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DIRECTORATE OF
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Intelligence Memorandum

Pakistan, India, and Communist China: A Change In Relations?

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence
19 January 1971

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

Pakistan, India, and Communist China: A Change in Relations?

Introduction

For at least the past five years, Pakistan's need for Chinese support against India has dominated its foreign policy. Some time next summer, a mainly East Pakistani civilian government may well replace the present predominantly West Pakistani military government. The foreign policy views of such a government would differ from those of its predecessor. This memorandum explores some of the factors that will work both for and against change in Islamabad's policy towards New Delhi and Peking.

Note: This memorandum was prepared by the Office of Current Intelligence and coordinated within CIA.

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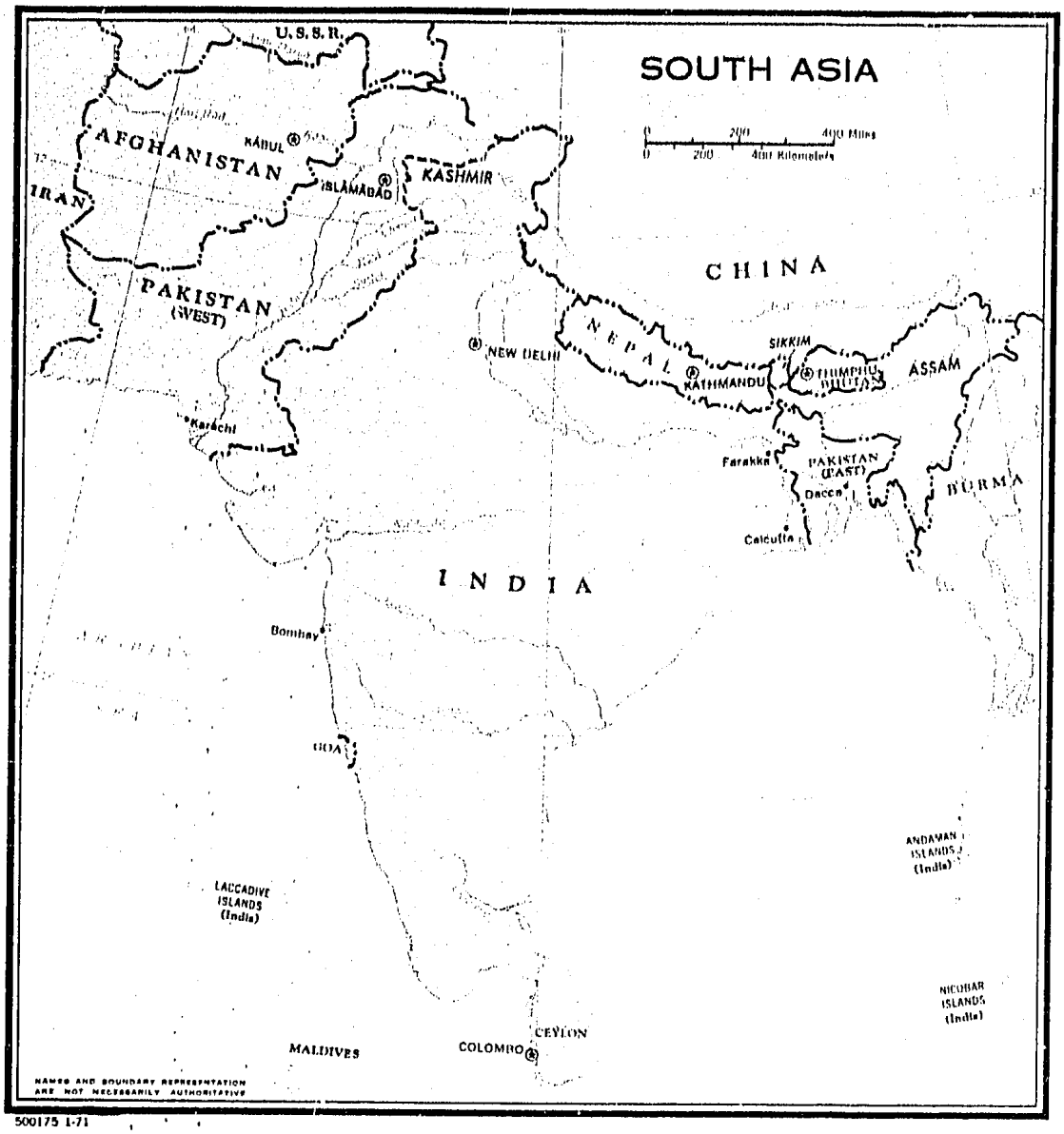

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The Present Policy

Indian efforts in the field of foreign policy were all directed towards one aim, the isolation of Pakistan and its disintegration. President Ayub Khan in Friends not Masters (1967)

1. Since 1947, when British India was divided into Muslim Pakistan and Hindu India, West Pakistanis usually have controlled the central government of Pakistan and dominated the influential military and civil service there. They have operated under the assumption that India planned either to absorb or to dominate its smaller neighbors. Among the many Indo-Pakistani issues, the one they most often have cited as evidence of Hindu expansionism is the continued occupation of predominantly Muslim Kashmir, an issue--in part a symbol of deeper antagonisms--that has led to two wars with India. New Delhi's insistence that Kashmir's accession to India is final and not further negotiable, combined with Pakistan's refusal to accept the status quo resulting from the 1949 cease-fire, has effectively blocked the building of good relations.

2. Because Pakistani leaders believed there was a clear military threat from India, they sought outside help against their larger neighbor. During the late 1950s and early 1960s an alliance with the US resulted in a massive US military aid program that largely satisfied Pakistan's perceived needs. In 1965, however, in the midst of one of the Indo-Pakistani wars over Kashmir, the US halted arms shipments to both belligerents. Pakistan with less diverse sources of arms and a smaller indigenous arms production capability than India, was forced to turn to other countries for assistance.

3. During the brief war, Pakistan received limited military and political help from a few Muslim nations, but its only effective ally was China. Pakistani leaders believe--probably incorrectly--that Chinese threats and ultimata kept seven Indian divisions tied down, thereby preventing an invasion of East Pakistan and the collapse of hard-pressed forces in the west.

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4. Since the war, Pakistan has sought arms from a number of sources, but with limited success. Only China (the Pakistanis believe that Peking is aiding them within the limits of Chinese capabilities) has been forthcoming, supplying tanks, jet fighters, and other equipment Pakistan felt it needed to replace combat losses and to try to match a buildup of the Soviet-supplied Indian military.

5. The Sino-Pakistani relationship has not been free of problems, but Pakistani leaders have seen few alternatives to its continuation. Ideologically, the West Pakistan establishment--based on landowners and industry--has had almost nothing in common with China's Communist rulers, and this has led them to suspect Chinese motives and to be concerned over possible Chinese interference in Pakistan's domestic affairs. Chinese arms, although welcome, have been of inferior quality, and Peking has not always been able to supply necessary spare parts or meet agreed delivery schedules.

6. Of most concern to the Pakistanis, however, has been the fear, especially after Yahya came to power in March 1969, that Peking was losing interest in Pakistan. Indian attempts over the past two years to reach a rapprochement with China have worried Islamabad, and the continued postponements of Chou En-lai's visit to Pakistan--which has been talked about for several years--has added to this concern. The warm reception given President Yahya Khan in Peking in November 1970, coupled with an extensive grant of economic credit--at that time the second largest ever given by China--did not completely dispel Pakistani worries.

The Awami League Foreign Policy

We believe that normalisation of relations with our neighbours would be to the best advantage of our peoples. Mujibur Rahman in a nationwide political broadcast (1970)

7. On 7 December 1970, Pakistanis elected a national assembly that will begin to write a new

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constitution in February. If the delegates are able to solve a number of difficult constitutional problems and if their solutions are accepted by President Yahya Khan, a civilian government will come to power early next summer. The national assembly will become the national legislature--or the lower house if the constitution calls for a bicameral body--and its leaders will play a significant role in determining the country's foreign policy.

8. The Awami League's (AL) sweep of elections in East Pakistan means that--although it won no seats in the west--it will have a majority in the assembly. Its leader, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, would be the logical choice for prime minister should Pakistan decide on a parliamentary government, and, conceivably, the Awami League, acting alone, could form the first government.

9. Mujib has devoted himself to winning greater autonomy for East Pakistan and has never developed a comprehensive foreign policy. There are, however, good indications of the direction of his thinking.

10. Mujib and most East Pakistanis would not view India in the same light as have Pakistan's previous rulers. Because of their struggle for provincial autonomy the Bengalis of East Pakistan see domination from West Pakistan as a more immediate threat to their independence than India, and considerations such as Islamabad's competition with New Delhi for international prestige have been irrelevant to the Bengali cause. With the army seen as an agent of West Pakistan and with too few troops in the East Pakistan army to defend it from Indian attack, Bengalis have concluded that negotiation rather than military confrontation is the only feasible means of protecting their interests.

11. Opposing interests of the two areas of the country have carried over into differences over the relative importance of Indo-Pakistani problems. For the Bengalis, Kashmir is neither an

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emotional nor an especially important issue. During the election campaign, Mujib gave lip service to the self-determination for Kashmir, but has privately urged that the issue be set aside so that more important problems could be solved. In the past, Pakistan has insisted that all issues--including Kashmir--must be resolved, and New Delhi has refused to discuss the disputed state.

12. Mujib is primarily interested in resuming trade with India and in allocating water supplies between East Pakistan and eastern India. When Indo-Pakistani trade was halted in 1965, problems were created for both East Pakistan and eastern India. Pakistani jute is now shipped to Calcutta via Singapore, the agricultural products of Assam can no longer be exported by river through East Pakistan, and East Pakistan must import coal thousands of miles from China instead of from Indian fields only a few hundred miles away. In West Pakistan--where Indian and Pakistani economies were not closely linked--the restoration of trade has been unimportant. In fact, West Pakistanis have tried to take advantage of the Indian desire for commercial relations to force concessions on other issues.

13. In 1960, a major Indian - West Pakistani problem was solved when an agreement was reached on the distribution of the waters of the Indus and its tributaries. But, despite a long series of meetings over the past several years, there has been no solution to the parallel problem of the Ganges and Brahmaputra, which flow from India through East Pakistan. India will soon complete a barrage at Farakka on the Ganges that will divert water from East Pakistan to the Calcutta area. The Pakistanis claim that the loss of water will prevent development projects in some parts of East Pakistan and have even speculated on harmful effects to the area's ecology. Although the Bengalis have not viewed this problem with anything approaching the emotion Kashmir generates in the west, the Awami League has expressed its concern and at one point demanded that the issue be taken to the UN. Negotiations will be difficult,

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but Mujib apparently believes the problem can be solved, especially if West Pakistani demands do not complicate the discussions.

14. Mujib has said little about China in public, but in private he has been critical of its policies. He has called for Pakistan's withdrawal from CENTO and SEATO, but despite his neutralist statements and his leftist tendencies in domestic programs, he is still basically pro-Western. In East Pakistan, potentially the strongest opposition to Mujib both within and outside the AL comes from the far left and includes groups that advocate Maoist policies. For all these reasons, Mujib's predilections are to minimize Chinese influence in Pakistan.

15. The success of Mujib's India policy, however, will probably decide his China policy. Should he succeed in normalizing relations with New Delhi, the need for a Chinese ally will diminish. At the same time, the lessening of tensions on the subcontinent would make it somewhat easier for both the US and USSR to supply arms the Pakistanis may still want.

16. On the other hand, should Mujib fail to improve relations with India, he might well revert to the established Pakistani policy of close relations with Peking. Should there be difficulty in negotiations with India, this alone could demonstrate to him the value of having a Chinese card to play. Moreover, as West Pakistani domination lessens, India may well emerge as the greater villain in the eyes of Mujib and his followers.

Limitations on Mujib

The roots of confrontation between India and Pakistan go deep into our history and will have to continue until the cause of justice triumphs, no matter how heavy the odds. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in The Myth of Independence (1969)

17. Domestic politics may limit Mujib's freedom of action in dealing with India, despite the

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AL sweep in the National Assembly election in December. In those elections, the Pakistan People's Party, led by Z. A. Bhutto, won a majority of the seats in West Pakistan, and Bhutto now is attempting to make himself the spokesman for the country's western wing.

18. Bhutto served as foreign minister under Ayub Khan from 1963-1966, and his writings and speeches give a detailed picture of his foreign policy views. Bhutto is somewhat more extreme in his dislike of India than most Pakistanis, and he has fewer reservations about close relations with China. Although he disagrees with the military and the former West Pakistani establishment on most domestic issues, he differs only slightly on foreign policy. In any contest for power with Mujib, Bhutto might try for military backing by emphasizing foreign policy and the few other areas, such as limitations on provincial autonomy, on which he and the generals are in substantial agreement.

19. Should Mujib try to ignore the Kashmir issue, sacrifice West Pakistani interests to obtain Indian agreement on the Farakka Barrage, or move far enough from China to weaken West Pakistan's ability to withstand an Indian invasion, he might face a united West Pakistani opposition and the threat of military intervention. To avoid such a situation, Mujib might modify his foreign policy views, especially if by doing so he will enhance his ability to implement his domestic program and to gain greater autonomy for East Pakistan.

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