

**March 8, 1962**

**Summary of Conversation between Premier Zhou  
Enlai and Pakistan's Ambassador to the PRC,  
Rashidi (Excerpt)**

**Citation:**

"Summary of Conversation between Premier Zhou Enlai and Pakistan's Ambassador to the PRC, Rashidi (Excerpt)", March 8, 1962, Wilson Center Digital Archive, PRC FMA 105-01799-02, 9-16. Obtained and translated by Christopher Tang.  
<https://wilson-center-digital-archive.dvincitest.com/document/121570>

**Summary:**

Zhou Enlai and Ali Muhammad Rashidi discuss the disputes between Pakistan and India and Afghanistan, and China's positions in those conflicts.

**Credits:**

This document was made possible with support from MacArthur Foundation

**Original Language:**

Chinese

**Contents:**

Translation - English

[...]

Zhou Enlai discusses how, regardless of their size, all countries should be amicable

Zhou Enlai thanked the Ambassador for his friendly words, and said that his analysis of the situation allows the Chinese to better understand Pakistan's position and the difficulties it is facing. Imperialism is indeed like this-just as colonialism past and present, they all adopt policies of "divide and conquer." China too encounters these kinds of situations, as they want to break off China's Tibet and Taiwan. In Tibet, they have failed; but regarding Taiwan, they have not yet given up the idea. Our countries have similar past experiences, and it is thus easy to sympathize. Furthermore, our two countries share a concrete border; no conflict of interest exists between our peoples and we therefore have friendly aspirations and needs...

Rashidi: Pakistan is a small country, so it is only Pakistan that needs China, and not China that needs Pakistan.

Zhou: You are also a large country. In short, regardless of whether a country is big or small, all countries want close friends. You have analyzed Pakistan's guiding principles from your personal position and your view is wise; we share similar opinions. The Sino-Pakistani friendship is not an expedient measure, but is long-standing. We also want friendship with the Indian people, but Indian authorities refuse to act accordingly and they support an attitude of opposition.

China Hopes Pakistan Can Ease Tense Relations with Its Neighbors

Zhou said: My opinion emerges not from diplomatic relations but from relations of friendship. The problems Pakistan is facing are multi-faceted. The situations in East Pakistan with India, and in West Pakistan with Afghanistan are presently in a dismal state of affairs; imperialists opportunistically exploit this situation, causing Pakistan to fall into the trap of two military treaties, steadily getting bogged down deeper and deeper-this is a regrettable situation. Why is Pakistan unable to ease its tense foreign relations? Why can't the dispute between Pakistan and Afghanistan be mitigated? As I have been informed, Afghanistan is a small country, a backward country, and completely unwilling to antagonize [Pakistan]; if Pakistani-Afghan relations were eased, Pakistan would have no need to maintain such immense military expenditures. When I previously visited Pakistan, then Prime Minister [Huseyn Shaheed] Suhrawardy told me, Pakistan would not go to war with China. I said this I can believe. Pakistan has not shown hostility toward China, and China has shown even less hostility toward Pakistan. Suhrawardy said that, even if a war truly did break out, not only would the weapons the United States would provide be second-rate, but also the ammunition supply would likely be insufficient, and the US would not re-supply. I wish to communicate this point to you. Just now you said that we must have foresight, yet Pakistan not only needs to improve relations with China, but also needs to improve relations with Afghanistan; this complies with the interests of the Pakistani people and with the interests of Pakistan's development. It is entirely as your friend that I put forth these ideas. Additionally, in Pakistan's dispute with India, resolving matters through direct negotiations is better than going through the United Nations, because the UN has many limitations. The UN is a tool of American imperialism, which could not possibly be impartial, and instead is used by the US whenever it needs to add pressure on this issue or that issue. Therefore, easing relations with India can lighten Pakistan's burdens, saving money that can be used for economic development and reducing its likelihood of falling into imperialism's trap. Economic development is fundamental; India has done very little in this regard, relatively speaking. If Pakistan tries to immediately settle its disputes with India, it will naturally encounter difficulties, but these problems can be resolved gradually; even if they cannot be resolved, these problems can still be eased a little. Just now you praised China very much, but China's accomplishments are limited and a long period of hard work is still

necessary. If we gradually develop and become strong, we can better provide aid to all those countries that suffer oppression at the hands of imperialism. We have a duty to assist the countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America to achieve not only political independence, but also economic independence. Through each country's own efforts, these countries can shake off the conditions of backwardness. These opinions of mine perhaps do not accord with the actual circumstances of your country; they are merely for your reference.

The Pakistani Ambassador requests that China arbitrate the Pakistani-Afghan, Pakistani-Indian disputes

Rashidi said, I agree with your opinions in principle; this is the ultimate objective of our policy.

However, we should adopt a realistic attitude regarding Pakistani-Afghan relations; perhaps it could take several years to resolve issues, or perhaps they could even be resolved right now. I think it is appropriate to have both sides secure full authority from their respective government, and then seek Premier Zhou Enlai to discuss matters together and reach a decision; whatever decision Premier Zhou makes, we will act in accordance with it. But Afghanistan's difficulties are larger than those of Pakistan. Pakistan only smokes one side's opium, whereas Afghanistan smokes the opium of two sides. If Afghanistan were not a tool, the United States and the Soviet Union would not invest in it. Pakistan hopes that one day China will be strong and have 2 or 3 atomic bombs; then the US would believe that it has no need to continue providing aid to Jiang Jieshi [Chiang Kai-shek], and China could simply reclaim Hong Kong and Macau. At that time, with China's support, it would be possible to resolve the Pakistani-Afghan and Pakistani-Indian disputes. But, at present, aspirations are, after all, merely aspirations; Asia is still half-asleep, and we therefore pray that China will become strong.

Zhou Enlai indicates that disputes with neighbors should be settled directly and without third-party interference

Zhou Enlai expanded on several points. First, he said the ambassador was speaking of a future far too distant. In the future, there is bound to be a day when the countries of Asia will have the strength to defend themselves, not for the purposes of expansion, invasion, or retaliation, but rather for world peace. This is not now. Second, the question is: what about today? Every country should consider the problem of how to increase its own strength. The fundamental issue is economic growth. On this issue, if Pakistan can reduce tensions with its neighbors and set about the task of development, it is beneficial for national independence and the happiness of the people. Regardless of how difficult the other side makes things, you yourself should proceed with working hard on the difficult tasks you face; this will be helpful, even if there are only small improvements. Otherwise, you fall deeper and deeper into imperialism's trap, and your economy gets worse and worse. Third, you must rely on yourself to settle bilateral issues, and third-party states cannot intervene or interfere; it is not a good method for a third-party state to use force to arbitrate. If one country invades another country, the circumstances are not the same; only those countries involved should convene an international conference to resolve the issue, just like the Geneva Conference [of 1954].

But it is always best to resolve bilateral disputes through direct negotiations.

Rashidi: Premier Zhou can perhaps now propose this idea.

Zhou Enlai: We are currently powerless. We can only promote this idea to you, we cannot promote it to India.

The Pakistani Ambassador suggests that Ayub Khan be invited to China for talks

Rashidi: On the India problem, Pakistan's situation is similar to China's-it is fundamentally a problem of Nehru. The issue of his turning to the US for money is his own, and not that of the Indian people. There will be a day when we can also think about inviting Ayub Khan to come to China and find a peaceful, non-political place, like Hangzhou, to talk face-to-face. President Ayub Khan is not a politician, he was not brought up in a political environment; you will not find that having discussions with him difficult. You might also find that discussing the Afghan issue obviously will be difficult; if initial talks don't succeed, we will talk again, or talk a third time; or perhaps even like the Sino-American talks, we will talk 108 times. On the Indian issue, I can raise matters with Ayub Khan in Hong Kong, but Nehru is not...

Zhou Enlai reiterates that it is inappropriate for China to interfere in Pakistan's disputes with its neighbors

Zhou said: What I just said was inspired by your friendly and frank words; I spoke my opinion, merely for your reference and really as a matter of diplomacy. If you wish, you can report my words to President Ayub Khan. At present, it is inappropriate for us to interfere in these matters; this would be unfavorable for Pakistan, and also for China. Even if it is purely from aspirations of friendship that we express our hopes for resolution, this also makes India nervous and gives them grounds to complain. We originally felt there is no need for tensions with India; but India is not willing to ease tensions.

Rashidi: India has its difficulties.

Zhou Enlai: As for Afghanistan, our opinion is different from yours. Afghanistan's circumstances are not the same as India's.

Rashidi: Premier Zhou can make a few suggestions on the Afghanistan issue.

Zhou Enlai: We can only express our hopes. To raise any suggestions would constitute interference.

[...]