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Central Intelligence Agency



Washington, D. C. 20505

DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

11 July 1986

PAKISTAN: Responding to Recent Nuclear Demarches [redacted]

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Summary

We believe that Pakistan is determined to pursue its nuclear weapons program, despite foreign pressure. President Zia is likely to respond to the recent spate of hard-hitting demarches from Washington and Moscow on nuclear weapons development by making low-cost tactical concessions--such as temporarily halting or slowing uranium enrichment. Islamabad is even more likely to continue its low-cost confidence-building efforts directed toward India on the diplomatic front. But Zia will gamble that Washington will not put nonproliferation concerns ahead of its desire to have Pakistan continue to play a major role in supporting the Afghan insurgency. [redacted]

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Committed to Acquiring a Nuclear Capability

We believe Islamabad is determined to pursue its nuclear weapons program in the face of unprecedented superpower pressure not to do so. Views expressed privately by many Pakistanis and occasional public discussions of the nuclear issue indicate that Pakistanis believe their country faces a serious and continued threat from India and a growing threat from the Soviet Union; war with either could mean the end of Pakistan as an independent nation. [redacted]

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In our view, the Pakistanis believe they cannot count on outside help in a war with either India or the Soviet Union. They believe that China, the Islamic countries, and, especially, the United States have not effectively supported Pakistan in its three wars with India. We believe Zia's recent efforts at normalization with India have done little to allay Pakistani fears of dismemberment by India. [redacted]

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This memorandum was prepared by [redacted] Pakistan/Bangladesh Branch, South Asia Division, and [redacted] Issues Branch, Issues and Applications Division, Office of Near Eastern and South Asian Analysis. Comments and questions should be directed to Chief, South Asia Division, [redacted] or Chief, Issues and Applications Division at [redacted]

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Diplomatic reporting indicates the Pakistanis appreciate US military assistance and believe it will help make Pakistan less--not more--dependent on outside support. We judge, however, that the Pakistani military knows it could never match Indian or Soviet conventional forces. In the view of most Pakistanis, only the threat of nuclear retaliation would raise the cost of victory to a level their enemies would find unacceptable. [Redacted]

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We count both Zia and Prime Minister Junejo in this majority. Zia has demonstrated genuine flexibility on other seemingly fundamental issues--such as his Islamization program and the transition to civilian rule--but his intransigence on the nuclear issue suggests that he considers a nuclear deterrent indispensable. Available evidence suggests that Junejo is far less involved in nuclear decision making, but [Redacted] the traditional Pakistani suspicion of India he betrays in unguarded moments lead us to believe he is convinced of the need for nuclear weapons. Junejo, more than Zia, probably also sees the nuclear issue as one of sovereignty. Junejo has been outspoken in his criticism of a Western conspiracy aimed at preventing Pakistan from acquiring nuclear technology. [Redacted]

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Second-Guessing Washington

In our view, the Pakistanis are not convinced of Washington's commitment to nonproliferation. [Redacted]

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[Redacted]

[Redacted] Full approval by the Administration for a significant follow-on US aid program probably has reinforced Islamabad's perception that Washington will not jeopardize the Afghan program. [Redacted]

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We believe, however, that Zia is almost certainly less confident about Congressional views and probably doubts how many more times he can deny the existence of a weapons program. Zia probably is concerned that the Administration will share full intelligence on the nuclear program with Congress. Even if Congress passes the multiyear aid package, he may fear that it will require annual certification from the Administration before releasing aid funds. Moreover, Zia probably worries that New Delhi's lobbying efforts on the Hill against the Pakistani aid package could succeed unless Indo-Pakistani rapprochement can be put back on track.

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Tactical Concessions Likely

Zia's doubts about the Congressional response and his strong desire for continued US economic and strategic assistance probably will induce him to make short-term concessions on the nuclear issue. In our view, such concessions would mainly involve the pace of the program. [Redacted]

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We judge that the Pakistanis may believe they are so close to achieving a nuclear capability that a temporary slowing of the program--at least until the aid package clears Congress next year--would not be a serious threat to Pakistani security. Islamabad would hope that such a response--even if it did not convince anyone that long-term nuclear goals had been abandoned--would give its friends in the West ammunition to argue for continued support for Pakistan. [Redacted]

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Diplomatic Steps

In our view, Pakistan will continue to try to reduce nuclear tensions with India. We believe Indian representations to Moscow are at least partly behind recent Soviet pressure. Although Islamabad maintains the next step in reducing tensions is up to India, which has rejected Pakistan's previous confidence-building proposals, Pakistani officials probably believe they could regain the high ground by appearing to be forthcoming on the issue. At virtually no cost, Pakistan could:

--Renew efforts to move forward on proposals it has already made to India, such as the tentative agreement reached last year forswearing attacks on each other's nuclear installations or on a longstanding proposal for declaring South Asia a nuclear weapons-free zone.

--Ratify the limited test ban treaty Pakistan signed in 1963. Foreign Minister Yaqub Khan already has agreed to study this possibility.

--Renew an offer to sign the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty if India did or agree to mutual inspection of nuclear facilities.

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--Broach with New Delhi the idea of a "gentlemen's agreement" on the nonproduction of nuclear weapons,

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Pakistani acceptance of full-scope safeguards would be a convincing gesture, but such a step is highly improbable because it would seriously hamper--if not preclude--weapons production. In our judgment, the Pakistanis do not believe US and Soviet pressure has reached a level to warrant such a dramatic step. [Redacted]

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