

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

~~SECRET~~/NODIS/XGDS

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

PARTICIPANTS:

Abd al-Halim Khaddam, Deputy Prime Minister
and Minister of Foreign Affairs,
Syrian Arab Republic
Dr. Sabah Kabbani, Syrian Ambassador
to the United States
Sameeh Tawfeek Abou Fares, Ministry of
Foreign Affairs (Interpreter)

The President
Dr. Henry A. Kissinger, Secretary of State
and Assistant to the President
for National Security Affairs
Joseph J. Sisco, Under Secretary of State
for Political Affairs
Amb. Richard W. Murphy, U. S. Ambassador
to Syria
Lt. Gen. Brent Scowcroft, Deputy Assistant
to the President for National Security Affairs
Isa K. Sabbagh, Special Assistant to Amb. Akins,
Jidda (Interpreter)

DATE AND TIME:

Friday, June 20, 1975
4:00 p. m.

PLACE:

The Oval Office
The White House

[The press takes photographs and departs.]



President: Mr. Foreign Minister, it is nice to see you again. We are fortunate it is the same week -- sort of an anniversary -- of the renewal of our relations and the building of better relations between our countries. It is my understanding that you and the Secretary had a lunch and a meeting before. It would be helpful if the Secretary could review for me the discussions thus far.

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NSC MEMO, 11/24/98, STATE DEPT. GUIDELINES *state review 3/9/04*
BY lm NARA DATE 5/20/04

Khaddam: Mr. President, I am pleased to be here in Washington and am delighted to have the opportunity to meet with you. It is indeed a pleasant occasion to be here on our anniversary and to celebrate the relationship which we hope will become even stronger.

Kissinger: Mr. President, I reviewed for the Foreign Minister the alternatives that we have before us: One is a series of interim settlements eventually leading to an overall settlement and, two, an overall settlement. It is correct to say that Syria didn't declare a day of national mourning last March when the negotiation failed.

The United States is not pushing any particular approach, but you have publicly committed your prestige to producing progress in the Middle East. We have made clear to Israel that any agreement with Egypt would have to be followed by an agreement with Syria. The advantage we saw in this is that the obstacles in the way would be removed, leading to an overall settlement. On the other hand, this is not an American problem, and if the parties can't be brought together, we would support movement to an overall settlement. The Foreign Minister pointed out that an overall settlement need not happen at Geneva and the Foreign Minister would look for other ways than at Geneva through which to work.

God will punish me someday, but I have really developed an affection for the Syrians.

Khaddam: As Secretary Kissinger said, we reviewed the situation in the area. It gives me pleasure to present to you the situation as we see it at the present time.

We in Syria, and the Arabs, greatly appreciate the efforts of the President and Secretary Kissinger to bring peace to the area. We seek peace. We are now before a given situation.

Perhaps it would be useful to go back and review what has happened since I was in Washington last August where we discussed the same subject. If we referred to the minutes of those meetings, we would find that the same discussion we are having now we had then. That is, there has been no progress over the past year, despite the efforts of the United States and the positive attitude of the Arabs.

Despite the alternative approaches, Syria prefers the overall approach. It is difficult, but ignoring the complexities doesn't make them



go away. Now is the time to face up to all the problems and see where to go. Especially since we tried the other method. Because we try the overall approach doesn't mean we would not try other avenues to reach the same goal. Therefore, if step-by-step is found to be the only feasible way, it should take account of all the issues on all the fronts together -- meaning that any withdrawal should take place on all three fronts simultaneously. Should things turn out different from this, it would be suspect in our minds, not because United States policy doesn't want withdrawal on other fronts, but because of Israeli intransigence. Withdrawal on one front alone wouldn't be conducive to peace.

The Israeli attitude arouses our suspicion -- for example, the new settlements and new construction; Israel says they won't withdraw. Even more dangerous would be a map as published by the Labour Party, showing the Golan, Gaza and the West Bank as part of Israel. Labour is not an opposition party -- it is the government. And then, it is softer than the Likud. So what must the attitude of the Likud be? If we were to ignore this in going along with a step-by-step it would give a bad impression in the Arab world. We can't ignore public opinion. Those manifestations of Israeli intransigence concern us about the step-by-step, especially if the steps would be splintered.

Kissinger: But the Foreign Minister was an avid supporter before.

[There is some jesting about using the Kissinger method of analyzing Israel.]

Khaddam: We said that the heavy United States military shipments to Israel would make them more intransigent when others were saying that it would make them more secure and more able to negotiate. Now Rabin is in a position to thumb his nose at the United States. As to what the other methods could be used -- Geneva is only one. But if Geneva will turn into an endless conference like the negotiation on Vietnam, we see no use for it. If we agree to Geneva, it would not be for speeches but a serious desire to work for peace. Geneva is the preferred method -- the UN called for it. We don't reject Geneva; only that it be turned into an Indochina-type conference. But we want to continue all channels of effort -- and American efforts are basic to any progress. The United States has many roles -- as Co-chairman, as a great power, and a responsibility for peace and leadership in the world.

We could go back to the Security Council so that it would have to do something for the resolutions that it, itself, had passed. Another method



is to increase pressure on Israel by the international community. These are the basic alternative ways of dealing with the subject.

Kissinger: If you want to go one way -- say to an overall solution -- and if there are explosions, because of failure, a stalemate, etc., then this will be used in the United States to discredit all Arabs so those who supported it would not support other efforts for a while.

Khaddam: We do not want an explosion to occur, especially if we sense that serious efforts are under way in reaching a common and permanent peace. We have now tried for one year, and what do we see? Israel's attitude is more intransigent.

President: Let me assure you that our decision to pursue the step-by-step was made in total good faith. We have maximized our efforts to make progress in that regard. We were disappointed that the negotiations in March did not bring success, and we were happy they were only suspended. Second, I said in March that we were reassessing our policy in the Middle East. In that process we have surveyed all the alternatives and we will decide on the one which offers the best hope for success. That decision may be aimed at resumption of the step-by-step or may take the course of an overall settlement and may include Geneva.

I was interested in your comment that the conference would not take place in Geneva. Where else do you have in mind?

Khaddam: What I meant was that if Geneva turned out like the Indochina negotiation, with just talk, we would go by it to the Security Council.

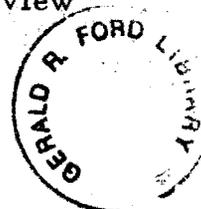
Kissinger: We don't know until Geneva starts how it will work.

Khaddam: Of course. Even when we followed the step-by-step, we ended up at Geneva. So it doesn't matter whether we end up at Geneva or in the Security Council.

President: Did I understand...

Khaddam: Given the present circumstances we cannot return to a step-by-step as in the past. Our view of this step-by-step is that we would oppose it if it didn't include all three fronts.

Kissinger: Last year you settled for two. I keep teasing, but Asad and Khaddam have taken -- considering the conditions -- a very serious view of the problem.



Khaddam: The first method is the past one; the second is Geneva and at the same time step-by-step efforts; and third is Geneva by itself. If these methods -- none of them -- produce results, then we go back to the Security Council.

President: I have three questions: Would you expect the PLO to be at Geneva?

Khaddam: There are certain facts. One is that the axis on which the whole situation exists, is Palestine. We believe clarity in this will help all to understand. Therefore, I will speak quickly: The basic problem is resolving the Palestinian question. To ignore them would be for a surgeon performing an appendectomy, to find an ulcer but just close the man up after an appendectomy and send him on his way. The Palestinian people exist, as does the PLO. So there are two political alternatives: we acknowledge their existence or we don't. For peace, they should be there. I assure you the Arab world has never been so desirous of peace.

Kissinger: Would the Arabs recognize Israel?

Khaddam: Whatever the Palestinians agree upon, we would accept. That is why we think Secretary Kissinger should meet with the PLO next time.

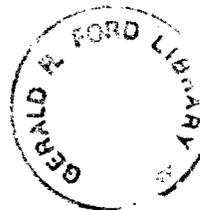
President: What would the Soviet role be at Geneva?

Khaddam: I can't answer without knowing how the arrangements would be. The Soviet Union is Co-Chairman. The role of the U.S. Government we have discussed, but we have no clear procedure which we think the Soviet Union will follow.

We ought to judge the UN by its experience. We look at it the way it is now -- the General Assembly and the Security Council. The General Assembly could come to certain resolutions which would isolate them and bring certain political and economic pressures. Resolutions by the Security Council would have to take into account the position of the United States.

Kissinger: If everything depends on us, why should we invest our efforts through the UN? It wouldn't bring a result and thus we would pay for having given it to the UN and for its failing.

[General Scowcroft leaves the meeting briefly.]



Kissinger: Supposing the President takes a position. If Israel disagrees with it and all or some of the Arab Governments disagree, we will be in the worst possible position.

Khaddam: As the President and Secretary must be aware, the Syrians and Arabs are anxious that U.S. efforts succeed. Your efforts were greatly appreciated. So when the American decision is announced -- which is just in the eyes of the Arabs -- we won't pick at it. So we can't say what the Arab attitude would be without knowing the U.S. position.

Kissinger: But you must understand our limiting factors.

Khaddam: Are you hinting that your decision won't be palatable?

Kissinger: No.

Khaddam: I want to assure you both that we are anxious for the efforts to succeed. We discern a new understanding by the President and Secretary Kissinger. The new policy may not be exactly what we want, but we hope it will be different from what existed in the past.

President: Would you be willing to undertake negotiations with Israel on a further step-by-step attempt?

Kissinger: In the case of progress on the Egyptian front?

Khaddam: Our view is that activities should start simultaneously, because otherwise it would leave the impression of favoritism. It is already being said that Israel is adamant about perpetuating their occupation and this map will be used as proof of it. We actually appeal to President Ford and the U.S. Government to consider our attitude. We can't afford to ignore Arab public opinion. If Israel can't ignore the views of a few settlers on the Golan, how can we ignore the views of 100 million Arabs? Every day Israel makes statements about keeping the Golan, the West Bank, and Gaza, etc. If Israel is not dilly-dallying to reach the end of the U.S. elections, how does that jell with the fact that nothing has happened for 10 months? In fact, I repeat my plea -- we desire peace, but we are apprehensive because we don't want another year of stalemate.

Kissinger: I will see the Foreign Minister again. As we have told him, there are no decisions, but the President has clearly said there has to be progress toward peace. The President has never confined it to one front. We recognize Syria as the center of the Arab nation.



President: Give President Asad my best. I hope we have a chance to get together very soon.



than at Geneva than which to work. God will
punish me some day but I have really enjoyed
an affection for Syria.

P He doesn't just say that in front of you. He
means it.

KH Q K has said, we remind a sit in a room.
It gives me pleasure to present to you sit as we
see it etc present time.

We in Syria & Araba greatly appreciate P &
K to bring peace & area. We seek peace. We
are now before your sit. Perhaps useful to go back
& review what has happened since I was in Wash
last day when we discussed same subject. If we
referred to minutes of those visits, we would find that
some sort of discussion we having now we had then.

ie, no progress past year despite efforts of US & positive
attitude of Arab. Despite all, approach, Syria
prefers a overall approach. It is dif. but ignoring
a complexity doesn't make them go away. There is
a time to face up to all the points & see where to go -
step since we tried a other method. Because
our try overall approach doesn't mean we would
not try other approaches to reach same goal.

∴ If step 4 is found to be only possible way,
it should take account of all issues on all points
together - meaning that any w/ channel should
take place on all 5 points simultaneously. Should
things turn out dif. from this, it would be
suspect in our mind, not because of policy

of effort - and Am. efforts are basic to any prog.

US has many cuts - ~~to~~ ^{to} ~~bring~~ ^{bring} a great power,
esp for peace & stability in world.

We could go back to SC so that it would have
to do something for resolutions it itself had passed.

Another is to increase pressure on I by a unit treaty.
These are a basic alt. ways of dealing w/ the subj.

K If you can't go one way - say a overall solution -
& if there an explosion, because of fortune, statements, etc.
the other way would be used in US to discredit all
American so those who supported it would not support
other efforts for a while.

Ka We do not want an explosion to occur, esp if in some
serious efforts underway in the meeting common &
peace plan. We have more time for 1 yr & what do
we see? I ~~attitude~~ ^{attitude} ~~attitude~~ ^{attitude} ~~of~~ more
in transient.

P Let me assure you our decision last effort &
previous S & S was made in total good faith. We have
maximized our efforts to make prog in that regard. We
disapp. report in March did not bring success one
hoping they would. 2nd I said in March
we were ⁱⁿ expressing our policy in NE. In that
press we have ~~strongly~~ surveyed all alts & our
will decide on one which offers best hope
& progress. That decision may be aimed
at resumption of talks & may take course of
actual settlement ~~with~~ & may include Amm. I
was interested in your ~~comment~~ ^{comment} ~~and~~ ^{and} ~~would~~
~~have~~



their visit or we don't. For peace, they should be
told. I assume you & Arab would have never been
to discuss of peace.

K Would Arabs say, I.

Kh whether talks open again, we would accept. That
why we think Khabat ~~meet~~ meet w/ PLO next
time.

P What would Sec not be at Amman

Kh Can't answer w/ a drawing how arrangements would be,
SU is unknown. Role of US & we have discussed, but
we have no clear ~~procedure~~ procedure which we
think SU will follow.

P ~~2~~

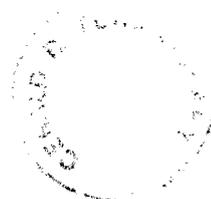
Kh We ought to judge UN by its experience. We look
at what way it is now - GA & SC. GA would want
to certain resolutions which would isolate them &
bring certain ^{good time to} resolutions. Resolution by
SC ~~take~~ take into account ^{position} of US.

K If everything depends on us, why should we
invest our efforts through UN. It wouldn't
bring a result & thus we would ^{pay} for having
given it to UN for its failing.

Kh (2 left)

K Supposing P takes a position. If I disagree w/ it
& all a some Arab govt disagree, we will be
in worst possible position.

Kh As P + Sec must be aware, Syria & Arabs are
convinced that UN efforts succeed. Your efforts
were greatly appreciated. So when Arab decision is



announced - which is just in eyes of Arabs, we
won't pick at it. So we can't say what Arab attitude
would be w/o knowing US position.

K But you must understand our limiting factors
Kk Are you limiting that your decision won't be
palatable

K No.

Kk I want to assure you both we are anxious for a cessfire
& ceasefire. We desire a new understanding by
P & Secy. The new policy may not be exactly
what we want, but hope it be diff from what
it existed in past.

P Would you be willing to undertake negot w/ F
on further s. h. attempt.

K ^{by the case of} ~~of~~ negot on E front.

Kk Our view is that ~~the~~ activities should start
simultaneously because otherwise would leave
impression of favoritism. It already being said
I is adamant about perpetuating their organization &
this may well be used as proof of it. We certainly
appeal to F & do USA to reassure our attitude.
We can't afford to ignore Arab pub opinion. If
I won't ignore voices of a few settlers in Jordan, how
can we ignore voices of 100 mil Arab. Every
day I makes statements about keeping Jordan, W
Bank, Gaza, etc. - If I is ^{not} clutching & clutching & reach
level of UK elections, how does that fill w/ fact
that nothing has happened for 10 mos. In fact,
I repeat my plea - we desire peace, but we

of previous course we don't want another
year of statements.

K I would see FVI again. ~~FVI~~ As we have told him,
there are no divisions, but P has clearly said
there has to be pay to avoid pure. P has never
referred it to report. We use Syracuse center
of arithmetic

P Give P good my best - I hope ^{we} I have a
chance to get together very soon.

