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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

27 August 1951

SUBJECT: NIE-41: PROBABLE DEVELOPMENTS IN THE KASHMIR DISPUTE TO
THE END OF 1951
(For Board consideration)

THE PROBLEM

To estimate Indian and Pakistani capabilities and intentions concerning Kashmir, and to indicate probable developments in the dispute during 1951, with particular reference to the possible use of armed force.

CONCLUSIONS

1. India and Pakistan have reached a critical state of tension over Kashmir, chiefly because of the Indian plan to hold Constituent Assembly elections between 10 and 30 September in most of Kashmir, including the Vale area. If held, these elections will produce an Assembly that will vote in favor of final affiliation of Kashmir with India.
2. The military forces of both countries are deployed in readiness for war, and very few additional measures would be required for either to go to war.

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3. The Indian Government is extremely unlikely to precipitate war, but is fully prepared to accept war and will not call off the elections or otherwise act to reduce the tension.

4. While the Pakistan Government is unlikely to precipitate war, there is a chance that it will do so to thwart India's Assembly plans. The danger of such action will be greatest during the period from September 15 to November 1. Thereafter, it may decline if the UN takes effective action toward an impartial plebiscite.

5. Apart from the governments' intentions there is a substantial chance that hostilities will be brought on by unauthorized action by the Pakistan Army, renewed communal rioting, or political pressure, especially in Pakistan. This likelihood will diminish only if there is a substantial lessening of tension, which we regard as unlikely in the period of this estimate.

6. In the event of war, fighting will almost certainly not be confined to Kashmir but will spread to the Punjab and to East Pakistan. It is unlikely that the UN could effect a cease-fire unless a stalemate was reached.

7. In any extended conflict India would probably be victorious, but its victory would not be quick or easy. Such conflict would almost certainly produce serious economic and political dislocation in both countries, regardless of the victor, and might open the way for a Communist coup in India. It would also probably deprive the US of vital raw materials now obtained from India and of potential air bases in Pakistan.

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DISCUSSION

Background and Current Status

1. The Kashmir dispute originated in 1947, when the Maharajah's accession to India led to an undeclared war between India and Pakistan. In 1949, a UN cease-fire left Indian forces occupying an area including the Vale of Kashmir and containing about 78% of the population. Thereafter, despite repeated UN efforts, the parties were unable to agree to terms for demilitarization and administration of a plebiscite to determine the permanent affiliation of the state.

2. In October 1950 the ruler of the Indian-controlled area of Kashmir, Sheikh Abdullah, announced plans for election of a Kashmiri Constituent Assembly. Pakistan denounced this plan vigorously, its leaders threatening war if it were carried out, and appealed first to the British Commonwealth nations and then to the UN. On 30 March 1951 the UN Security Council passed a resolution, sponsored by the US and UK, under which ex-Senator Frank Graham of the US was designated as UN representative to seek a solution to the demilitarization problem. India rejected the resolution (which Pakistan supported), but agreed to receive Graham, who arrived in the subcontinent on 29 June 1951. He is due to report to the Security Council by 29 September 1951, though he may seek delay.

3. Despite the Graham mission, Abdullah declared in June that the Constituent Assembly elections would be held as planned, between 10 and

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30 September. Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan then repeated that Pakistan would not permit such elections, and renewed the threat of war.

4. Early in July, allegedly to counter Pakistani military moves, India hastily reinforced her Kashmir garrison to 65,000 men, and moved the bulk of her striking forces to the Pakistan border in the East Punjab opposite Lahore, where she now has over 75,000 men including an armored division and brigade. Pakistan also straightened her forces, and now has about 18,000 men, with another 15,000 in reserve, deployed for use in Kashmir, and about 57,000 men in the Punjab border area, with another 7500 in reserve. On the distant East Pakistan front, India has 20,000 men against about 10,000 Pakistani.

5. Militarily, the Indian forces are now fully deployed in position for attack or defense. The present deployment of the Pakistani forces appears to be defensive in nature, but the further moves necessary for attack are not major in character.

Basic Objectives of the Parties in Kashmir

6. The dominant motivating force of both India and Pakistan on the Kashmir issue is nationalism tinged with religion. The Kashmir issue focuses the deepest passions of both countries, and since 1947 public opinions, particularly in Pakistan, has made the issue one of national prestige going well beyond its original foundations. To Pakistan, founded on the principle of a Moslem nation, it seems intolerable that the largest of the subcontinent's princely states, containing a predominantly (78%)

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Moslem population, should be handed over to India. To the Indians, who have waged a vigorous campaign to take over the princely states left uncommitted by Partition, it appears all but unthinkable to give up a state whose ruler has formally acceded to India. Nehru's feelings about Kashmir are intensified by his long association with Sheikh Abdullah, by the fact that he himself is a Kashmiri by birth, and by his strong belief in the concept of a secular state under which Moslems may have full equality.

7. Strategically, the Pakistani view Kashmir as an important military gateway which would enable India to threaten Pakistan's principal military headquarters and also major agricultural areas. Indian strategic interest is less marked; a Pakistani Kashmir would outflank much of the East Punjab, but the intervening terrain is difficult.

8. Economically, Kashmir's trade is with Pakistan rather than India. Possession of Kashmir would slightly improve Pakistan's control over the vital water supply obtained from the Indus River and its tributaries, though it would not prevent India from carrying out a present threat to impair the flow of two major Indus tributaries that rise in India.

9. Eventually, both India and Pakistan might be satisfied with less than the whole of Kashmir. However, both are adamant in demanding control of the central Vale area, the heart of the state, which has a Moslem majority but is on the Indian side of the cease-fire line.

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Political Prospects in the Absence of War

10. India's trump card is her present control of the Vale. It is generally agreed that a plebiscite conducted under impartial auspices in the near future would produce a substantial majority in the Vale for accession to Pakistan. However, Indian control, with the inevitable intimidation and ban on pro-Pakistan religious campaigning, would with equal certainty produce a result favorable to India in any Constituent Assembly elections.

11. Therefore, it is extremely unlikely that India would postpone or cancel the elections. Although the Security Council wrote to India in June stating that the elections were contrary to the spirit of the March 30 resolution, there is no indication of any UN action to block the elections and almost no chance that India would heed the UN if it did act.

12. If the elections are held, the resulting Constituent Assembly will establish a constitutional government and will undoubtedly pass some form of resolution in favor of final affiliation with India. Although Indian spokesmen now concede that such a resolution will not be binding on the UN, India will certainly make maximum propaganda use of it. Moreover, the creation of a stable and "independent" government (in contrast to the puppet government of the Pakistan-occupied part of Kashmir) may enlist growing loyalty and support among the Kashmiri. Through this process the Indians undoubtedly hope eventually to present the world with a fait accompli, at least as to the areas now under Indian control.

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13. Confronted by this sequence of events, Pakistan -- if she did not go to war -- would certainly seek further UN action. Because of her willingness to accept an impartial plebiscite, Pakistan undoubtedly believes that she has a superior moral case at this stage of the dispute and that further UN resolutions will be favorable to her. At the very least she can count on firm support from Arab and Moslem nations and to a large extent from the British Commonwealth nations. Present reports indicate that the Graham mission has little chance of reaching an agreed solution. It may propose the appointment of an arbitrator (already rejected by India) or perhaps formulate its own plan for demilitarization, and these recommendations would go to the Security Council. At the same time Pakistan would almost certainly propose a new resolution specifically denouncing and refusing to recognize the Constituent Assembly elections. Reference to the General Assembly in November is also a possibility (and need not mean withdrawal of Security Council jurisdiction); Pakistan might welcome this as a more effective means of bringing world opinion pressure to bear on India.

Indian and Pakistani Military Capabilities

14. Indian land forces heavily outnumber those of Pakistan, and the Indian Air Force and Navy, though small, are likewise superior. Moreover, India has some industrial capacity for munitions production, while Pakistan has virtually none and would be heavily dependent on outside supplies. Another major Pakistani weakness is the fact that its transportation and communications network in West Pakistan parallels the Indian frontier and is extremely vulnerable to attack.

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15. In an all-out war with Pakistan, India probably would be victorious, provided Pakistan received no outside help. Initially, probably neither country would be likely to gain a decisive victory, and in the first stages Pakistan might even win some battles. But in time the balance would be tipped in India's favor by her advantages in troop strength, trained reserves, manpower resources, and industrial capacity. The Indian Navy could blockade Karachi, Pakistan's only major port, and the Indian Air Force could neutralize the Pakistani Air Force, though its own bombing capabilities are meager.

16. In a limited action designed by either country to take all or part of Kashmir, India would probably also be victorious, but its success would not be quick or easy. India's present troop superiority in the area would be partially offset by the mountainous terrain and by the difficulty of bringing up supplies and reinforcements over the single road between India and Kashmir. Indian forces would also be handicapped by cold weather in any winter fighting, from December on.

17. Important elements in any conflict would be the attitude of Afghanistan and of the Northwest Frontier tribesmen, particularly the Pathans. Afghanistan itself, which has been diligently courted by India in recent months, would probably make border raids on Pakistan, and the possibility of such raids is already tying down most of two Pakistani divisions. On the other hand, in spite of continuing Afghan propaganda, some of the Pathan tribesmen would probably fight again on the Pakistani side, as in 1947, and if so their warlike qualities would substantially augment initial Pakistani strength in Kashmir.

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18. Weather conditions would seriously hamper military operations in Kashmir and the Punjab until after the monsoon ends, generally about 15 September. For a short time thereafter, major rivers near the Punjab border would be deep and unfordable, and it has been reported that flood conditions now exist in the Lahore area and will prevent military operations there until at least 1 October. Thus, there may be a period of weeks when operations will be possible in the crucial areas of Kashmir but not on the Punjab border.

Likelihood of War to the End of 1951

A. Deliberate War by India

19. We estimate that the Indian Government (GOI) is extremely unlikely to precipitate a war during this period. Its reasons against war are formidable; (a) war would disrupt the Constituent Assembly elections and subsequent plans; (b) time is all on India's side — even if the elections were postponed, her possession of most of the disputed areas would still leave her in a strong position gradually to win over the Kashmiri; (c) any extended war would be a serious threat to Indian economic and political stability and would almost certainly lead to widespread communal rioting between Hindus and Moslems. The only contrary arguments of any possible weight are that (a) a war that led to quick victories in the West Punjab and East Pakistan would help Nehru's wavering prestige; (b) most of India, including Nehru, opposed Partition and would welcome the reintegration of Pakistan. However, Nehru is almost certainly too well aware of the risks to be swayed by these considerations.

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20. Indian actions are consistent with this view of her intentions. Her July troop movements could well have been designed to forestall Pakistani interference with the Constituent Assembly elections while further deterring Pakistan by the threat of a Punjab counterattack. There have been plausible but unconfirmed reports that before these movements India obtained a copy of Pakistani plans for initiating war in Kashmir while conducting a delaying action in the Punjab.

21. Nonetheless, India is clearly willing to accept war and is extremely unlikely freely to withdraw her forces in such a way as to relax the tension. In the event of war, India would certainly not permit hostilities to be confined to Kashmir, where Pakistan might gain some quick successes, but would take advantage of her superiority on the Punjab front and perhaps in East Pakistan.

B. Deliberate War by Pakistan

22. We estimate that while the Pakistan Government (GOP) is unlikely to precipitate war, there is a chance that it will do so through a local attack in Kashmir before the end of 1951. This possibility will be greatest during and immediately after the Constituent Assembly elections (roughly 15 September to 1 November). Thereafter it may decline, depending chiefly on UN developments.

23. Rationally, the arguments against a deliberate resort to war by Pakistan appear overwhelming. In a long war Pakistan would almost certainly lose East Pakistan (containing 60% of her population) and major Punjab areas, and her economic and political stability — even her very existence — would be threatened. However, the extreme statements of Liaquat and other Pakistani leaders indicate that they may have reached a dangerous mood of frustration in which these considerations would be outweighed by the desire to thwart the Constituent Assembly elections. Moreover, there is evidence that the Pakistani leaders, who tend to be contemptuous of Indian fighting qualities, believe that their forces might be able to make quick gains in Kashmir (even to capturing Srinagar) and conduct a holding action in the Punjab (possibly aided by the reported floods), after which Pakistan would appeal for a new UN cease-fire. Pakistani statements have used every possible argument to put India in the wrong and encourage support for a contention in the UN that military action in Kashmir is justified

because of Indian obduracy and the illegality of the Constituent Assembly elections. There is also some possibility that Pakistan would encourage the tribesmen to come in and would then argue that the hostilities were a local revolution; however, the presence of UN observers makes this unlikely.

24. If the Constituent Assembly is elected and convenes, the GOP's position will depend on whether the UN offers real hope of a solution that would offset the effect of the elections and permit an impartial plebiscite. The actions of the Constituent Assembly, plus Indian "crowding", will undoubtedly tend to increase army and popular pressure for war, and if the Security Council failed to take even the steps of denunciation and arbitration, the GOP might give way and start a war. However, so long as the UN appears to offer hope of effective action, the GOP will probably not resort to war after the Constituent Assembly elections if it has declined to do so before.

C. Unpremeditated War

25. Apart from the possibility of deliberate war we estimate that there is a substantial chance that war will be brought on during this period by a chain reaction of explosive factors. These include:

a. Unauthorized military action by the Pakistan army.

For some time a definite militant group in Pakistan has agitated for aggressive action. An anti-government plot from this source was nipped in the bud by the GOP in

the spring of 1951. While a recurrence of actual revolt appears improbable, members of this group might turn a border incident into large-scale conflict at any time.

- b. Popular feeling in Pakistan. The GOP has been able substantially to limit incendiary press and radio statements in the past, and US Embassy Karachi believes that it can continue to do so. But the possibility of a dangerous surge of feeling exists, especially in the event of:
 - c. Renewal of the widespread communal rioting that took place in Bengal in the spring of 1951.
 - d. Indian internal politics. Popular sentiment in India is notably calmer than in Pakistan, and Nehru appears to enjoy virtually unanimous support on this issue. However, there is now a struggle between Nehru and the right wing of the Congress Party, some elements of which are sympathetic to the strongly anti-Moslem and anti-Pakistan Hindu Mahasabha, though others are conservative businessmen generally opposed to military adventures. Apart from actual beliefs, there is some possibility of inflammatory statements for political advantage.

26. The chance of unmediated war arising from the above factors is likely to diminish only if there is a substantial relaxation of tension. Such a relaxation is unlikely to be brought about by any conciliatory statement on either side, although there is a bare possibility

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that Nehru and Liaquat would calm the waters by meeting to settle subsidiary issues, such as the water dispute. But so long as India pursues the Constituent Assembly plan, the only real hope for relaxation appears to lie in UN action that would not merely satisfy the leaders of the Pakistan Government but also enable them to allay army and popular feeling.

D. Conclusion as to Likelihood of War

27. In summary, we believe that while the chances are generally against an outbreak of war before the end of 1951, a substantial risk of such an outbreak nevertheless exists and will continue unless general tensions between India and Pakistan are reduced. The chief factors in the situation are whether and to what degree India pursues her Constituent Assembly plan, and the extent to which the UN is able to achieve a plan that has general world backing and affords at least the hope of an impartial plebiscite.

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Consequences of War for US Security Interests

28. It is extremely unlikely that a war could be confined to Kashmir, or that UN cease-fire efforts would be successful in the early stages of conflict, at least so long as either side had a hope of major immediate gains. It is particularly unlikely that India would accept a cease-fire that left Pakistan in control of the Vale.

29. War on a broad scale would have a very serious effect on US security interests. Its immediate effect would be to subject the US to heavy pressures, as in the Palestine war. Whether or not the US took an active role in attempting to settle the conflict, it would run a serious risk of alienating one or both of the parties and affecting their positions in the East-West conflict. Pakistan, if it survived, would be unlikely to take an active part in Western plans. India might be driven further toward neutralism, and it is possible that the Indians might even enter into some sort of working partnership with the Soviet bloc. Shortage of military supplies might drive both sides to seek aid from any outside source, including the USSR and, in the case of India, Communist China.

30. Specifically, the movement of strategic materials from India to the US would probably be impeded or blocked if the war spread

to Bengal. The most important material thus affected would be manganese, of which the US gets 30% of its supply from India. In Pakistan, the US would lose important potential air bases if the Government turned away from the West or lost internal control, or if important areas were overrun by India.

31. Perhaps most important would be the internal consequences in India and Pakistan. Although the outbreak of hostilities might initially strengthen the respective governments' control, any extended fighting would so weaken both countries as to make the maintenance of orderly government a matter of question. There would almost certainly be vast communal disturbances and a resulting increase in the severity of the refugee problem. Such conditions might permit the Indian Communist Party to take over various local areas, and there is a slight possibility that it would be able, conceivably with Chinese help, to assume control of the government. * Outright Communist control is extremely unlikely in Pakistan, but a state of internal chaos and immobilization would be probable.

* The consequences of Communist control of India to US security interest vis-a-vis the USSR, especially in Southeast Asia and the Near East, are considered in detail in NIE-23, "Position of India in the East-West Conflict."