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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

18 October 1951

SUBJECT: SE-17: THE CURRENT OUTLOOK IN PAKISTAN
(Draft for IAC Consideration)

The Assassination of Liaquat Ali Khan

1. On 16 October Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan was assassinated by a man now officially described as an Afghan national. The Premiership has been assumed by the Governor-General of Pakistan, Khwaja Nazimuddin.

Effect on the Stability of the Regime

2. There is unlikely to be any immediate threat to the stability of the regime. The popular reaction to the murder has been one of shock and revulsion and the assassination cannot be taken as an indication of widespread opposition to the government. The group of Moslem League leaders which Liaquat headed occupies a dominant position in Pakistani politics, has maintained a strong grip on the army and on the press and radio, and appears to be dealing efficiently with the situation. Although there is some danger of disorders in

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the traditionally turbulent tribal areas in the North West Frontier Province from which the assassin came, the government will probably be able to contain them. Opposition groups are weak. The army conspiracy of last spring appears to have been effectively crushed.

3. Nevertheless, the government is unlikely to provide as firm leadership as under Liaquat. Nazimuddin is a capable but relatively colorless East Pakistan politician, who appears to have been chosen as a symbol of national unity and as a neutral chairman; neither he nor any of his colleagues appears to possess Liaquat's high degree of personal vigor and political prestige. The absence of an established line of succession may encourage rivalry within the ruling group.

Effect on the Kashmir Dispute*

4. The assassination does not affect our present estimate that neither Pakistan nor India is likely deliberately to initiate hostilities over Kashmir prior to the end of 1951.

* See NIE-41, "Probable Developments in the Kashmir Dispute to the end of 1951," published 14 September 1951.

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The leaders of both countries appear genuinely shocked by the assassination and anxious to avoid trouble, and are probably capable of preventing public pressure from getting out of hand.

5. However, the assassination comes at a time when Pakistan's leaders are obliged to review their Kashmir policy. The meeting of the pro-Indian Kashmir Constituent Assembly, scheduled for 31 October, and the submission of the Graham report to the UN Security Council make further decisions inescapable. In the absence of any conciliatory act by India, the Pakistan Government would almost certainly exert the utmost pressure for firm UN action, either in the Security Council or through submission of the issue to the General Assembly. If these tactics failed to produce results acceptable to Pakistan, army and popular pressures for war would increase. Although the leaders of the new government can be expected to follow a policy at least as moderate as that of Ishaqat, it is possible that lacking his influence and stature they may be less able to withstand these pressures.

6. There is a slight chance that extremist elements in Azad (pro-Pakistan) Kashmir may attempt in the near future to take advantage of the situation and, by attacking Indian troops,

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to bring about a general resumption of hostilities in Kashmir. There is also a slight chance that some hot-headed Pakistani army officers might attempt similar action.

Effect on Relations with Afghanistan

7. The official description of the assassin as an Afghan national may create some popular pressure for war against Afghanistan. Pakistan may demand that Afghanistan make atonement for the assassination and renounce further agitation in regard to Pushtoonistan. If Afghanistan proves unresponsive, the Pakistan Government might countenance border raids by tribesmen, but it is unlikely that it would resort to war against Afghanistan.

Effect on Relations with the West

8. The new Prime Minister, the Foreign Minister, Sir Mohammed Zafrullah Khan, and the new Governor-General, Shulam Mohammed, have all shared Liaquat's pro-Western leanings. But the unsettled state of the Kashmir dispute, plus increasing anti-Westernism in the Moslem world, particularly as a result of the Anglo-Egyptian crisis, will make it more difficult for Liaquat Ali's successors to maintain a pro-Western orientation.

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