

**March 16, 1979**  
**Record of Discussion in the State Department on**  
**Friday 16 March: 14.30 Hours**

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**Summary:**

This document is a record of a joint Anglo-American meeting on March 16, 1979, regarding the nuclear situation in Pakistan. A significant point of discussion was the alleged support being given to Pakistan's nuclear program by both Libya and Saudi Arabia.

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*Mr. Newsom*  
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RECORD OF DISCUSSION IN THE STATE DEPARTMENT ON  
FRIDAY 16 MARCH: 14.30 HOURS

Mr D Newsom, Under Secretary of State  
Mrs L Benson, " " "  
Ambassador G Smith  
Ambassador A Hummel  
Ambassador T Pickering  
Mr P Kreisberg, Planning Staff  
Mr J Kahan, Pol/Mil Bureau  
Mrs J Coon, Director, Pakistan  
Mr D Tice, Assistant to Mr Newsom  
Mr R Deming, OES

Sir A Parsons, FCO  
Mr JA Robinson  
Mr MA Pakenham

REC'D  
MIN 166/307/1  
MINISTRY No. 76  
29/3

*a cc memo to Asst)*  
*2/3*

1. Mr Newsom said we were both familiar with our mutual problem over Pakistan. He invited Sir A Parsons to give his views on:

- a) What the Indians would now do, given their clear awareness of Pakistan activities?
- b) What the US and the UK, acting either separately or together, could do to turn the Pakistanis around or to secure a non-proliferation agreement applying to the continental or sub-continent area?
- c) Whether we must now accept the present position and seek to contain the proliferation dangers by wider-scale activities.

2. Sir A Parsons said that we felt that events in Pakistan were one of the most horrifying developments since 1945. Since its creation as a country Pakistan had never reached a level of real political stability. She had been ruled by a series of unsatisfactory governments, of which the present was one of the most unsatisfactory examples.

Given the present situation in the Middle East, the possibility that Arab money might now be available to assist the Pakistanis in their efforts only added to the grave dangers. Of all the countries in the world who might achieve a nuclear weapons capability, Pakistan was one of the least desirable. The apparent readiness of the Pakistanis to adopt a confrontational position, as revealed in their response to Mr Christopher's representations in Islamabad, was profoundly depressing.

3. Sir A Parsons continued that we concluded we should therefore make a very major effort to turn the Pakistanis around. So far we had only taken mechanical action, applying certain regulatory measures to prevent exports of sensitive UK materials to Pakistan. As a result, the Pakistanis must to some extent have recognised the extent of our knowledge and our intentions. So far, at US request, we had taken no diplomatic action.

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4. Ministers had approved the regulatory measures. Consideration of further steps by HMG had so far only been conducted at official level, although we should need to seek the views of Ministers before long. We were contemplating wide-scale diplomatic action, to include Arab countries, and we believed that they might conceivably be ready to be helpful. We were also thinking of sticks to use against the Pakistanis such as an aid cut-off; and of wider non-proliferation concepts, such as we had explained to the US Embassy in London the previous week. In addition we were giving thought to the desirability of going public with our knowledge; we were aware of both the advantages and disadvantages of such an action. Conclusions had still to be reached at official level, and these would be put to Ministers after his return to London. We should then need to co-ordinate our next steps.

5. Mr Newsom explained the US legislative position. The Glenn Amendment to the International Security Assistance Act of 1977 dealt with reprocessing; the Symington Amendment to the same Act dealt with enrichment.

the Administration had concluded that there was overwhelming evidence that the Pakistanis were conducting an enrichment programme which might produce some sort of explosive device within two to five years. They had therefore accepted that the provisions of the Symington Amendment must be applied to Pakistan. One aid project to Pakistan was in the process of being signed, and 50 places in the US military training programme had been allocated to Pakistan this year. Congress had been informed that these commitments would stand but no further obligations under the 1977 Act would be undertaken until diplomatic efforts might resolve the situation.

6. Mr Newsom said that the Administration were being very careful to avoid a determination which would damage this approach. Consultations with the Hill had been very limited; so far Congress had co-operated. The Administration expected the current position to become public eventually; he noted that echoes of it were already appearing regularly in the Indian press. Some of the future options now under review involved the transfer of greater US resources to Pakistan but, under current legislation, this might prove impossible. However, the legislation did not prevent the provision of PL480 or military sales (without credit). Mrs Benson noted that, even without the Amendments, the US would face similar problems but the timescale for handling them would be longer.

7. Mr Newsom said that some of the options under examination by the US were similar to the British ideas; some involved approaches to the Indians, some to the Pakistanis; some envisaged the combined pressure of the group of aid donors. None had total appeal or carried a sure guarantee of success. He invited Mr Kreistery to outline the options.

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8. Mr Kreisberg said that there were four sets of options under review, involving both sticks and carrots.

(i) The first set comprised a series of dis-incentives stemming from the Symington Amendment, US foot-dragging on debt re-scheduling, and approaches to other Governments; and a series of mirror-image incentives, such as additional aid and security assistance from the US and other countries.

(ii) The second set addressed the options in the UK paper. However, he noted, the Indians had so far been totally adamant (most recently during the Christopher visit to Delhi) in rejecting the whole concept of a region of enhanced security by guarantees and assurances. It was hard to construct a scenario which the Indians could accept and which did not include Chinese agreement to stop nuclear testing and sign a CTB. \*

(iii) The third set covered bilateral and multilateral security assurances to Pakistan, based on the theory that the Pakistanis wanted a nuclear weapon capability for security reasons and not for domestic political considerations. Any US agreement to extend added protection to Pakistan would create very difficult political problems for the Administration.

(iv) The fourth option was to confront Pakistan with an international public challenge, using fora such as the UN, the IAEA, and the Non-Aligned Movement (in which Egypt and Yugoslavia might be helpful). Possible Pakistan reactions to such a move were unclear. The Saudis and the Chinese were important factors. The Chinese were probably ready to be helpful in terms of applying diplomatic pressure. But would they go further, possibly risking serious damage to their bilateral relations with Pakistan? It would be useful to have a British view on this.

Mr Kreisberg concluded that there was a fifth possibility, which was not a US option as such. How long did the UK think that the Indians would allow the Pakistanis to proceed unhindered down the nuclear road? Mr Newsom noted the possibility of pre-emptive Indian action against an emerging Pakistan weapons capability.

9. Mr Hummel said that, although he did not rule out any of the above options, he took a slightly different view on the timing of these problems. He believed it was only a matter of days before the issue received international publicity. He noted the coverage already being given to the issue by the Indian press. For that reason there was no longer any need to react with utmost speed and

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\* Does this mean the US have a draft of the instruments of agreement/sign? \*

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to make panicky responses. We should therefore concentrate on the longer term, beginning with full-scale consultations with all relevant countries as soon as the release of the news appeared imminent. He had recommended to the Department that there was no need to choose, at this point, between the options, since these consultations might well throw more light on the preferable solutions

10. Sir A Parsons agreed that it was strange that the news had not yet become public knowledge. When this happened, what effect would it have on the Pakistanis? Was there any intrinsic reason for us to avoid taking steps in public? Would the Pakistanis turn nastier (if this were possible) and become even more obdurate?

11. Mr Hummel said it was hard to assess their reactions. Public attitudes would be different from those on the French reprocessing deal. That had been a public contract which all in Pakistan felt should be fulfilled. The current programme was covert. When it was exposed it would make a mockery of Pakistan official statements (eg on the SANWFZ) and assurances to other countries. Some would feel uncomfortable in these circumstances. But Zia and his closest advisers had crossed an intellectual bridge; only the severest penalties would make them re-cross it, and these penalties would have a substantial and perhaps unhelpful effect on the attitudes of other Pakistanis. He thought there was a slim chance that another Pakistan Government, not that of Zia, might reverse the present policy.

12. Sir A Parsons noted that Indian actions would be affected by public revelation of Pakistan intentions. Would they find it easier or harder as a result to respond helpfully to our ideas and how would an international publicity campaign affect the possibility of Indian pre-emptive action? Mr Kreisberg noted that the Indians could always find or manufacture a reason to act as seemed best to them at the time against Pakistan. Sir A Parsons, drawing attention to the link between India and China, thought the Indians would have to take account of possible Chinese reactions in considering their own. Mr Kreisberg believed that Chinese action against Vietnam made the Indians all the more ready to believe the worst of China. He thought it was not inevitable that the Pakistanis would all approve the development of nuclear weapons on the sole justification that they had been driven to do so by Indian pressure.

13. Mr Smith agreed with the UK assessment that current events were the worst international prospect since 1945. Given the inevitability of publicity before long, it was a waste of time to speculate on our public reactions. We could count on the Russians to do some of our work for us, as they had with South Africa. He thought that we would do better to pay heed to Indian views than to seek to avoid risking damage to our relations with Pakistan. He thought that both the Moslem countries and the Black Africans would have a problem in reacting to Pakistan news, since they now advocated such stern

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measures against South Africa for the same reasons.

14. Mr Smith agreed with Mr Hummel that we should now try to broaden our vision. He liked the British paper but thought that as a fall-back we should consider wider concepts. If a Moslem bomb were now on the cards, we must reckon with the implications for the Israelis. They might as a result be interested in a broader nuclear free zone involving both the Middle East and South Asia. He drew attention to the longer term, and the very real anxieties aroused by the prospect of nuclear weapons in the hands of the Libyans, for example. Perhaps some speculation could be given to the idea of a future international force, providing both Pakistan and India with mutual deterrence. He was attracted by the concept of a bilateral arrangement between these two countries. It made it easier to negotiate if the status quo in some respects were allowed to remain and the Pakistanis were not required to give up all their sensitive nuclear facilities, including the re-processing plant. Greater US flexibility over Tarapur and Canadian co-operation over Kanupp would help the deal along and could induce both India and Pakistan to accept. Such a deal, while it would involve a change in current US legislation, might also be saleable to Congress.

15. Sir A Parsons asked, on the assumption that some possible approaches would be overtaken by wide international publicity, how we should raise the issue in UN disarmament circles, where the Pakistanis had recently been making some holier-than-thou statements. Would the Russians take it up? Mr Smith thought that the Russians could be expected to take it up in every conceivable forum - the CD, IAEA, the Security Council, where they might demand a debate on a threat to world peace. Mr Robinson said that Mr Smith's optimism about the possible Indian reaction to a bilateral arrangement was striking. He thought that the Christopher visit had provided little evidence to support this. Mr Smith noted that a bilateral arrangement

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would have to be embellished with additional elements not discussed during the Christopher visit.

16. Sir A Parsons said that the Secretary of State would be in Delhi from 19 to 21 April. What sort of reaction could he expect, were he to put some of these ideas to the Indians? Mr Newsom said that there was a better chance of the Indians co-operating if Morarji Desai were consulted privately first. An initial approach to Shankar or Vajpayee would offer less chance of success. Mr Kreisberg noted that at the Special Session, Mr Desai had gone further than ever before in stating his opposition to regional security arrangements. He had appeared hostile in principle to such concepts.

17. Mr Pickering noted that part of this opposition was based on his antipathy to vertical proliferation. If SALT II and CTB began to show signs of success, there was perhaps more chance of Indian co-operation. At the Special Session Mr Desai had totally committed himself against the development of nuclear weapons. A package deal could include assurances by NWS similar to those in the Tlatelolco Treaty. He supported Mr Smith's argument that it would be helpful if the US showed greater flexibility over Tarapur.

18. Mr Hummel thought that by the time Dr Owen arrived in India, following international publicity on Pakistan intentions and public statements by many important countries, Indian views might have changed. Mr Smith agreed, so long as the main theme of public agitation concentrated on the Indians being ultimately responsible

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and guilty for Pakistan's weapons objectives. Mrs Benson noted that the influence of the Group of 77 was another important factor. Mr Pickering added that yet another might be the Zia offer of mutual renunciation of nuclear weapons. If this were maintained, the onus would then be on Mr Desai to make the decision for good or ill. Mr Smith, picking up Mrs Benson's point, noted that a number of developing countries complained vigorously about the failure of nuclear suppliers to transfer sensitive technology. The case of Pakistan would show the accuracy of suppliers' anxieties. It was logical that these developing countries should help to turn the Pakistanis around.

19. Sir A Parsons noted that the Prime Minister owed Mr Desai a response to his latest letter. What would be the most useful line, in the US view, for British officials to offer their Ministers, who had not yet been fully briefed on all the options and ideas being considered at official level? Should some of these ideas be included in the Prime Minister's reply? Mr Hummel asked whether we knew for certain that the Indians were aware of our three (sic)-to-five year estimate. This was an important point to put to Mr Desai, since it showed that the Indians had more time to solve the problem than they appeared to believe. Mr Kreisberg said that Ambassador Goheen believed that both Mr Sethna and Mr Vellodi were aware of our minimum three year estimate.

20. Mr Newsom suggested that the best reply to Mr Desai might be a re-statement of the problem and of the very keen interest taken by the Prime Minister; a description of the time-frame in which we were operating; and a reference to the forthcoming visit by Dr Owen, who would have some new ideas to raise. The reply might thus set the stage rather than illustrate our thinking in a way which would enable unhelpful elements in Delhi to attempt to get our ideas dismissed before Dr Owen arrived. Mrs Coon found a recent article by G K Reddy disturbing, in its suggestion that Western suppliers were responsible for supplying Pakistan with the equipment and technicians to construct a bomb. It would be helpful for the Prime Minister's response to demonstrate the major efforts made by Western suppliers to prevent any sensitive material or technology going to Pakistan. Mr Newsom agreed. The Administration would give further consideration to the possibility of informing the Indians of what they had already done to turn the Pakistanis around. Sir A Parsons undertook to have further consultations with the US before the Prime Minister's response was transmitted. He emphasised that no final decision had been taken. In answer to a question from Mr Robinson, Mr Kreisberg said that Mr Vajpayee would be visiting Washington on 24 April, a week after Dr Owen was in Delhi.

21. Mr Newsom thought that the conclusion was beginning to emerge that the US, the UK and the international community as a whole did not possess sufficient leverage to prevent the Pakistanis going ahead, unless the problem were subsumed into a wider structure of arrangements, with a broader rationale. Alternatives such as the

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provision of an extra \$100 million in grant aid or a squadron of fighter bombers (which the US had reluctantly examined) would set a most undesirable precedent or gravely damage relations with India. In any event the price was too high. Sir A Parsons agreed. He noted that while it might therefore be true that an attempt to buy the Pakistanis off was a non-starter, by the same logic attempts to beat them into submission would be equally fruitless. Mr Newsom pointed out that the US had a legal obligation to impose penalties. Mrs Benson suggested that further thought should be given to the ideas on security guarantees advanced by Mr Smith.

22. Sir A Parsons thought that both sides were moving towards the belief that the only practical course was to produce some international structure and rationale, based on non-proliferation considerations, which might emerge as a result of the international agitation produced by publicity on Pakistan intentions. Mr Newsome wondered whether it was correct to assume that the Pakistan news would create as wide an alarm as we believed. Would other countries, apart from the Western weapons states, be equally concerned?

23. Mr Smith believed the Germans and Japanese would voice very strong concerns. Mr Pickering noted that they had been helpful over nuclear supplies to Pakistan. Mr Smith thought that head-lines would be necessary to ensure that urgent action followed. Mr Kahan pointed out that following the Indian explosion in 1974 other countries had been sensitised to the problems of proliferation. The Pakistan case could be used in public to open up debate, from concentration on supplier issues, on the ideas advanced by Mr Smith. Mrs Benson agreed.

24. Sir A Parsons said that we had been considering diplomatic action without the influence of head-lines, but the current discussion was now proceeding on the basis that head-lines were inevitable, and soon. He thought that while there would be some private satisfaction with Pakistan intentions in Arab countries, Western and Eastern Europe and much of Latin America would be firmly hostile. Mr Pickering asked why there had been so little reaction to the current Indian press coverage. Why had the Russians said nothing? He wondered what was the best forum for us to employ. Should we not take advantage of head-lines to orchestrate a campaign of like-minded countries? Mr Kreisberg said that the question of Israel must also be considered. Pressure on Pakistan would be contrasted with the way we dealt with Israel. He was not sure that the G77 reaction would be sympathetic to our cause. Even if it were, it could be unhelpful in the Israel context. Mr Newsom agreed that a sympathetic reaction from G77 was by no means certain.

25. Mr Hummel asked how the Pakistanis planned to defend themselves against public opinion when the news broke. Agha Shahi had already told Mr Christopher that they planned to do so in public, and

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appeared confident that they could get away with it. Obviously they had their case well prepared; they could be expected to raise the issue of discrimination by developed against developing countries, and against Moslems in particular. We should give some thought to how best to counter their likely arguments. He noted that only three countries (the UK, France and China) had been briefed by the US on the results of Mr Christopher's visit and the current position as a result of this. Sir A Parsons said that we had talked to the Japanese, Germans and French about nuclear supplies to Pakistan. The US was the only Government to whom we had shown our regional security paper.

26. Mr Newsom concluded that the Administration wanted to remain in close touch with HMG. As our respective thinking developed, the US would want to compare notes again and were ready for further exchanges, perhaps by means of a US visit to London. They would want to consider how to orchestrate European reaction to publicity, whether to stimulate this, and how to conduct public discussions. Further thought should also be given to the impact of public revelations on both the Indians and Pakistanis. Sir A Parsons welcomed the prospect of further discussions with the US before Dr Owen's visit to Delhi.

British Embassy  
Washington DC

15 March 1979

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