


senior official of the State Department. There are two aspects to any such mission, namely the message to be conveyed, and the level of the envoy's reception. The first is the substance, and the second, the show. A special envoy, particularly for a one-off mission, does need a specific or notional rank, to determine his entitlements, and also to emphasise to the receiving state, the importance of the mission. There is a good reason though for this information not to be made public; if, for whatever reason, the envoy is not received at least at an equal level, it could grate on sensitivities.

The level at which a special envoy is received by a major power would depend on several factors; the nature of the mission, the agenda, policies and priorities of the major power, and the closeness of bilateral ties. Pakistan's relations with the US may be traced in time to Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan's nearly month-long visit to that country in May of 1950. Liaquat's decision to visit the US rather than the USSR -- which had invited him earlier -- was a pointer to Pakistan's foreign policy orientation. This trend would be reinforced in the years ahead. Pakistan would become "the most allied ally" of the US -- CENTO and SEATO -- and the period 1954-62 would be the "aligned years" of Pakistan's foreign policy.

In the early 1960s, President Kennedy described Pakistan as a friend of "immediacy and constancy." It was against this general backdrop of bilateral relations that in October 1969, Pakistan's information minister, Maj. Gen. Sher Ali Khan, and the deputy chairman, Planning Commission, M.M. Ahmad went to Washington. Sher Ali was in the US for the UN General Assembly, and M.M. Ahmad for IBRD-IMF meetings; both sought appointments with US national security adviser, Henry Kissinger. M.M. Ahmad had a letter from his president for President Nixon, which they wished to hand over to Dr. Kissinger.

Hal Saunders of the National Security Council addressed a minute to his superior on the request for an appointment: "No sooner had I successfully -- I thought -- begged off for you on Ambassador Hilaly's request that you see Sher Ali Khan than he was back at me with the following problem. M.M. Ahmad is now in town with a letter from President Yahya to President Nixon …He and Sher Ali Khan feel some obligation to deliver this letter to you. I explained to Ambassador Hilaly the great pressures on your time and he agreed that it would be satisfactory if he brought the two ministers to my office for a long substantive chat and then have them drop over literally for five minutes to put their letter in your hands. Substantively, this doesn't make a lot of sense. The problem is simply to have these fellows go home and say that they were able to to you."