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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

18 October 1951

SUBJECT: SE : THE CURRENT OUTLOOK IN PAKISTAN  
(Draft for Board consideration)

The Assassination of Liaquat Ali Khan

1. On 16 October Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan of Pakistan was assassinated by a man first identified as a member of a fanatical society, the Khaksars, favoring a "holy war" to obtain Kashmir, but now officially described as an Afghan national motivated in part by opposition to Liaquat's suppression of agitation for an autonomous "Pushtoonistan" and in part by his cautious policy on Kashmir, where the assassin reportedly once fought as an irregular. The Premiership has been assumed by the Governor-General of Pakistan, Khwaja Nazimuddin, who has been replaced in his former post by the Minister of Finance and National Economy, Ghulam Mohammed.

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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, in contrast to the admixture of apathy and approval in Iran when Razmara was murdered in March 1951. The Moslem League group of leaders which Liaquat headed occupies a dominant position in Pakistani politics, has maintained a strong grip on the army and on the media for moulding public opinion and appears to be dealing efficiently with the situation. Although there is some danger of disorders in the traditionally turbulent tribal areas in the North West Frontier Province from which the assassin came, the government should be able to contain them. Opposition groups like the Khaksars are not powerful, and the army conspiracy of last spring appears to have been effectively crushed.

3. Over a period of time, however, the government is likely to be less firm and less powerful than it was under Liaquat. Nazimuddin is a relatively colorless though capable East Pakistan politician who appears to

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have been chosen as a symbol of national unity and as a neutral chairman; neither he nor any of his colleagues appear to possess Liaquat's high degree of personal vigor and political prestige. The absence of an established line of succession encourages rivalry within the ruling group. Finally, despite the initial popular reaction, the successful use of violence as a political weapon may serve to encourage the development of extremist elements and demagogic opposition groups.

Effect on the Kashmir Dispute

4. The assassination does not increase the presently small chance that either Pakistan or India would deliberately initiate hostilities over Kashmir at this time. The leaders of both countries appear genuinely shocked by the assassination and anxious to avoid trouble, and it is doubtful public tension would get out of hand.

5. There is some danger, however, that extremist elements in Azad (pro-Pakistan) Kashmir might attempt to take advantage of the situation. Prior to the assassination, the leader of the bellicose dissident element in Azad Kashmir, who probably has a considerable following among Azad Kashmir forces, had threatened to instigate an attack on the Indian forces designed to force a general resumption of hostilities in Kashmir. There is also an outside chance that hotheaded Pakistani Army officers not arrested in connection with last spring's conspiracy might take similar action.

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6. Moreover, the Pakistan Government will probably adopt a firmer policy with respect to Kashmir. The pro-Indian Kashmir regime's Constituent Assembly is now scheduled to convene 31 October and the Graham report is now before the UN Security Council. Pakistan's leaders will soon have to reassess Liaquat's Kashmir policy, which generally called for vigorous prosecution of Pakistan's claims but by means short of war.

7. It is conceivable that the shock effect of Liaquat's assassination, plus Graham's efforts, may lead, directly or through UN pressure, to a weakening of India's previous obduracy on Kashmir. It appears far more likely, however, that India will continue immovable on fundamental points. In the absence of any conciliatory act by India, the Pakistan government would be almost certain to increase its pressure for firm UN action either in the Security Council or through submission of the issue to the General Assembly. Moreover, the patience of the Pakistan Government and people in awaiting such action would be shorter than hitherto. There would be a substantial chance of something like a Pakistani ultimatum in the UN, and if this approach failed to

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show results, the chance of war, either deliberate or through army and popular pressure, might become serious.

Effect on Relations with Afghanistan

8. The identification of the assassin as an Afghan national, a point which the Pakistan Government may be emphasizing to divert attention from the Kashmir issue, will probably create some public pressure for war against Afghanistan. Pakistan may demand that Afghanistan make some specified gestures of atonement for the assassination and renounce further agitation in regard to Pushtoonistan. Even if Afghanistan proves unresponsive, however, it is doubtful that the Pakistan Government would wish to go to war or that public opinion, never as strong against Pakistan's fellow-Muslim state as against India, could force the government, with its control over the army and public opinion media, to go to war. Afghanistan, while disavowing all responsibility for Liaquat's death, will probably attempt to avoid exacerbating the issue, both because of consciousness of its military weakness vis-a-vis Pakistan and because of the recent fall from power of the chief sponsor of the Pushtoonistan campaign.

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Effect on Relations with the West

9. Liaquat's colleagues, notably Foreign Minister Mohammed Sir/Zafrullah Khan and the new Governor-General, shared his pro-Western leanings. Under the new stresses they are likely to face, however, they may well become more insistent that the Western powers support Pakistan vis-a-vis India and Afghanistan if they wish to be assured of Pakistan's close cooperation. Eventually, popular pressure may force them to take an even cooler attitude toward the West.

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