

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

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MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

PARTICIPANTS: Dr. Sarabhai, Chairman, Indian AEC
Dr. Haksar, Special Assistant to the
Prime Minister
Dr. Henry A. Kissinger, Assistant to the
President for National Security Affairs
Mr. Winston Lord, NSC Staff

PLACE: Ashoka Hotel, New Delhi, India

DATE & TIME: Wednesday, July 7, 1971
Luncheon - 1:10 - 2:50 P.M.

High Level Communications

Before Mr. Haksar's arrival, Dr. Kissinger and Dr. Sarabhai discussed the need for better communications between authoritative policy making officials of the two governments. Dr. Sarabhai stressed the need for India and the U.S. to exchange conceptual views of their long term objectives so as to rise above the buffeting of tactical events which the two countries had experienced over recent years. He noted that the American intellectual community seemed out of touch and had lost relevance for the government decision-makers, to which Dr. Kissinger agreed. Dr. Sarabhai was delighted when Dr. Kissinger was appointed to his job, believing that this kind of thinking and exchange of views could then take place; he had missed seeing Dr. Kissinger several times in Washington.

Dr. Kissinger suggested that they try to arrange regular intimate meetings in groups such as this one at this level in order to explore strategic questions and clarify where each government was going. This idea was reaffirmed to Mr. Haksar when he arrived, and all agreed that periodic meetings of this sort, without the usual diplomatic frills, would be a good idea. Dr. Kissinger returned to this suggestion at the end of the conversation, saying that regular consultations, such as the ones with our Under Secretary of State, were very important for tactical questions like economic aid, but that such gatherings were unable to treat the big picture.

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The Soviet Union

Dr. Sarabhai asked Dr. Kissinger for U.S. views on the Soviet Union, China and South Asia. On the Soviet Union, Dr. Kissinger noted the pull between geo-politics, which suggested some relaxation of tensions, and ideology which for the Soviet Union, still meant something even though it was no longer so revolutionary. For example, it was important in terms of influence with communist parties around the world. Thus, there was an ambivalence in Soviet policy towards the U.S., and they often pulled back after taking some steps forward with us. Also, the extreme bureaucratization in that country made their policy ambiguous and cautious.

Nevertheless, the U.S. saw a better chance for relaxation of tensions with the Russians than it had for many years. The Nixon Administration was trying to make progress on concrete issues, such as SALT, MBFR, and Berlin, rather than thinking relations could be improved through atmospherics or cordial personal contacts. The Soviets were too serious for that approach.

In response to Dr. Sarabhai's question, Dr. Kissinger didn't think that the Middle East problem would spill over and hurt other aspects of U.S./Soviet relations. He admitted that U.S. policy had been less skillful on this issue, and perhaps the Soviets thought we were trying to push them out of the region. He believed that no Middle East settlement were possible without their participation, given their influence in the region, and that an ultimate settlement would come about only through U.S./USSR cooperation and influence.

China

Dr. Kissinger noted that the Chinese had no foreign policy experience as equals, since in their history they had either been culturally superior or dominated by foreigners. In addition, there had been 25 years of isolation between the U.S. and China. The U.S. was trying to re-establish communications and bring China back into the international community. The U.S. believed that it knew how to deal with the Soviet Union, but it was not sure how to approach the Chinese.

Mr. Haksar noted the insoluble conflict in China between the pressures for modernization and technical advance which called for an elite class and the revolutionary drive which called for complete democracy in the society. Dr. Kissinger commented that Mao knew what he was doing in the Cultural Revolution, realizing he had to shake up the bureaucracy, which in communist societies never changed and became very rigid. However, at the same time such upheavals created great tension in the society. He said that we are just at the beginning of a meaningful dialogue with the Chinese, and noted in fact that no country had recently had much meaningful discourse with them. Over the coming months the U.S. might be able to make some significant starts in its relations with the Chinese, although we had no illusions about our differences. In response to Dr. Kissinger's question, Dr. Sarabhai said that the Indians had no objection to the U.S. improving relations with Peking, a course which India had recommended for many years.

South Asia

The conversation then turned to the sub-continent. Dr. Kissinger said that under any conceivable circumstances the U.S. would back India against any Chinese pressures. In any dialogue with China, we would of course not encourage her against India. The U.S. knew that foreign domination of India would be a disaster. It was for a strong, independent India which would make for stability in the region. From what we knew, this was the Soviet aim as well, and we did not believe that the U.S. and Soviets had any conflicting interests in India. India was a potential world power, as well as being the region's only functional democracy, while Pakistan was a regional power. Our priorities would reflect these facts.

Dr. Kissinger believed that the \$20 million of arms shipments, which were the result of a bureaucratic oversight and not a new decision, would prove to be an unimportant episode in U.S./Indian relations. Such amounts of arms could not threaten India and would be forgotten in a couple of years, although he knew this was a very emotional issue right now. The U.S. hoped to use its influence with Pakistan, rather than cutting off all influence, and move it toward the type of political evolution in East Pakistan that we believe India wanted also. Dr. Sarabhai agreed with the essential insignificance of the recent arms shipments and acknowledged the theory of having some influence over Pakistan, but the problem was the long-term attitude toward the sub-continent that such actions conveyed.

Dr. Sarabhai stressed that since the U.S. and Soviet interests in strengthening India were closely parallel, the three countries could and should work closely together. When Dr. Kissinger asked what concretely he had in mind, he suggested coordinating the viewpoints of the three countries.

Dr. Kissinger said that Tri-Partite talks, for example, were out of the question now, and Dr. Sarabhai said that this was not primarily what he had in mind. Dr. Kissinger recalled the idea they had agreed upon for intimate high-level U.S./India talks; India in turn talked to the Soviet Union and could see if any developing tensions among the three needed attention.

Concerning Pakistan, Dr. Sarabhai and Mr. Haksar agreed that it was in India's interest to see this country stronger. In response to Mr. Lord's question, Mr. Haksar confirmed that he meant East Pakistan as well as West Pakistan. Mr. Haksar emphasized the need for a greater resonance between the aspirations of the people in Pakistan and the political system. He said that Pakistan was overly Punjabi-oriented and that other peoples were not sufficiently represented. Pakistan needed some form of democratization or the tensions there could spill over and make trouble for India. India too had its problems, but was able to diffuse them.

Dr. Sarabhai said that Pakistan was very unlikely to attack India. Mr. Haksar was less categorical, noting the hotheads among the younger generation which had been brought up on hostility towards India as opposed to the older generation which had memories of India and family ties there.

There was a brief discussion of the degree of economic progress in various parts of India, with the two Indians noting that the Punjabi area had done especially well owing to such things as miracle grains and the discipline of soldiers who returned to farm in that region. Since this was the area bordering Pakistan, it was fortunate that it was prosperous. Mr. Haksar noted that pressures against India from outsiders had always come across the northwest frontier and that it would be a very dangerous situation, for example, if Ceylon fell under malevolent influence, thus creating pressures from a different direction.