is a request, there may be a study going on at low levels on the bureaucracy, which leaks. But we can't get into a large program of any kind. From the point of view of your strategic planning, you can count on the fact. If there are greater requests, we'll tell you, so you won't read in the papers about 200 tanks. It's not being considered. There are no requests now.

Our basic approach is we do not intend to do anything that will affect the strategic balance in South Asia.

Singh: Maybe not from your calculation, but from our point of view we will be compelled to add to ours.

Kaul: And it will have political repercussions.

Kissinger: I want to explain our bureaucratic situation. It's a mistake, frankly, to escalate it to high-level consideration. I've tried to keep it at a low level.

Singh: It should be given high-level policy consideration.

Kissinger: But it is in your interest to keep it at a low level in our government. Because the low level can't do anything. I keep reading in the newspapers that there is a review. You can look at it two ways: a review is a way of doing nothing. If we were seriously giving arms to Pakistan, I wouldn't give it to the South Asia desk, which is against it and will certainly leak it.

Singh: And we can count crates.

Kissinger: There is no way to do it secretly. I can give you an assurance there will be no secret, clandestine shipment of arms to Pakistan. There are requests that come in, but they have not reached the President.

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I don't want to read this in the Indian press.

Kaul: I have given your State Department figures that the Pakistanis have greater airpower, fire power, than before the war.

Singh: But as Defense Minister I have to say they can never war on us. But this would harm our relations.

Kaul: And it would damage the process of normalization.

Kissinger: As the Simla Process continues, even the slight arguments that can be made... For historical reasons we cannot be indifferent to threats to the integrity of Pakistan. But we don't think in terms of balance; we're against Pakistani military pressure on India. I can't exclude there are studies going on, but they have not reached the President. If they ever reached the President, I would tell your Ambassador. I can tell you now it will not happen in the near future. There will be no surprises.

Kaul: The present declared policy is no lethal equipment for either side.

Kissinger: Yes, and I have said it to the Congressional committees.

I don't know what I will say to your press.

Kaul: Say it's not the proper forum.

Kissinger: Frankly, it's a problem with China. We won't join in an attack on India.

Singh: They plead with you to aid Pakistan.

Kissinger: For three years they pled with us. But we have never done it.

Singh: Also the Chinese intrusions in West Bhutan, Sikkim, disturb us.

Kissinger: We have no interest in encouraging China against you. Our relationship is a marriage of convenience. If you read their speeches and philosophy, they're against us.

Singh: Well, I shouldn't keep you.

[After warm farewells, the Secretary departed.]