

August 12, 1966

Intelligence Note 506 from Thomas L. Hughes to the Secretary, 'Will Communist China Give Nuclear Aid to Pakistan?'

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Summary:

Intelligence reports about recent visits to Beijing by Pakistani defense and science officials raised questions whether China was or would be providing nuclear aid to Pakistan. The latter was already developing close relations with China, a matter which was of great concern to U.S. policymakers, but INR analyst Thomas Thornton concluded that Pakistan was highly unlikely to seek a significant degree of Chinese nuclear assistance.

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
DIRECTOR OF INTELLIGENCE AND RESEARCH

*Intelligence
Note* - 506

August 12, 1966

To : The Secretary
Through: S/S
From : INR - Thomas L. Hughes *TLH*

Subject: Will Communist China Give Nuclear Aid to Pakistan?

Several recent developments have raised the possibility that Pakistan and Communist China may have entered into some sort of an agreement for collaboration on nuclear matters. There is still insufficient evidence on which to base a confident judgement of the interrelated factors:

- a) did Pakistan seek nuclear assistance,
- b) if so, did China agree to provide it, and
- c) if so, was it in the arms or peaceful uses area?

Our tentative judgement -- that as of now there is probably no agreement in existence -- is based upon a weighing of the following considerations.

Evidence and Indications

1. We have two reports from Pakistanis that an agreement for unspecified Chinese assistance in the nuclear field was obtained during the recent visit (July 27-30) of Defense Adviser Ghulam Faruque and Science Adviser Abdus Salam to Peking. Although the sources of both reports could have access to such information, they are completely untested and the circumstances surrounding the collection of the reports raises questions as to their reliability.

2. Upon his return from Peking, Faruque did speak of collaboration with China "in different fields" as well as the prospect of foreign aid for the nuclear reactor planned for Roopur, East Pakistan. The Pakistanis deny that

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there was any connection between the two statements, and the reports we have of Faruque's remarks lend credence to the denial.

3. Allegations are circulating in India that the Chinese and Pakistanis are engaged in nuclear "collusion." The Indian Foreign Minister has doubted publicly that China would give nuclear weapons to Pakistan; he did, however, claim to have information that there would be collaboration on the reactor to be built at Roopur, East Pakistan.

4. Pakistan initiated a major propaganda campaign decrying the Indian arms buildup and alleging that India is already committed to producing nuclear weapons **even** before Faruque left for China. This could be a smokescreen for a Pakistani plan to engage in nuclear cooperation with China, an attempt to blacken the Indian image without any basis of fact- **or it could reflect genuine** Pakistani beliefs.

5. Pakistani Foreign Minister Sharifuddin Pirzada has denied categorically on two occasions (August 2 and 5) that there is any nuclear collaboration between Pakistan and China.

6. In September 1965, Foreign Minister Ch'en I told a press conference that "as for the peaceful uses of atomic energy and the building of atomic reactors, China has already been approached by several countries, and is ready to offer them assistance." It is believed that this statement referred primarily to Indonesia; there has been no Chinese follow-up on it in any country.

7. We have no supporting evidence of Sino-Pakistani nuclear collaboration although there is little reason to expect that we would have it at this time.

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Factors Affecting Pakistan's Position

1. Pakistani foreign policy is currently seeking to avoid unnecessarily antagonizing the US. Cooperation on any nuclear matters between China and Pakistan would sorely try the already strained US patience; collaboration on nuclear weapons would be totally unacceptable. The Pakistanis undoubtedly realize this.

2. There are few things that would be as certain to trigger an Indian decision to produce nuclear weapons as would a Sino-Pakistani arrangement for nuclear arms collaboration. Even collaboration on peaceful uses would disturb India greatly.

3. If, however, Pakistan believes that India already has made a decision to produce nuclear weapons (and the chances are good that the Pakistanis do believe this), Rawalpindi has strong motivation to develop some sort of a countervailing nuclear capability.

4. Pakistan is far from having anything like the base that India possesses upon which to build a nuclear weapons program. It would need extensive Chinese assistance if it hoped to catch up with India.

5. Pakistan needs foreign assistance to develop its peaceful uses program, but it still hopes to receive this assistance from countries other than China. The cost of collaborating with China in peaceful uses would not be compensated by a significant political gain, and Chinese capabilities in the field of power reactors are believed to be quite limited.

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Factors Affecting China's Position

1. The Chinese are now with great difficulty and at great expense seeking to build a modest stockpile of nuclear weapons and during this process can hardly afford to transfer weapons to any other country. Shortages of technical skills and highly-enriched U-235, and the need to develop a plutonium capability, should put considerable restraints on any form of nuclear assistance -- peaceful or military -- to any recipient.

2. For reasons of security, the Chinese would be loath to divulge any significant information on nuclear technology to a foreign power. They would be reluctant to risk any leakage which would enable the US to assess Chinese progress in the nuclear field.

3. Peking may be fundamentally reluctant to help any immediate neighbor move towards a nuclear weapons capability, since this could eventually become a source of danger to China.

4. The likely Indian reaction to Sino-Pakistani nuclear collaboration -- a decision to produce nuclear weapons -- would be unwelcome to China.

5. The implications of any nuclear collaboration for US-Pakistani relations, would, however, be welcome to China in that it would split the US and Pakistan still further and increase Pakistan's dependence on China.

6. China could gain many benefits, at little cost to itself, by keeping the possibility of nuclear collaboration open without doing anything substantial to aid Pakistan.

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Conclusions

Did Pakistan Ask? Probably no. In weighing the factors, we believe that it is very unlikely that Pakistan would have sought collaboration with China in the nuclear weapons field. Pakistan would have been more likely to seek collaboration in peaceful uses, and we by no means rule this possibility out; nevertheless, there is no apparent strong motivation for Pakistan to seek Chinese peaceful uses assistance, except to discomfort India and perhaps demonstrate that Pakistan is not friendless and can compete with India even in the nuclear field.

What Would China Have Replied?

Probably "No, but..." Chinese agreement to cooperate in the weapons field is highly unlikely. They might have been more willing to cooperate in a peaceful uses program -- particularly in a manner that would maximize their political gains at the lowest material cost -- but even this is less than probable. They would hardly have rejected a Pakistani request out of hand, however, and there may be continuing discussions on the matter that will result in our receiving more reports and allegations.

In Sum

We remain unconvinced by the evidence thus far obtained that there is any definite plan for Sino-Pakistani cooperation of any type in the nuclear area, but if there is, it is most likely in the peaceful area.

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