

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

~~SECRET~~/NODIS/XGDS

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

PARTICIPANTS: President Nixon  
Secretary Kissinger  
GOP Congressional Leadership  
Lt. General Brent Scowcroft, Deputy Assistant  
to the President for National Security Affairs

DATE & TIME: March 8, 1974

SUBJECT: Middle East

President: It is very important not to talk about linkage. I don't know how Henry has stood it. He has been out there talking to everyone. There is movement on an agreement between Syria and Israel. It is more difficult than the Egyptian one, and we don't know when it'll be done. Don't predict. The Egyptian disengagement was an enormous achievement. Henry?

Kissinger: It might be helpful to summarize your basic strategy, Mr. President.

In October and November of last year we found a united front of the Soviet Union, Europe, Japan -- most of the world -- supporting the Arabs and then following generally the Soviet line. All of the issues were lumped together in one big ball. We were the only supporter of Israel, and everything we advanced the Soviet Union would block.

Our objective was (1) to break up this coalition, (2) to change the situation where the Soviet Union was the supporter of the Arabs and we were the supporter of Israel, and (3) to break out the issues into separate items.

We demonstrated to the Arabs that the Soviet Union could give them arms, but only the U.S. could give them political progress. The Jordanian crisis of 1970 and all our other actions were parts of this policy, to demonstrate that the Arabs would have to come to us.

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BY [initials]  
NARA DATE 2/4/04

President: At the time of the '67 war, the U.S. ended up on the Israeli side. This time, we saved Israel with an airlift; we stopped a possible Soviet intervention -- both of these looked pro-Israel. We saved Israel. But we did this in a way which enhanced our role with the Arabs and did not posture us as anti-Soviet.

Kissinger: The paradox of the situation is that it is in our interest to have Israel so strong the Arabs can't defeat it, so they must come to us for progress. We must keep the Soviet Union out but not frustrate them so that they actively oppose negotiations. Asad of Syria said he wanted U.S. equipment because I told him we wouldn't let Soviet equipment defeat U.S. equipment.

Sadat is a wise, moderate leader who permitted a reduction of tensions by agreeing to disengagement. He ran the risk of separating himself from the other Arabs; Asad immediately started a campaign against Egyptian disengagement. A Syrian disengagement is tougher. Egypt acts as an independent country and not as part of a pan-Arab movement; the Sinai is not close to Israel. But the Syrians are at the front of the movement of pan-Arabism; much of Israel used to belong to Syria, and the domestic situation in Syria is more complicated.

President: Tell us about Asad. Sadat turned out to be more able than Nasser.

Kissinger: Sadat is able. He is not mesmerized by exhortation or tactics. Asad is very intelligent, perhaps more intelligent than Sadat. Also there is a difference in background -- Egypt was British, Syria was French.

Syria doesn't want to be the first one to have made an agreement with Israel -- whatever the content. This is the reason we have adopted the procedure we did. We had planned to do it like Egypt and Israel at Kilometer 101. It became apparent to me, though, that this would just produce a situation where each side would constantly have to prove its manhood. The way we ended up was a way we could get things moving and lead into it gradually. The Syrians would reject anything I brought back, so I brought something very vague. Now they have said they have rejected it -- whatever that can mean -- and made a counter-proposal publicly -- thus getting that public element out of the way.

President:

The point is we won't get an instant settlement.

Kissinger: And they may attack -- to prove they can't win and must negotiate; to prod Israel back into the conflict; to force Soviet support; or even egged on by the Soviets.

President: There is no indication of the latter, and we don't want any anti-Soviet coloration to our policies.

Kissinger: The President is right. Soviet influence is down drastically. And they must be asking: what have they gotten from their aid?

President: You should know that we are prepared to help clear the Suez Canal. It is the right thing to do.

Burleson: What is the significance of the Iran-Iraq dispute?

Kissinger: We have no relationship to it. But if the Iranians tie down Iraq, they can't go to Syria. Iraq is a radical element in Syria. Syria can't fight back by itself.

President: What can the leadership say on the embargo?

Kissinger: As little as possible.

President: Why not say we are making progress -- apart from the embargo -- and hope to avoid rationing? We are working on negotiations and that will have a favorable effect -- but the embargo is a matter for the Arabs to decide. We are seeking peace as an end in itself -- the fact of the embargo makes it more difficult. They should lift the embargo as an end in itself because a positive American role in their countries is in their interest.

On the other point. Israel is saying: Between '67 and '74 you were our friend; now you are renewing relations with the Arabs, etc. The answer is this is not at the expense of Israel. We always will stand by Israel, but we are seeking better relations with the Arabs in Israel's own interest, and also to keep the Soviets out and not have Israel surrounded by countries either radicalized or under Soviet influence.

Kissinger: In fact, after the Syrian disengagement we plan to go back to the Egyptian part and seek a territorial settlement. Also with Jordan. Jordan is difficult because of Israeli domestic politics. Israel hasn't realized their choice is between dealing with Jordan and dealing with Arafat. They can't deal with neither.

We must deal with the situation one item at a time. This process has been very painful for the Soviet Union. Before, even we dealt with the Soviet Union as the spokesman for the Arabs. Now everyone is coming to us. We are not trying to force them out -- but their negotiating style is too legalistic for this situation -- and they also tend to push more extreme views.

But the Soviet Union has the capability of going public, stirring up trouble, etc.

President: The Arabs are very emotional.

Kissinger: A moderate Soviet policy is important -- therefore the President's relationship with Brezhnev is important -- and MFN. We can't put it to them in every area and expect them to continue to take it.

President: Remember, if the Soviet Union and China had wanted the Vietnam War to go on, it would have, and the POW's would still be there. Our interests are opposed to those of the Soviet Union in most areas of the world -- but we discuss with them our differences and we seek to avoid any of these issues from provoking nuclear war.

Rhodes: Do we have a promise of the embargo lifting?

Kissinger: The President's language in the State of the Union was Arab language. The problem is Arab unity. They have to have unity to lift the embargo. We have to decouple the embargo or we will be blackmailed at every step if they think we need it.

President: We can't link the two.

Kissinger: Take Faisal. He wants to lift the embargo, but by having it, he is at the head of the radicals -- for free.

Rhodes: We'll be playing the same game until Jerusalem?

Kissinger: No, he is not blackmailing now.

Bob \_\_\_\_\_: This tells me we ought to get off our duff and get going so the embargo doesn't matter.

President: Right.

Kissinger: One point on the MFN and credits.

President: Yes, this is very important to the world.

Kissinger: This is a case where an action produces the opposite reaction to what was intended. Cutting off MFN will push emigration back to what it was in the Johnson times, not increase it. It will radicalize their Middle East policy. We can't frustrate them in every area. The result of an MFN cutoff would be that after three years of detente they would be worse off than when detente started.

The story is we have been taken to the cleaners in detente. We got our way in Vietnam, solved Berlin, prevented war in Cuba, and got the Soviets moderated in the Middle East.

Until 1972 we were attacked for not making increased trade an end in itself.

President: I will veto if the credits are not passed. Our relations with the Soviet Union were cool during the '50s and '60s. We didn't trade; there was little communication. The new policy doesn't mean a change in attitudes -- I despise what they did about Solzhenitsyn, but he is in Paris, not in Siberia, or dead.

The question is how do you get the Communists to change? Not through the Glassboro technique -- a little of that is helpful. But great nations consult their interests, not their emotions. The primary US-Soviet interest is that we are both nuclear powers, and I can push a button to kill 20 million Soviets and he can kill 20 million Americans, and we are in consultation to find common points of interest, and the basic point is we are not interested in destroying each other. There is a gradual change which we can anticipate in a very long term. But in getting there we must avoid a holocaust. If detente breaks down, we will have an arms race, no trade -- that's not very important --

confrontation in the Middle East and elsewhere, and they will go right on repressing their people and even more so. The only alternative is a \$100 billion increase in the defense budget and that might not do it. I don't think that is viable, because they can keep up an arms race.

Kissinger: One other point: Our careful detente policy prevents a wild European detente policy toward the Soviet Union. They can't do it now, because they fear we could outbid them.

President: We are trying to build a new world--not to change human nature, but to break the ice which prevented peaceful settlements of disputes. That is where we are now, and we must build now on this. People like Jackson think I have gone soft -- I know them and they know me.

Our options are very clear. We can follow our present track, build up our defenses, or bug out of the world.

Beall: Can we get this to the Jewish community?

President: Henry and I are trying to. They are worse than Jackson. Isn't it better for the U. S. to have influence with its enemies than the Soviet Union? Israel says all it needs is weapons. But even if they can hold off the Arabs, there is the Soviet Union. Who can keep the Soviet Union at bay? It is in Israel's interest to have us on good terms with the Soviet Union.

Kissinger: We are making progress. The leaders are receptive now and I think they are working on Jackson. But labor and others are running with this ball.

President: There is also a partisan interest that this diplomatic effort would fail.

Scott: The worse case may be a vetoed bill, and we would have to try then for a bill with MFN.

Handwritten notes in top left corner: "LSD 101", "XISE 101", "Sent cards to Shultz".

to Repub Leadershiparty  
8 Mar 74

P Very important not to talk about linkage. Don't know how K has stood it - he has talked to my group. There is movement on S-I. It is more difficult & we don't know when. Don't predict. E. change agent was enormous achievement.

K Might be helpful to summarize your basic strategy W/P.

In Oct-Nov last year we found united front of SU, E. ar, Jap - sort of a world supporting Arabs & then following gently sweet line.

All issues were lumped together in one big ball - we only I supporter + everything we advanced & SU we would talk.

Our objective was (1) to break up this coalition (2) Change situation SU supporter of Arabs + we of I. (3) Break out issues into separate items.

We demonstrated to Arabs that SU could join them on issues, but only US could give them job, progress. Jerusalem issues + all others were parts of this policy to demonstrate that Arabs would have to come to us.

P At time of '67 war, US ended upon I side - this time we saved I as a right; we stopped <sup>power</sup> Soviet intervention - both of these looked pro-I. Had we saved I. But Arabs did this in a way which enhanced our role w/ Arabs & did not posture as anti-SU.

K The paradox of restraint is it is in our interest to have I so strong Arabs can't defeat it so they must come to us for progress. Must keep SU out but not frustrate them so that they actually pose negotiations. Goal should be convinced US equip cause we wouldn't let Sov equip defeat US equip.

Sadat is a wise independent leader who appreciated



rejection of tensions by engagement - He can't risk of separating himself from other Arabs - Assad himself started campaign against E engagement - Syrian dissent is tougher tho, E is subject not part of pan-Arab movement; Syria not close to I; Syrians are at front of pan-Arabism; much of I used to belong to Syria and domestic situation in Syria is more complicated.

P Tell us about Assad. Sadat turned out more apt than Nasser

K Sadat is abt. He is not mesmerized by emotional tactics. Assad is very intelligent, perhaps more than Sadat. Also a difference in background - E is British, Syria French. Assad's Syria doesn't want to be a part one to have made an agreement w/I - whatever content. That is reason we have adopted procedure we did. We had planned to do it like E-I at Km 101. It became apparent to me tho that this would just produce a situation where each would have to pour members. The way we could go was a way we could get things moving & deal with it gradually. Syrians would reject anything I brought back, so I brought something very vague. Now they have said they have rejected it (whatever that can mean) & make counter proposal. Important thing is that he has rejected & made counter proposal publicly - thus getting that publicly clear way.

P Point is we won't get an instant settlement.

K And they may attack - to prove they can't win & must negotiate; to prove I look with respect; to force Sov support; or even to get on by Sov.

P No indication of latter & we don't want any anti-Sov escalation to our perilous.





K P is right. Saw influence is down drastically & what have they gotten from their side.

P You should know that we are prepared to help clear a canal. It is a very thing to do.

Barbora What is sig of I am - Iraq dispute.

K We have no relationship with it. But if humans tie down Iraq, they can't go to Syria. Iraq is a radical element in Syria. Syria can't do great work by itself.

P How what can ~~the~~ leadership say on embargo?

K A little or possible

P Why not say we making prog - apart from embargo - & hope to avoid rationing. We are working on negotiations & that will have favorable effect - but embargo is matter for Arabs to decide.

We're working piece by piece in itself - part of embargo makes it more difficult. They should lift embargo as end in itself because positive oil sale in their countries is in their interest.

Another point - I saying Sept 62-74 you were our friend - now you reversing relations w/ Arabs, etc. Answer is this is not at expense of I - we always will stand by I, but we're making better relations w/ Arabs in I interest also - keep a secret & have I concerned by countries in the radicalized or under Saw influence.

K In fact after Syria disney we plan to go back to E part & seek trilateral settlement - also Jordan. Jordan is difficult because of I domestic politics. I have realized this choice is bet Jordan & Arabat.

We must deal w/ situation one after another



This process has been very painful for S. V. Byers, whom we dealt w/ SU as spokesman for Arabs. Now everyone is coming to us. We're not trying to force them out - but their negotiating style is the opposite for this situation - and they also tend to push more extreme views.

But S. V. has capability of going public, stirring up trouble, etc.

P Arabs are very emotional.

K A moderate Arab policy is important - therefore ~~the~~ relationship w/ Byers is important - and MFC. We can't put it to them in any area & expect them to continue to take it.

P Remember, if SU & PRC had wanted UK to go on it would have & POW's would still be there.

Our interests are opposed to those of SU in most areas of world - but we discuss w/ them and differences & we seek to avoid any of those issues from pushing home war.

? Rhodes Do we have promise of embargoes lifting

K The SOA language was Arab language. Problem is Arab unity. They have to have unity to lift embargoes. We have to decouple embargoes or we will be black - marked at every step if they think we need it.

P We can't black & 2

K Take Faisal. He wants to lift embargoes, but by breaching it, he is at the head of a radical black - for free.

Rhodes Well he plays a some game until Jerusalem?

K No, he's not blackwashing now

Both - This tells me we ought to get off our drift & get going to embargoes doesn't matter

P Report



K One point on MEFs relet.

P Yes, very important to work.

K This is a case where action produces opposite reaction to what intended. Cutting off MEFN will push migration back to Johnson's times, not increase it. It will ~~isolate~~ radicalize their MEF policy. We can't credit further them in any case. As a result of MEFN, would be after 3 yrs of attempts they would be made off them when Detroit started.

Stay is not been taken to Manners in detente? we got our way in VN, solved Berlin, prevented loss in Cuba, Sm's moderate in MEF.

Article 72 we were attacked for not making desired trade deal in study.

P I will veto if credit is possible. ~~When we talk in~~ Our relations w/ S U were cool during 50's + 60's - we didn't trade, there was little communication.

The new policy doesn't mean change in attitudes - I disagree ~~with~~ about Solz - but he is in Paris, not Schinas dead.

Question is how do you get a Route to change? Not the Glasgow technique - a little of that is good helpful. But great nations consult their interests - not their impressions.

Primary US-Sov interest is - we are both new powers, + I can push button to build 20 mil Sov + 20 mil Americans - in consultation to find common points of interest - card basic point is ~~we~~ we are not interested in destroying each other. There is gradual change which we can cooperate on very long term. But in getting there we must avoid a lockdown. If detente breaks down,



we will have arms race, no trade (not very important) confrontation in ME + elsewhere - and they will go right on increasing their people and man masses. Only alternative is a 100 bil increase in Def budget - that might not do it. I don't think that is viable, cause they can buy an arms race

K One other point - our careful detente policy presents a will <sup>Exo</sup> extensive policy toward S.U. They can't now because they know from us could control them.

P We are trying to build a new world - not to change human nature - but to break ice which prevents peaceful settlements of disputes - that is where we are now, + we must build now on this.

People like Johnson think I have gone soft - I know them + they know me.

Our options are very clear - follow our present track, build up defenses, or bring out of world.

Beal Scott

Can we get this to justify ourselves.

P Henry + I are trying - They are worse than I. Don't it bother for US to have influence of its enemies than C.S.U.? I say all it needs is capno. But even if they can hold off Arabs, there is a S.U. who can keep C.S.U. at bay? It is in interest to have us on good terms w/ S.U.

K We are making progress. The brakes are wept the new card I think they are working on Jackson. But looker + others are running w/ this ball.

P Also a partisan interest that this diplomatic effort would fail.

Scott Worst case would be a retail bill + we would have to try them for a bill w/ M.F.A.

