Chapter – IV

Indo – Soviet relations after Nehru
Overcoming of Anxieties

After forcing its pre-planned war on India, the Chinese leadership must have thought that due to humiliation of reverses on the border, pressures of right-wing forces inside the country and Anglo-US machinations from outside. Nehru would feel forced to go with the west, the time-tested indo-Soviet relations would be put in serious jeopardy, the concept of non-alignment would collapse, the cause of peace would suffer a mortal blow, bi-polarization would be the order of the day, and thus, Mao’s prophesy of the inevitability of war would have to be accepted as the only path to the “triumph” of communism in the world.

But thanks to the patience, perseverance and pragmatism shown by the leaders of India and Soviet Union throughout the border crisis, China’s calculations failed to be fulfilled. Nevertheless, the forces working against the course of India’s foreign policy, more particularly against her friendly ties with the Soviet Union, had not ceased their activities.

Triangular Thrust on The Course of Nehru’s Foreign Policy

In point of fact, the Sino-Indian border conflict paved the way for the recrudescence of rightist forces in India. It prompted the west to exert its pressures on India on a wider scale, added to China’s anti India campaign and further strengthened Sino-Pak-US collusion against India’s leadership of the non-aligned movement and her friendship with the Soviet Union.

As regards the consolidation of the right-wing political parties of India, the Swatantra, Jana Sangh and both factions of the Socialists vigorously opposed the acceptance of the Colombo proposals by the Government.¹ The Jana Sangh openly championed the proposed plan of air-cover, an idea which the West tried hard to sell to Nehru, and more than that, it proposed India’s linking with the NATO and SEATO. The Jana Sangh leaders demanded a new Government and a new Prime Minister. As a natural corollary to all these pressure, a no-confidence motion against Nehru’s Government was moved in August 1963 for the first time in the history of the Indian parliament.
The west exerted pressures for the acceptance by the Government of India of the presence of the Seventh Fleet in the Bay of Bengal, joint military exercises, air umbrella and negotiations with Pakistan on the issue of Kashmir. To add to these pressures, broadcasting facilities were sought for the voice of America and attempts were made to scuttle the proposed Bokaro Steel Project in the public sector.

So far as China’s strategy is concerned, her delegates used various international conferences and forums for propagating their views against peaceful co-existence and disarmament. In several Afro-Asian meetings, the representatives of China took the floor for speaking against Indo-Soviet friendship. The widely circulated Chinese polemics against the Soviet Union speak sufficiently of Peking’s malicious aspersions against India and the Soviet Union. In order to counteract non-aligned and democratic India, Chou En-lai continued to pamper the aligned and theocratic State of Pakistan, which was a confirmed protégé of the US. The Prime Minister of China tried his best to weaken non-aligned India by grooming Pakistan as her counter-weight. He brushed aside this country’s alliance with SEATO and CENTO, and affirmed his country’s strong desire to defend Pakistan throughout the world, as she had defended China in the CENTO and SEATO.

In order to tarnish India’s image in the developing countries of Africa and Asia and to denounce Soviet stand on peaceful co-existence, the leaders of People’s Republic of China adopted a novel method of making state visits to most of the counties, which were favourably disposed towards New Delhi. In the months of April and May 1963, China’s President, Liu Shao-Chi visited Indonesia, Burma, Cambodia and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, where he took great pains to explain his country’s case against India. Towards the end of the year 1963, Chou En-lai visited the UAR, Algeria, Morocco, Ghana, Tunisia, Mali, Guinea, the Sudan and Ethiopia. In the beginning of the year 1964, the Chinese Premier visited Burma, Pakistan and Ceylon. The main purpose behind these visits of Chou En-lai was to isolate India from the non-aligned countries.

The Sino-Indian border conflict prepared the way for Sino-Pak-US collusion. In February 1964, the Chinese Premier and the Foreign Minister visited Pakistan to express their views of India and her friendly relations with the USSR. They pledged their outright support to Pakistan on the issue of Kashmir. During his visit to Pakistan, Prime Minister Chou En-lai referred frequently to the mutual understanding and friendly cooperation, which had developed recently between China and Pakistan. He went to the extent of
offering unequivocal support to Pakistan in her just struggle to defend her national Independence and sovereignty.

The Foreign Minister of China, Marshal Chen Yi, who also visited Pakistan, declared that even after Pakistan would get Kashmir and China would achieve Taiwan, their countries would continue to main friends\(^3\). He went to the limit of attacking Soviet South Asian policy and affirmed that Indo-Soviet friendship was “a serious danger to Pakistan”.

During their visit to Pakistan, it is Important to observe, the leaders of China accused India of “big power chauvinism” and condemned her as “an imperialist tool as well as an aggressor against both Pakistan and China”.

How diligently Pakistan was trying to hold out the olive branch to the USA and act at the same time a mid-wife between Peking and Washington was revealed during Chou En-lai’s visit to Dacca on 24 February 1964. In a press conference, held in the capital of East Pakistan, President Ayub Khan remarked that “if the good Offices of Pakistan were required to bridge the gulf between the USA and China, Pakistan would glad to help”.

Premier Chou En-lai welcomed this desire on the part of the Pakistani President and observed, “We would welcome the helpful efforts in this direction by our friends, who are willing to offer their good offices between China and the USA”. Chou, the self-styled sworn enemy of US imperialism, further revealed that “for many years, the Chinese Government had been working for the relaxation of tension between China and the US” in 1955, during the Bandung Conference, I proposed … that the Government of China and the US should sit together and negotiate the settlement of disputes between them.;”- Chou disclosed and added further that this proposal led to the Sino- US ambassadorial talks, which lasted eight and a half years.

The aforesaid discussion bears ample testimony to the fact that as a counter – weight to Indo-Soviet friendship, the odd convergence of three diametrically opposed powers – Sino – Pak - US collusion – was being formed. A revolutionary China was trying for her own brand of detente with the imperialist USA; a Socialist China was aspiring for her own model of peaceful co-existence with feudal Pakistan and an aligned China was professing her own design of non-alignment with the communist bloc countries.
Nehru Undeterred

The pressures on Nehru, which were exerted from the aforesaid three quarters in the years following the Sino-Indian border conflict, were really immense. It is heartening to observe that Nehru successfully withstood them. He got overwhelming support from progressive forces and friendly circles all over the world, which certainly emboldened him to overcome all onslaughts on his foreign policy course. The Prime Minister of India took from decision not to allow any foreign military base to work on the Indian soil turned down all military plans of the west and hailed the Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty. By a vast majority (346 to 61), the parliament expressed its Confidence in him. The Voice of America deal was scuttled since, as Nehru himself put it, it did not correspond to India’s principles and policies.

Nehru defended his policy of non-alignment and friendship with the Soviet Union, which, as he himself admitted, the rightist parties of India were trying to subvert. Irrespective of China’s open hostility towards India, he remained fully confident of Soviet good will. The Prime Minister of India paid eloquent tributes to the Soviets, friendship with whom, as he pleaded, was worth 20 divisions.

The fact that the Soviet Union had shown some “restraining influence” on China during the border conflict was disclosed by no less a person than the President of India, S. Radhakrishnan, in the course of a speech in London early in 1963. While speaking at the University of Notre Dame, Northern Indian, Indira Gandhi also observed that the USSR had stopped supply of oil to China during the border conflict.

Tributes from Moscow

Moscow’s response to Nehru’s friendly gestures shown towards the Soviets was equally cordial. In May 1963, the Government of the USSR firmly supported India’s acceptance of the Colombo proposals. It agreed to take up the Bokaro Steel Project, which had been turned down by the US Senate due to its ideological bias against American adi to be given to a public sector enterprise.
Kashmir in The Security Council

The year 1964 was marked by several instances of further Indo-Soviet cooperation on various issues, above all on the ticklish question of Kashmir. This issue was raised in the Security Council in the month of February and due to adjournment, sought by the parties concerned, continued till May of that year.

The meeting of the Security Council on the issue of Kashmir was being held in the background of troubles in that state, which were caused as a result of the theft of the holy relic in the Hazratbal shrine.

While initiating discussion on the issue on 3 February 1964, the Foreign Minister of Pakistan, Z.A. Bhutto, observed, “The Government and people of Pakistan are totally committed to the liberation of their Kashmiri brethren. They will not tire, neither will they falter in the long and bitter struggle until the right of self determination… has been implemented”.

The head of the Indian delegation, M.C. Chagla, tried his best to calm the wrath of Bhutto. Chagla said, “We are prepared to discuss all our outstanding differences with Pakistan, including Kashmir…. Let us make every effort to come together….”. He offered to settle bilaterally all existing issues with Pakistan and set aside “Interference of a third party”.

The British delegate, Sir Patrick Dean, welcomed Chagla’s offer of talks with Pakistan, but proposed further that “some degree of outside assistance might help in the search for a solution”. He hinted at the possibility of engaging the services of the Secretary General of the UNO in finding out a solution to the Kashmir issue. He further added that “the decisions, taken by the Security Council in the course of the last fifteen years should not be lost to view”. Obviously, the British delegate was hinting at the earlier resolutions of the Council demanding the right of self-determination for the Kashmiri people.

The demand of the British delegate for soliciting the assistance of a third party was supported in one way or the other by the delegates of China, Norway and France.
In view of the facts referred to above, it is very curious to observe that the British delegate remembered to mention the earlier resolutions of the Security Council on the issue of Kashmir, but failed to mention China’s border agreement with Pakistan for the demarcation of her border with Pak-held Kashmir. It goes without saying that Pakistan, a member of the UNO, had clearly violated the earlier Security Council resolution on the issue of Kashmir by bringing about a change in the status quo of the so-called Azad Kashmir. Instead of holding Pakistan responsible for flouting the Security Council resolution in letter and spirit, the British delegate took delegate in challenging the legality of the Instrument of Accession. In blind prejudice against India, he forgot to remember that the Instrument of Accession was part of India’s Independence Act, which was duly passed British Parliament and hence obligatory on the Government of which he was the representative.

The US delegate, Adalai Stevenson, excelled his British counterpart and proposed that the Secretary –General of the UN should assist the parties concerned and the Council should have a “fresh look” at the issue. His view was fully endorsed by the British delegate.

**Soviet Stand on Kashmir**

From the long discussions on the issue of Kashmir in the Security Council, it becomes clear that the friends of Pakistan were poised for complicating this question and straining India’s nerves, Thanks to the foresight and firmness displayed in the Council by the Soviet delegate, this awkward situation could be avoided and no “fresh look” could be given to the Kashmir issue.

The Soviet delegate ruled out any superimposed solution. He repeated the earlier stand of his Government that “the question of Kashmir’s belonging to India has already been decided by the Kashmiri people” and further requested the Council to create conditions, in which India and Pakistan could settle their disputed by peaceful means. Fedorenko, the delegate of the USSR, referred to the Soviet Premier’s message to the Heads of States, send towards the end of 1963 with regard to the renunciation of force by countries for the settlement of territorial disputes or boundary questions. In clear-cut terms, he observed that the “dispute should be settled directly by the parties concerned –India and Pakistan – and of course, exclusively by peaceful means”. While setting aside the proposal
of seeking assistance from outside, the Soviet delegate said, “the parties to this dispute are themselves capable of taking steps of relax the tensions which exist between them”.

When the aforesaid deliberations on the issue of Kashmir came to an end in the Security Council on 18 May 1964, the President of the Council gave “common conclusions”, which were readily acceptable to all concerned. The President recorded that there was agreement among all members of the Council that bilateral negotiations should be held between India and Pakistan in order to reach a solution to their outstanding disputes. It was further noted by the President that some members were in favour of soliciting the assistance of the Secretary General in order to facilitate negotiations. At the same time, the President noted the desire of some members who had observed that outside intervention might only complicate the situation in the India sub-continent. The last point, recorded by the President, was the fact that the Indo-Pak question remained on the agenda of the Security Council.

The President of the Security Council remarked that the aforesaid “summation” was “not a consensus”, “not a resolution” and it had “no binding effect”. He concludingly observed,” … any intervention on the part of the Secretary General, which is uninvited and without the consent of both parties, will hinder and hamper the negotiations, which we propose to carry on in the very near future”.

From the aforesaid discussion on the issue of Kashmir in the Security Council, it becomes clear that it was the attitude of the Soviet delegate towards this question, which finally prevented Pakistan’s friends from moving a resolution in the Council asking for the assistance of the Secretary General in the overall bilateral negotiations between India and Pakistan. The Soviet view of this matter was exactly the same which was placed before the Security Council by M.C.Chagla, India’s delegate, who had already proposed bilateral negotiations to Pakistan in his very first speech on this subject delivered on 10 February 1964. The Soviet stand on this issue was a brilliant instance of Moscow’s firm desire to strengthen Indo-Soviet cooperation.

The element of mutual cooperation in Indo-Soviet relations kept on growing further. The proposed Second Afro-Asian Conference gave India an opportunity to reciprocate the friendly gestures by the Soviets. The Soviet Union was not invited to attend the first Afro-Asian conference held in Bandung in 1955. Even in the UNO, she never
participated in the lobbying of the Afro-Asian group. Despite all these instances, when the representatives of twenty-two Afro-Asian countries met in Jakarta in April 1964 in order to take some decisions in connection with the preparations for the Second Afro-Asian Conference, the representative of India proposed the inclusion of the Soviet Union. The Chinese delegate took strong exception to it on the ground that the Soviet Union was not an Asian country. For various reasons, this Conference did never take place. India’s willingness to come closer to the USSR, however, was quite vivid.

Indo-Soviet cooperation was put to more severe tests in the near future, first after the death of Jawaharlal Nehru and subsequently after the change in the Soviet leadership.

**Legacy of Nehru**

Nehru died on 27 May 1964. A memorial meeting was held in Moscow in the Hall of Columns, where eloquent tributes were paid to the late Prime Minister, who was the architect of India’s friendly ties with the USSR. This was a rare sort of condolence, such honour being served for communist heads of states only. On Radio Moscow and TV, the Soviet Prime Minister spoke very high of Nehru and observed that his memory would be “enshrined for ever in the hearts of the Soviet peoples”. Pravada referred to Nehru’s contribution to non-alignment, disarmament and peaceful solution of international disputes and wrote that he was “an outstanding statesman and a sincere friend of the Soviet Union”.

All apprehensions with regard to any probable shift in Indo-Soviet relations after Nehru’s death were set aside by the Prime Minister designate of India, Lal Bahadur Shastri, who declared that Nehru’s course both in home and foreign policies shall be continued. The inclusion of Indira Gandhi, Nehru’s daughter, in Shastri’s cabinet as Minister of Information and Broadcasting would have certainly allayed Soviet apprehension of any twist in India’s foreign Policy.

Within less than a month after Nehru’s death, the Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, A.I. Mikoyan, exchanged views with Prime Minister Shastri during a brief stop-over in New Delhi and invited him to visit Moscow.

Nehru’s death did not bring about any re-assessment of the Soviet attitude towards India. It was fully confirmed the visit of the Defence Minister and the President of India to Moscow in September 1964.
Before his visit to Moscow, Defence Minister Y.B. Chavan had gone to Washington in order to ascertain the possibilities of purchasing military hardware. In the US Capital, the Pentagon officials proved quite tough, and tried to bargain as much as possible and expressed unhappiness over India’s MiG agreement with the USSR. The terms and conditions for the US weapons were more unfavorable than the mood of the US officials. It was in this background that Chavan’s visit to Moscow took place.

The Defense Minister of India stayed in Moscow for about a couple of weeks in order to finalize negotiations for the supply and manufacture of sophisticated arms in India with Soviet assistance. As a result of these negotiations, the scope of the MiG deal was further broadened, and agreements for the supply of larger transport planes, missiles and naval equipments were signed. Soviet Defense Minister Radion Malinovsky observed that Chavan’s visit showed “strengthening and growth of friendly relations between the armed forces of the two countries”. That there were no strings attached to Soviet Military assistance was revealed by Chavan, who after his return home, told the Rajya Sabha on 21 September 1964 that Soviet arms could be used against China in case of need.

President S. Radhakrishnan’s visit to Moscow almost synchronized with the signing of Indo-Soviet agreement for the supply of Soviet defense equipment to India. Since this visit took place after the death of Nehru, it was an important event in the history of Indo-Soviet relations. In a dinner speech on 11 September 1964, Mikoyan observed that “the Soviet Union was determined to develop friendship with India”. In his turn, the President of India assured the Soviet leaders of the continuation of Nehru’s policy by India. “Anti-capitalism within, anti-imperialism without these are the principles of the governments of the liberated nations”, Radhkrishna asserted. In a meeting, held on 18 September, he laid more stress on the “unity of purposes between India and the Soviet Union”, their pursuit of peace and co-operation among the nations of the world being identical.

The Soviet leadership used the Indian President’s visit for expressing its views on the issue of Soviet Participation in the proposed Second Afro-Asian Conference, scheduled to be held in Algiers in March 1965.

The leaders of both India and the USSR expressed complete identity of views on the issues of vital importance to their respective countries as was quite evident from the
joint communiqué issued at the end of President Radhakrishnan’s visit. The Soviet leadership reiterated its desire “to continue and develop cooperation with India” and affirmed its readiness to assist her in the construction of the Bokaro metallurgical plant. Keeping in view Pakistan’s claims on Kashmir and China’s claims on vast tracts of both India and Soviet territories, it was observed in the joint communiqué, “all States should refrain from the use of force in the solution of their territorial and border disputes and should pay due regard to historically formed boundaries” Nehru was remembered in the joint communiqué as “an outstanding statesmen of the modern times”.

The visit of India’s President to the USSR was appropriately used by both the countries as a high-level probing mission. This was the first highest level exchange of views after the Sino-Indian border conflict and Nehru’s death. And it took place after the first nuclear explosion by China. From the talks, that were held in Moscow during Radhakrishnan’s visit and the praise that was lavished on India, it became clear that there was no cooling off in Indo-Soviet relations during the post-Nehru era, nor was there any evidence of getting deterred by China’s warlike postures.

Leadership Change in Moscow: Kremlin’s India Policy Intact

Within less than a month of President Radhakrishnan’s visit to Moscow, L. I. Brezhnev took over as the chief of the CPSU. Apprehensions grew in certain quarters that Moscow might reassess its attitude towards India and some sort of rapprochement with Peking would be reached. China had sent immediate congratulations to the new Soviet leaders on their assumption of offices. For some days, the Chinese press stopped condemning Moscow. It looked as if Peking was trying to mend fences with the Soviets.

New Delhi studiously watched all this and issued a brief statement, which expressed the hope that friendly relations between India and the USSR would continue to grow stronger under the new Soviet leadership. This statement was cautiously worded in order to elicit some sort of reciprocity from Moscow. And the same was received, when the Soviet charged d’affaires in New Delhi met Prime Minister Shastri on 17 October and conveyed his Government’s wish to continue friendly relations with India. Ambassador I.A. Benediktov, a member of the Central Committee of the CPSU, who was called to Moscow for consultations, returned to New Delhi with a cordial and personal message from Prime Minister Kosygin to Shastri. Towards the end of October 1964, when the
Minister of Information and Broadcasting, Indira Gandhi, visited Moscow, she met Mikhil Suslov, a powerful member of the Politbureau. On a personal testimony received from Suslov, Indira Gandhi Brushed aside the fabrication that the previous Government of the USSR had been criticised for holding pro-Indian views. At a press conference, held in New Delhi on 2 November, Indira Gandhi observed that Suslov and other Soviet leaders had refuted the suggestion that the previous Government’s pro-India policy was at fault.

Soviet pledge of friendship with India was reiterated on several occasions by the new leadership. On the eve of the 47th anniversary of the October Revolution, Brezhnev referred to good neighborly, traditional and friendly ties with India. Despite the presence of premier Chou En-lai in the anniversary day celebrations in Moscow, China did not find any place in the anniversary speech, which was a clear-cut re-affirmation of the foreign policy course followed by the CPSU all along. During the colourful function held in the Kermlin Palace of Congress, in which Chou was also present, Ambassador T.N. Kaul was given categorical assurance of perpetual Soviet friendship. Pravda editorially laid stress on “friendship with India as an object of care with the Soviet Union.” Prime Minister Shastri equally reciprocated this warmth, when he told the Lok Sabha on 24 November that he got a letter from the Soviet Premier, which was couched in the most friendly terms. “This was a source of strength to me”, he asserted. On 9 December 1964, in his report to the Supreme Soviet, Prime Minister Kosygin observed that Soviet friendship with India was becoming “broader and more fruitful” year after year.  

It is apparent that this period was marked by severe trials and serious tribulations. It was during this period that events of farreaching significance took place, and new alignment of forces was shaped. China’s open hostility towards both India and the USSR was more vigorously pronounced. The axis of China, Pakistan and the USA was set up with evil designs on Indo-Soviet friendship. It was during this period that changes in the leadership of both the countries took place. It is heartening to note that both India and the USSR successfully overcame all these odds, skilfully weathered all the storms and stood firmly resolved to raise in future the great edifice of Indo-Soviet friendship, which hereafter entered into another phase, characterized by a search for new horizons in relations between these two countries with a view to facing the new alignment of powers which was emerging on the world scene.
Crisis in the Sub-Continent: Soviets for Peace

A new phase in relations between India and the USSR, which began in the spring of 1965 with the outbreak of armed clashes on the Indo-Pak border in the Rann of Kutch, was characterized by a firm desire on the part of the Soviets to develop their time-tested relations with New Delhi and explore some new vistas in their formal state-to-state relations with Pakistan.

After the Sino-Indian border conflict of 1962, Moscow had been carefully watching as to how cautiously Pakistan was “hunting with the hound and running with the hare”. Pakistan’s disenchantment with Washington, her hobnobbings with Peking, her bid to play the role of an honest broker between the USA and the People’s Republic of China in order to squeeze out the blessings of both in terms of military hardware and economic assistance against India- all these initiatives of Pakistan were being keenly observed by the Soviet leadership. Moscow itself was fully seized of China’s ever-increasing challenges to its authority in the international communist movement and to New Delhi’s position in the Afro-Asian world. Peking’s preposterous claims on vast tracts of Soviet and Indian territories were doubtlessly causing serious alarm and anxieties in the Kremlin.

The aforesaid convergence of powers required a re-appraisal of Moscow’s South Asian Policy. It is true that there was no questions of bartering away a time-tested friend like India. Since Sino-Pak-US collusion had further increased the element of interdependence in relations between India and the USSR, economic cooperation with India had to be augmented, military assistance to her had to be further reinforce and political support to her on her on the issues of her direct interest had to be reaffirmed. Further development in Soviet relations with Pakistan was also considered important in order to wean her away from the People’s Republic of China. Certainly, this balancing act was an up-hill task. The major issue, which the Soviet Union faced, appeared in the form of armed clashes between India and Pakistan in the Rann of Kutch, which ultimately led to the Outbreak of an all-out war between these two countries in September 1965.

Break Through in Soviet South Asian Policy
A major breakthrough in Soviet South Asian policy was made during President Ayub’s visit to Moscow in April 1965. Its cornerstone however was laid by both the countries during the visit of the foreign Minister of Pakistan to the USSR in January that year. Z.A. Bhutto was the first Foreign Minister of his country to be invited to the Soviet capital, where he held important discussions with his Soviet counterpart, Andrei Gromyko, and other important Soviet leaders such as Mikoyan and Kosygin. His visit really proved a successful probing mission, which cleared the deck for president Ayub Khan’s visit to Moscow in April 1965.

The important talks held between Ayub and the Leaders of the USSR bear testimony to the fact that the visit of the Pakistani President to the Soviet capital proved successful. Even Brezhev, General Secretary of the CPSU, observed that talks with the President of Pakistan were “epoch-making”. Prime Minister Kosygin considered this visit as “historic” and the Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, Mikoyan lauded Ayub as “a great statesman” No more honorable compliments could have been lavished by Moscow.  

The Soviet-Pak joint communiqué which was issued on Ayub’s visit to Moscow, was received well in Pakistan, where it was argued by many, including the President of the country himself, that the declaration in the aforesaid document by both the sides of “their resolute support to people engaged in the struggle for national liberation and the people fighting for the right to declare their future at their own discretion” had a direct relevance to problems of the Indian sub-continent. This view was widely propagated in Pakistan that the joint communiqué, referred to above, amounted to Soviet concurrence with the principle of self-determination, for which the people of that country stood in Kashmir. In the Soviet-Pak joint communiqué, it was declared that all international agreement should be immediately implemented with a view to continuing world peace and cooperation. This part of the declaration was interpreted by many responsible persons in Pakistan as an affirmation on the part of the Soviets of all the international agreements, including the Security Council resolution on Kashmir which asked for a plebiscite.

There is no evidence to prove that, by agreeing to the aforesaid part of the Soviet-Pak joint communiqué, the Soviets in any way subscribed to the principle of “self-determination” in Kashmir. The Soviet view on the issue of Kashmir remained practically the same as before. This was fully confirmed a little later, during the Indo-Pak war of
September 1965. But there cannot be any denying the fact that it was during Ayub’s visit to Moscow that the Soviets launched a breakthrough in their relations with Pakistan, which naturally came to have some bringing on the Indo – Soviet ties as well. The visit of the Pakistani President to the Soviet capital was indeed a turning point in the history of Russia’s relations with this country. It was not long ago that Premier Khrushchev had made his angry remark about Pakistan in the wake of the incident involving the U-2 spy plane of the US air force, which only some time after flying from Peshawar air-base had been shot down over Soviet air space, slightly more than a year ago, Suslov had branded Pakistan as “a reactionary state” in the course of his speech at the plenary session of the CPSU on 15 February 1964. Pakistan had not even been mentioned in the address delivered on the eve of the anniversary-day celebration on 6 November 1964. Nor was any reference made to Pakistan in Kosygin’s report to the Supreme Soviet, which presented on 9 December 1964.

On the eve of Pakistan’s National Day, however, Pravada published an article by A.Kutsenko (entitled “Time for Reflection and Hope”), which observed that “Pakistan had actively started to oppose imperialism and colonialism to support the national liberation movement” Izvestia brought out an article by A. Markov, who expressed satisfaction on “the emergence of new trends in the political, economic and social life of Pakistan”.  

**Indian Fears Allayed: Shastri’s Visit to Moscow**

The Soviet attitude towards the grave situation in the Indian sub-continent, which began to deteriorate in the spring of 1965 and continued to be explosive till the end of autumn that year, could be seen in the TASS statement on the aforesaid crisis in the Kutch area of India, adjacent to Pak border.

The TASS statement noted that solution of problems between India and Pakistan by means of war would only help the imperialists in developing the already existing tension in other parts of Asia. While citing Premier Shastri’s and President Ayub’s recent statement regarding peaceful solution of disputes between India and Pakistan, it laid emphasis on the necessity of direct and peaceful negotiations.

The aforesaid TASS statement stood in sharp contrast to the inflammatory statement of the Chinese Government, issued on 4 May 1965, in which Peking had
pledged its full sympathy with Pakistan in her fight against ‘Indian expansionism.’ On 5 May, the People’s Daily supported Pakistan through a leading article on the situation in the Rann of Kutch. It warned India not to play with fire.10

India was not abandoned by the Soviets for the sake of Pakistan. It was actually the Soviet attitude towards Pakistan, which had fast undergone a change. The visit of Prime Minister Shastri to the Soviet Union (12-19 May 1965), which took place within a month after Ayub’s departure from Moscow, made it clear that the element of inter-dependence in Indo-Soviet relations had not lost its weight on account of Soviet reappraisal of its attitude towards Islamabad. On the contrary, Shastri’s first-hand discussions with the highest Soviet authorities confirmed his personal belief in the strength of Indo-Soviet bilateral ties, which the new alignment of forces in the sub-continent had failed to erode.

Shastri’s visit to the Soviet capital constituted an important milestone in the further development of friendly relations between India and the USSR. While welcoming the India Prime Minister, Kosygin wished that “India should exercise more positive influence in international affairs”. Both the Prime Ministers used this opportunity for expressing their desires to strengthen further “the opportunity for expressing their desires to strengthen further “the unbreakable bond of friendship between the Soviet Union and India”.

It is important to observe that Shastri’s visit to Moscow took place after the President of Pakistan had visited the Soviet Union. In order to allay India’s misunderstanding, the Soviet Premier considered it necessary to emphasize at a reception held in honour of Shastri’s in the Kremlin that his country, while aspiring to establish better relations with third world countries, would never do it at the expense of Indo-Soviet friendship. Shastri made much more clear what the Soviet Prime Minister wanted to say between the lines, and in the presence of his host. He went to the extent of warning “those ugly forces, which were casting covetous eyes’ on India’s territories and “trying to violate her borders”. The prime Minister of India was fully aware of the peace-keeping mission of the Soviet Union. It was clear to him from the TASS statement on the Kutch situation, which was issued barely four days before his arrival in the Soviet capital. In order to reciprocate Soviet desire for peace, he reiterated India’s strong support to peaceful negotiation of all disputes. But hinting at Pakistan’s warlike postures, he declared in clear terms. “if the path of peace and negotiation is discarded and aggression is committed, we
are duty bound to safeguard our freedom and to defend our frontiers”. The Indian Prime
Minister decried outside intervention, including bombing in Vietnam and ruled out any
military solution to that problem. He hailed the Moscow Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty and re-
affirmed India’s deep faith in peaceful co-existence, disarmament and non-alignment.

Seen in the background of a change in the Soviet leadership, China’s aggressive
postures against both India and the USSR, detonation of second nuclear device by Peking,
Pakistan’s warlike activities on India’s borders, China’s flamboyant outcries against India
during the Kutch crisis and the escalation of war in Vietnam, the exchange of views
between the leaders of India and the Soviet Union at the highest level had assumed wider
regional and international significance.

The Soviet leaders attached far more importance to Shastri’s visit than they had
given to Ayub’s. They changed their already scheduled programmes in order to be present
at direct talks with the India Prime Minister. An extremely rare courtesy was shown to the
Shastri’s by Premier Kosygin and his wife, who took pains to accompany them all the
way to Leningrad, their home city. In the Kremlin banquet, held in honour of Prime
Minister Shastri, almost all the senior members of the Soviet Government and all
members of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR took part. Indeed an
unusual, but extremely touching, note of cordiality and courtesy was shown to Shastri.

The honour, bestowed on Prime Minister Shastri, and the negotiations that he held
with the Soviet leaders, were proof of the fact that India was not being side-tracked for
making way for Pakistan. No doubt, the Soviet treatment of Pakistan had changed: no
doubt Moscow had carefully restrained from taking sides in Pakistan’s dispute with India,
no doubt Premier Kosygin had avoided criticizing China in his speeches delivered during
both Ayub’s and Shastri’s visit to Moscow. But the Soviet leaders did not leave any doubt
in the mind of the Indian Prime Minister that whatever new equations they would seek in
order to be in tune with the time, they would not weaken the traditional bonds of
friendship with India. In the coming months, when small border incidents in the Kutch
area were escalated by Pakistan in to a shooting war with India, the Soviets showed how
well-intentioned they could be in solving the Indo-Pak dispute on the issue of Kashmir.

**Indo-Pak War: Attitude of The Soviets**
Towards the end of August 1965, the border situation in Kashmir became extremely tense after mass crossings by Pakistani infiltrators into this state of India and the latter’s action against them. The Soviet Union called upon both the countries to find out ways to liquidate the conflict which could only further aggravate their economic problems.

Soviet stand on the above situation was nicely elaborated by an observer of Pravda in a leading article entitled “Urgent Necessity”. The commentator did not apportion blame to any side. While referring to Soviet respect for India’s policy of peaceful coexistence and non-alignment, her fight against colonialism and her respectable place in the words, he underlined that Soviet aspiration for developing her relations with Pakistan proceeded from the assumption that her good-neighbourly relations with Pakistan would not weaken her friendship with any third country. Maintenance of relations between the Soviet Union and Pakistan, the commentator added, was a part of Soviet general policy directed towards ensuring peace in Asia and the world. Soviet relations with Pakistan, like her traditional friendship with India, would be a stabilizing factor for normalization of relations between India and Pakistan as well as for the situation in Asia. Pravda commentator laid stress on the peaceful solution of disputes between these two countries. By all means Pravda was non-committal to both the parties. Friendly feelings were expressed for both India and Pakistan. The sole objective of the Soviets was peace in the Indian sub-continent and this supreme need of the hour was all the more stressed by the Pravda editorial of 24 August 1965, entitled “Stop Bloodshed in Kashmir”.

Just contrary to the aforesaid Soviet attitude was the policy adopted by the People’s Republic of China towards the Indo-Pak conflict. It is interesting to note that on 4 September 1965, in the wake of serious border fighting in Kashmir, when the issue of war between India and Pakistan was being discussed in the Security Council and when the Soviet delegate was asking for immediate measures to be taken for the restoration of peace in the Indian sub-continent, Chinese Foreign Minister Chen Yi paid a surprise visit to Karachi, where he pledged his country’s “moral and material support to Pakistan”.

In the Security Council meeting referred to above, the Soviet delegate expressed his deep concern on the gravity of the situation and asked both India and Pakistan to halt the conflict.
In order to counteract the Soviet demand for immediate peace and add to the intransigence of Pakistan, the People’s Daily vehemently condemned India’s stand on Kashmir on 5 September. It supported “Pakistan’s counter-attack in self-defense against India’s armed aggression” and accused the Soviet Union of “vying with the US in aiding and abetting the Indian reactionaries”.

China’s allegation, however, was a total travesty of truth because the Soviet leadership had taken a clear-cut neutral stance and asked for a peaceful solution of the dispute.

The various debates held in the Security Council on the issue of Kashmir led to the passage of two unanimous resolutions (4 and 5 September) asking for cease-fire and withdrawal. In the hope of China’s direct intervention against India, Pakistan did not pay any heed to the UN call. This was precisely what china had desired. In order to embolden Pakistan a bit more, on 7 September, the People’s Republic of China released a statement, which condemned India’s “naked aggression” and warned her that “she must bear the responsibility for all consequences”. China outrightly denounced the UNO, the Soviet Union and the USA, which, she contended, were “helping” India.

The Soviet reaction to the Indo-Pak conflict remained quite unaffected by China’s outbursts against all the forces, which were working for an amicable settlement of the Indo-Pak conflict. The second TASS statement on this conflict was released on 8 September. The Soviet Government, the statement observed, expressed its “anxieties on the violation of the ceasefire line in Pakistan”. It asked both sides to keep peace and maintain the status quo.

The People’s Republic of China came forward to counteract the aforesaid second TASS statement. In contrast to the guarded moderation and deep concern of the Soviets for peace, the Chinese Foreign Ministry sent a note to the Indian Government on 8 September alleging border violations and warning it. On 9 September, while speaking at a civic reception given in his honour by North Korean Charge d’Affaires Prime Minister Chou En-lai harshly condemned the Soviet Union and the USA “for playing their games in the UN against Pakistan”. Increase in China’s warnings to India could very easily be marked after an increase in Soviet demands for peace, the UN concern for cease-fire and Pakistan’s reverses on the border.
China’s inflammatory statements along with Pakistan’s request to CENTO and SEATO partners for military assistance further made it imperative for the Soviet leadership to re-assert its stand on the Indo-Pak conflict. Soviet Premier A.N. Kosygin wrote almost identical letters to both Shastri and Ayub on 4 September. In these letters which were published in Pravda on 12 September, Kosygin reaffirmed the well-known Soviet stand on the conflict and stressed the need for immediate cease-fire. He underscored the complexity of the Asian situation due to US aggression in Vietnam and the “dirty game of some powers” which were striving for subverting Afro-Asian solidarity. After thus making an oblique reference to China’s outbursts, the Soviet Premier reiterated his Government’s desire that the leaders of both the countries could count on Soviet cooperation, if asked for.

Despite all the aforesaid Soviet efforts and Security Council resolutions for immediate cessation of the conflict in Kashmir, the situation on the Indo-Pak border went on deteriorating fast. Apart from China’s open encouragement to Pakistan, Turkey, Iran and Indonesia, had come out to register their moral and material support to that country. China’s open provocations near Sikkim border and her troops’ movement on various other strategic points in the north made the situation very explosive. Any spark from outside could have been sufficient for an all-out conflagration in South Asia.

Fully aware of the various implications of the Indo-Pak conflict. China’s open siding with Pakistan and her threats to India, the Soviet leadership directed all its energy to the maintenance of peace in the Indian sub-continent and thereby to the prevention of any escalation of the conflict. The third TASS statement, which was released on 14 September, warned against exploitation of the conflict by certain forces. Which had intensified the conflict by issuing instigatory statements. This statement of the TASS maintained that if the conflict would be deepened many governments would be involved and the conflict would spread over distant regions. It warned that ugly forces would have to bear full responsibility for their policies and actions. “No Government has the right to add fuel to the fire”, this statement asserted.

Peking, which had already directed its diplomacy against Soviet bid for mediation in the Indo-Pak conflict, issued its first ultimatum to India on 17 September. The aim of China’s ultimatum was to coerce India, reduce her mounting military pressure in Lahore Sector and thus to help Pakistan in getting a favorable resolution from the Security
Council. In this ultimatum, China threatened to strike at India on the flimsy grounds of stealing some Chinese yaks and grabbing some Chinese territory by the Indian border guards near Sikkim. This ultimatum contained China’s claims on territories in Sikkim. It was quite strange, because at no stage in the past, Peking had disputed India’s right in Sikkim. Traditional boundary in this area was also always confirmed by several treaties and even by Chinese maps. Peking had sent a Note to the Government of India on 26 December 1959, in which it very clearly accepted that Sikkim-Tibet part of the Sino-Indian boundary had been fully delimited. This was subsequently confirmed by Premier Chou En-lai during his last visit to New Delhi in April 1960. Chou had then said that his Government fully respected India’s relations with Sikkim and Bhutan. While referring to the aforesaid Chinese ultimatum and charges against India, Prime Minister Shastri declared in the Lok Sabha in the course of a statement on 17 September 1965, “the Government of India are constrained to reject these allegations”. He observed that China’s stand in the present crisis amounted to outright interference on her part. “calculated to prolong and enlarge the conflict”.

Moscow was carefully watching the aforesaid move of Peking, which was correctly described by an observer as China’s “political second front” against India. On 17 September, i.e. exactly on the day China’s first ultimatum to India was received in New Delhi, Premier Kosygin wrote letters to both Shastri and Ayub, in which he proposed direct meeting between the leaders of India and Pakistan on the Soviet soil, preferably in Tashkent, and offered his services, if requested. Under the shadow of threat, caused by China’s first ultimatum, the meeting of the Security Council was summoned on 18 September. The Soviet delegate put forward his earlier three proposals for the maintenance of peace.”

Exactly on 18 September, the people’s Daily alleged that the USSR had “collaborated” with the USA in “manipulating” two resolutions in the Security Council which were passed earlier on 4 and 6 September. This paper alleged Soviet “intervention”, criticized the third TASS statement (released on 14 September) as “fully distorted”, retorted at the speeches of Soviet leaders and their offer of good offices. The Soviet Government was held responsible by China for the escalation of the conflict. India was condemned as “the darling child of the USSR and the USA”. On 19 September, the New China News Agency (hereafter NCNA) assailed UN Secretary General U Thant for
attempting a fake truce under the UN aegis. It asked for branding India as an aggressor and laid stress on self-determination in Kashmir. It is difficult to understand as to how China could ask for the right of self-determination in Kashmir. A sizable portion of Kashmir was first captured by Pakistan, which was named as “Azad Kashmir” and subsequently, a vast chunk of this territory was ceded to China by Pakistan herself.

All the outbursts of Peking were directly aimed at the subversion of peace efforts in the UNO and the level of Soviet diplomacy. India’s Foreign Minister rightly observed that in the Security Council, China was fighting through Pakistan.”

The deadline of China’s first ultimatum had already passed and India remained undeterred. The Council, however, was deeply concerned over the situation in the sub – continent because China had issued her second ultimatum to India on 19 September.

To ward off any eventuality at the hands of an adventurous Peking, an emergency meeting of the Security Council was held on 20 September, at which a new draft resolution “demanding” acceptance of cease-fire by India and Pakistan, latest by 22 September, was adopted unanimously. China’s second ultimatum was to lapse after this date.

These were thus left only two options for Pakistan: either to flout the Council’s resolution and continue to fight even after the council’s deadline in the hope of some sort of rescue operation by the Chinese, or to accept the unanimous call given by the Security Council. Pakistan’s losses on the border were heavier. China’s first ultimatum to India had also fully failed to bail out Ayub. A defeated and desperate Pakistan could have seen no way out except to accept the aforesaid resolution of the Council, which did not include the right of self-determination for the people of Kashmir, nor was incorporated in it the demand of withdrawal from the territories already won. This position was readily acceptable to India. Both the parties thus accepted this resolution of the Council and Kosygin’s offer of mediation. The war thus came to an end.

China, however, attacked the Security Council resolution, which was willingly accepted by both the parties and hastened to observe that such a resolution, “equating aggressor with victim”, “added another page to the inglorious record of the United Nations”. 
From the above discussion on the Soviet attitude towards the Indo-Pak War, the curious contrast between the foreign policies of People’s China and the USSR becomes clear.

A bloody conflict, taking place between the two Asian countries, whose total population accounted for one-fifth of the mankind, in an area of close geographical proximity, was certainly a matter of the highest concern and caution for their Asian neighbours—the Soviet Union and the People’s Republic of China. The Chinese Government issued incendiary statements, sent threatening ultimatums, openly sided with Pakistan and aimed at the subversion of Soviet strategy to end this conflict through the UN efforts. Peking concentrated its energy on how to humiliate the Soviet leadership and humble the fighting forces of India. This was so, when the Soviet Union came forward with peace proposals and friendly statements, when she exercised her influence with both India and Pakistan, asked for immediate cease-fire, put forward prudent proposals of mediation and laid stress on the UN efforts.

An objective account of the attitude of these two powers towards the aforesaid conflict makes it evident that Peking showed all possible generosity in subsidizing the military hawks of Pakistan in what was planned as their “Bay of Pigs” adventure. This was so, when Moscow took all diplomatic steps to moderate the rulers of that country and at the same time successfully managed to deter its Chinese patrons. Peace was the supreme need of the hour and the demand of all international organizations and powers concerned. By her reckless action China confirmed her war-like character and by her quiet diplomacy, the Soviet Union consolidated her image of a peace-maker in Asia. Certainly, Soviet diplomacy was aimed at creating a suitable atmosphere for direct bilateral negotiation between India and Pakistan, and at the same time, it rendered complete support to the UNO, as a result of which the war could be put to an end and the probability of a still greater calamity could be averted.

Notwithstanding a lasting contribution to the political stability and peace in South Asia at a very critical juncture, various sorts of misapprehensions with regard to a change in Soviet policy towards India were expressed. The Jana Sangh alleged that the Soviet leadership deserted India and did not render her any support in war with Pakistan. While advocating the need for reassessment of India’s foreign policy, the Swatantra Party blamed the Soviet Union for equating India with Pakistan. Many phrases were coined in order to
bracket Soviet and American stands on the Indo-Pak war. Russo-American “move in concert”, “US-Soviet parallel commonality”, “expedient coincidence”, “tacit alliance between America and Russia” – such comments were offered in the West. Some influential British journals blamed the Soviets for discarding India and denying her due support.

Was there really a shift in Soviet policy towards India during the Indo-Pak war? Could Soviet attitude towards this crisis be compared to that of the USA?

It is quite strange to argue that the Soviet Union changed her earlier friendly attitude towards India simply because she did not denounce Pakistan as an aggressor, consistently asked for bilateral negotiation and ultimately voted for ceasefire resolutions on the issue of Kashmir in the Security Council. In our view, demand for immediate peace was the fittest course which the Soviets could have adopted for the relaxation of tension in the sub-continent. In the difficult and dangerous circumstances of war, which had been made much more explosive by the People’s Republic of China, it was Soviet initiative which proved an important factor in diffusing the crisis.

Moscow’s open support to India would have certainly delayed military disengagement, irked the Chinese leadership further and given it a lame excuse for creating some more trouble on India’s northern border, which would have only added to her enormous problems. China was reportedly poised for some sort of military action against India. Clear-cut Soviet championship of New Delhi’s case would have only aggravated the situation. It would have paved the way for China’s military adventure and eventually increased the possibility of US intervention – a warning of which was reported to have been given by the US Ambassador to his Chinese counterpart in Warsaw.

Soviet diplomacy during the Indo-Pak War was guided by reason and realism. It is true that right from the beginning of troubles in Kutch up to the all-out war along the Indo-Pak border, there were definite evidences of Pakistan’s responsibility in aggravating the situation. Why then the Soviets did not pass any judgement on the merit of the issues involved? A simple answer to this question is the fact that the Soviets had very carefully envisaged for themselves the role of a peace-maker. A spade could not be called a spade by the Soviets, because this truth-telling would have amounted to an outright denunciation of Pakistan and as a result of it, Soviets would have been eliminated in the very first round with all their plans of mediation doomed to disaster. Further, it would have cost a
negotiated settlement between India and Pakistan, which were only draining away their rare resources in a war which was largely undecisive.

There was actually nothing new in the Soviet demand for bilateral negotiation between India and Pakistan, a proposal the Soviet Union consistently placed before these countries during this war. It is a well-known fact that after the Security Council discussion on the issue of Kashmir in May 1964, both India and Pakistan had accepted the Council’s resolution to this effect. The Soviets did not go back on the issue of Kashmir in the Security Council. It is important to observe that the Security Council resolution on situation in the Indian subcontinent, which was ultimately acceptable to both the parties, had asked for a simple cease-fire, there was no reference to withdrawal from or even self-determination in Kashmir. This was precisely what India herself stood for in the Security Council. Was there then any point in opposing this unanimous proposition of the Security Council, which was acceptable to the parties themselves?

At no stage did the Soviet Union equate India with Pakistan. She kept intact arms agreements with India. Barely a month before the outbreak of the Indo-Pak War, she had expressed her readiness to sell submarines to India on deferred payment and offered both training and maintenance facilities. In view of the aging ships of the Indian navy, these fresh Soviet offers were vital for the protection of India’s long coast-line, which was easily vulnerable from Pakistan’s side. Even when the Indo-Pak conflict was approaching towards an end, a high-level defense delegation from India was finalizing some important negotiations in Moscow.

As regards the much publicized thesis of “parallelism” between Soviet and American stands on the Indo-Pak conflict, it is worth noting that by ordering an immediate stoppage of military aid to both India and Pakistan, it was the American administration, which actually equated the aggressor with the victim. To keep Pakistan at par with India, it was the White House which and had cancelled the scheduled visit of Shastri and Ayub to Washington. Pakistan had made a mockery of the earlier pledges given by Eisenhower and Kennedy to India that US arms assistance, given to Pakistan under Mutual Security Pact, was for containing communism and its use against India could not be allowed. Despite this, the US administration was found quite reticent about Pakistan’s open violation of these pledge. Not only this, when it received protest from New Delhi, it declared arms embargo against both these countries and thus kept them on an equal footing.
America’s stand on the aforesaid conflict was even excelled by that of her ally, Britain. The Head of the UN Military Observers Group in India and Pakistan, General Nimmo and UN Secretary General U Thant had held Pakistan responsible for first sending her armed infiltrators into Kashmir. Despite this well-known fact, the British Government called India the aggressor and immediately cancelled all military assistance to her. In view of the facts, referred to above, there is no gainsaying that Soviet attitude towards India during the Indo-Pak conflict amounted to any sort of withdrawal of support to India. While declaring India’s acceptance of the Security Council resolution of cease-fire in the Lok Sabha on 2 September, nobody less than the Prime Minister of India, Lal Bahadur Shastri, referred to premier A.N. Kosygin’s letter of invitation (received on 18 September) and observed, in offering “good offices for bringing about improved relations between India and Pakistan”, “Kosygin is impelled by noble intentions. No one can contest the view that ultimately India and Pakistan will have to live together as peaceful neighbours. We cannot therefore say no to any efforts, which may help to bring about such a situation, made by those, who are sincere and genuine in their feelings of goodwill and friendship”. Shastri accepted Kosygin’s invitation, and so did Ayub.

The Tashkent Declaration

Strong Soviet desire for peace in the Indian sub-continent was fully confirmed during the Tashkent Conference, which took place on 4 January 1966. On invitation from the Soviet Premier, the Prime Minister of India and the President of Pakistan took part in this summit. In his welcome address, A.N. Kosygin, who inaugurated this Conference, said that the sole purpose behind his suggestion to hold such a meeting was just to help India and Pakistan find out a road to peace. While aspiring for strengthening friendly relations with both of these countries, he observed, the Soviet Union stood for the establishment of a good neighbourly relations between India and Pakistan. The soviet Premier referred to the seriousness of the economic tasks and the complexity of the existing issues, which stood before these countries. “Tashkent might start a turning point in Indo-Pak relations, if they would create a climate of mutual trust and understanding”, Kosygin added.

After six days of mutual discussions and causal consultations with the Soviet Premier, Lal Bahadur Shastri and Ayub Khan signed the Tashkent Declaration, which was witnessed by A.N. Kosygin. According to this document, India and Pakistan agreed to renounce the use of force and withdraw their armed personnel to their earlier positions.
Both these parties further expressed their desire to respect the principle of non-intervention in the internal affairs of each other and discourage hostile propaganda. Mutual desire for the restoration of diplomatic relations, repatriation of prisoners of war, and settlement of refugee problem was expressed.

The results of the Tashkent Conference were hailed by many countries in the world, more especially, by the third world countries. Most of the developing countries were seething with acute territorial, racial and religious differences with their neighbors. The Tashkent Declarations, which was signed at the end of the Asian summit, held in an Asian city, was received by most of these countries as brilliant model of self-negotiated settlement with no super-imposed solution. Rightly, the delegates of the Solidarity Conference of the Countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America applauded the results of the Declarations.  

A large number of Arab countries welcomed this Agreement.

As expected, the right-wing political parties of India reacted very sharply to the outcome of the Tashkent Agreement.

The Bharatiya Jana Sangh, which had already warned against the “sinister straws” in the Soviet wind at Tashkent even before the Conference had taken place, came out to condemn this document as the “most dubious” one. The party leader A.B. Vajpayee observed that this Declaration was a self-delusion. Vajpayee branded the Tashkent Declaration as a betrayal of the solemn assurances given by Shastri to the Parliament.

The Praja Socialist Party maintained that at Tashkent, the Soviet Premier “cajoled India only to intercede on behalf of Pakistan, to accommodate and humor her at India’s expense. The National Executive of the Socialist Party resolved that the Tashkent Declaration would not serve any purpose and, therefore, the country should start a powerful movement for the “confederation of India and Pakistan”. PSP leader Surendra Mohan alleged that at Tashkent the Soviet Union succeeded in exercising greater pressures on India in order to gain favor for Pakistan. Another leader of this party, S.N. Dwivedi observed that Shastri died at Tashkent due to Soviet pressures. Socialist leader Madhu Limaye called the aforesaid Agreement as a betrayal and defeat for India.

Swatantra Party leader C. Rajagopalachari welcomed the Declaration. Subsequently, his party plunged into second thoughts and warned against the “revival of Tsarist Government of Russia”. The party mouthpiece wrote that as a result of the
Tashkent Agreement, both India and Pakistan were being brought “in the ring of Russian sphere of influence”.  

As regards the views of some major powers on the conclusion of the Tashkent Declaration, it is important to note that the reaction of the People’s Republic China were hostile. A product of joint US-Soviet plotting”, the Tashkent Declaration would weaken the struggle against imperialism in Asia and Africa – commented the People’s Daily on 2 February 1966. While attacking the results of the aforesaid conference, the people’s Daily accused the Soviet Premier of “provoking” the Indo-Pak conflict, “aiding the aggressor and disguising himself as an impartial negotiator”. That the Soviet Union had succeeded in holding a conference at Tashkent, so near the Chinese border, in which Pakistan, Peking’s newly discovered friend, had taken part, must have demoralized the Chinese leadership, whose policy of confrontation in the Indian sub-continent had thus crumbled to pieces.

So far as the attitude of Britain and the USA towards the Tashkent Declaration is concerned it was a strange mixture of applause and animosity. It must have been painful for these countries to see that India and Pakistan, countries which had fought largely, with their arms had ultimately agreed to discuss matters at a conference, which was sponsored by the USSR. That Pakistan, a faithful ally of the West had chosen to prefer Soviet mediation in a conflict, which was largely of their own making, must have brought home additional heart burnings.

The Tashkent Conference might have placed Washington in an awkward situation, because in the wake of the troubled Indo-Pak situation, it had gone back on its invitation to both Shastri and Ayub, whereas Moscow had succeeded in persuading these leaders to enter into direct and bilateral negotiations. The outcome of the Tashkent summit must have disappointed London as well, because two of the biggest members of the Commonwealth family had chosen to visit the forbidden city of Tashkent, where they would have certainly discovered the last remains of Curzon’s “Russian bogey”.

The USA appears to have adopted a double-edged policy towards the holding of the Tashkent Conference. President Johnson favoured the idea of the Conference during Ayub’s visit to the US capital in December 1965. Just on the eve of the Tashkent Conference, he had observed that a peaceful solution of disputes in the Indian sub-
continent was most essential. This was one edge of America’s policy, by the adoption of which the White House would have hoped that Moscow’s role of the peace-maker in Tashkent would only infuriate peking against Moscow – a task in which Washington was vitally interested. The other edge of the US Policy was added by Defence Secretary Robert McNamara, who reportedly told India’s Minister of Food, S.K. Patil, just on the eve of the Tashkent Conference, that his Government would not recognize any agreement at Tashkent, if it did not suit its interest. Under such circumstances, he added, the US Government would resume its arms supply to Pakistan. McNamara’s statement was aimed at adding to Pakistan’s tough attitude towards the conference and thereby enabling her to score a few more points against India.

Like McNamara, British Prime Minister Wilson also contributed to the intransigence of Pakistan. It is true that Wilson welcomed the holding of a conference at Tashkent, but strangely enough, he got his controversial letter (written much earlier to Francis Noel Baker) released to the press just on 6 January 1966. In this letter, Wilson had once again re-affirmed his previous stand that India was an aggressor in the September War. It is important to note that the Indo-Pak parleys in Tashkent reached an impasse for the first time on this date itself. It seems as if Ayub found some extra ground for hardening his attitude. China also contributed substantially to the stiff attitude of Ayub, which continued for three consecutive days, during which he postponed his talks with Shastri. It was a curious coincidence that exactly on 6 January, when Wilson’s aforesaid letter was release to the press, China sent a strong note to India, in which she alleged that Indian forces were making frenzied efforts to create tension on the border and that China would strongly strike back unless instrusions into her territory ceased. Undoubtedly it resulted in the hardening of Pakistan’s attitude.

The Tashkent Agreement was in essence almost an embodiment of a no-war pact between India and Pakistan. A defeat for none and a victory for all, the Tashkent Declaration was a right step taken at a right time and in the right direction. Signed by the Prime Minister of a non-aligned India and the President of an aligned Pakistan in the presence of the Prime Minister of the USSR, the Tashkent Agreement was an enshrinement of the policy of peaceful co-existence. Seen in comparison with the bellicosity of China and the duplicity of the West, the Tashkent Declaration looks like a major triumph of Soviet policy of
peaceful co-existence, a marvel of mature Soviet diplomacy and an assertion of strong
desire on the part of the Soviets to take keen interest in the affairs of South Asia.

The Government of India whole-heartedly welcomed the Tashkent Agreement. Both
Gulzari Lal Nanda, who took over as the acting Prime Minister after the sad demise of
Shastri at Tashkent, and Indira Gandhi, the newly elected Prime Minister, expressed their
preparedness to execute this Declaration. It was duly approved by the Indian Parliament
and the Jaipur session of the INC, which recorded that but for the patience, tact and
diplomatic skill, displayed by the Soviet Premier, the Tashkent Declaration could not have
been brought about.

**Advancing Through Stresses and Strains**

New trends in Soviet South Asian policy, which came on the surface in the wake of
the Indo-Pak War and the Tashkent Conference, remained in force in some way till the
situation took a serious turn in the sub-continent in March 1971. Ayub’s lukewarm attitude
towards the Tashkent Declaration and the development of multi-dimensional Soviet
relations with Pakistan were some of the important factors, which could have impaired
Indo-Soviet relations in some way. But thanks to the skill and maturity of the leadership
both in India and the USSR, the transitory pressures of this phase could be successfully
overcome leading ultimately to the unfolding of wider dimensions in relations between
these two countries.

**Tashkent Spirit: Hope and Despair**

The Government of India welcomed that Tashkent Declaration as a bright
beginning in Indo-Pak relations, a great act of the late Prime Minister Shastri. In a speech,
delivered on 12 January 1966. President Radhakrishnan praised the Soviet Primer’s
“leading noble and historic part” at Tashkent and observed that force could not be the
arbiter of international quarrels. “Either to perish or to change,” he emphasized, “that was
the advice, which the Tashkent document gave”\(^1\) Newly elected Prime Minister Indira
Gandhi expressed her preparedness to implement this agreement on which, she remarkably
observed, “Shastri had put the seal with his own life”.

Just contrary to India’s hopeful response, Pakistan’s attitude towards the Tashkent
Agreement was full of misgivings and despair right from the beginning. Immediately after
returning home from Tashkent, highly placed authorities of this country started giving various sorts of wrong interpretations of this declaration. Pakistan’s foreign Secretary was reported as saying that the “armed personnel”, who were to withdraw from the recently occupied areas to their earlier positions as desired by the Tashkent Declaration, did not include “freedom fighters in Kashmir”. On 14 January 1966, in an unscheduled broadcast to the nation, Ayub himself declared that this declaration did not affect Pakistan’s stand on Kashmir, because “he had not signed a no-war pact with India. The information Secretary of Pakistan went still further and declared that the cease-fire line in Kashmir was nothing more than “a temporary arrangement” and “the freedom fighters had the right to be where they were”.

There were in fighters acute pressures on Ayub from military, communal and political forces, which were being further exploited by Pakistan’s Foreign Minister, Z.A. Bhutto, who charged that by signing the Tashkent Declaration, “Ayub betrayed the nation and capitulated to the dictates of Great Powers”. In the course of debates in the National Assembly of Pakistan, Bhutto went to the extent of declaring that “the Tashkent Declaration did not contain any specific answer or solution to the problems between Pakistan and India. The Foreign Minister of Pakistan declared in unambiguous terms that the Tashkent Declaration was “not a contractual obligation” and it did not stop Pakistan from “enpousing the cause of Jammu and Kashmir”, where Pakistan had always a right to go to the defense of its people.19

It is strange that the anti-Tashkent campaign of Bhutto which of course had the clear-cut backing of the official circles in Pakistan, almost coincided with the first visit of the Chinese President, Liu Shao-chi to Pakistan in March 1966. In the courses of his various speeches in Pakistan, the Chinese President asserted his country’s strong support to Pakistan in her just struggle for the protection of her territorial integrity and people’s right of self–determination. This was the patent way of pledging China’s support to Pakistan in the affairs of the sub-continent. One need not wonder at China’s incitement of Pakistan in her anti-Tashkent drive. How could Peking patiently watch the implementation of the Tashkent Declaration, which would have undoubtedly increased Soviet prestige in Asia, reduced Pakistan’s dependence on China, put a brake on Peking’s policy of confrontation in the sub-continent and strengthened India’s defence Capability?
Despite Pakistan’s open inhibitions with regard to the Tashkent Agreement and Peking’s hostile propaganda against Soviet peace efforts in the Indian sub-continent, and its angry outburst against Indo-Soviet friendship, the Government of India did not in the least contemplate any withdrawal of its support to this document. It is true that in India several demonstrations and mass meetings were organized by some political parties in order to register their protest against this document. Several motions against this agreement were presented in the Lok Sabha by opposition leaders. But none of these could get through. By a vast Majority, the House endorsed the action of the Government of India. In his address to the Indian Parliament, while referring to “the satisfaction” that Shastri had in “signing the Tashkent Declaration with President Ayub Khan of Pakistan in the presence of Mr. Kosygin, Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR”, the President of India, S. Radhakrishnan observed that it was Kosygin’s “good offices and friendly approach, more than anything else”, which “made the agreement possible”.

In response to Brezhnev’s call for the observance of the Tashkent Declaration in the course of his report to the Twenty – Third Congress of the CPSU (29 March – 8 April 1966), Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, during a brief stop-over in Moscow, came forward to pay tributes to the Soviet Union for hosting the conference and observed that India would implement the Tashkent Agreement in spite of Pakistan’s provocation.20 During her first official visit to Moscow as Prime Minister (12-16 July 1966), Indira Gandhi reciprocated Kosygin’s sincere desire for the realization of the Tashkent Agreement and observed that she considered it as “a manifest of peaceful co-existence”.21 In an oblique reference to China, which was creating hurdles in the normalization of Indo-Pak relations in the spirit of the Tashkent Declaration, the Indian Prime Minister referred to “the narrow dogmatism of some power”, which was hostile to peaceful co-existence and added that “there were countries, which did not like the détente achieved by the Great Powers” and which wished “to veto it by aggravating tension in Asia”. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi made a cautiously – worded remark on China and her ever-growing ties with Pakistan. She regretted that “a major Asian power should have forgotten the pledge it signed at Bandung” and decried the use of aggressive force in the settlement of disputes by some counties, which “entered into opportunities alliances with feudal and revivalist forces in Asia and Africa”.

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Indira Gandhi used her Moscow visit primarily to impress upon the Soviet leadership the various difficulties which India was facing in the implementation of the Tashkent Declaration due to China’s incitement of Pakistan and the latter’s desertion of the pledges given at Tashkent. It is true that the Prime Minister’s visit to Moscow had become essential in view of her earlier visits to London, Paris and Washington (in April 1966). This visit was used by the India Prime Minister to keep Soviet interest alive in India as reliable and strong neighbour. Reiterating her commitment to the Tashkent Declaration, and expressing her apprehensions regarding China’s adventurous postures in South Asia, she succeeded in allaying Soviet fears with regard to any shift in India’s attitude towards America’s role in Vietnam. The importance attached to Indira Gandhi’s visit to the Soviet capital was more vividly revealed from the vast coverage of her visit in the Soviet press and the presence of the entire CPSU Politbureau at the banquet in her honour. Premier Kosygin spoke eloquently about friendly and meaningful cooperation between India and the USSR

**Soviet Relations With Pakistan: Some Anxiety in India**

If we take into account the significance attached by the Soviet leadership to President Ayub’s Moscow visit, the confidence that Pakistan reposed in the Soviet Prime Minister at Tashkent, the volume of ever-growing economic transactions between Pakistan and the USSR and the increasing exchange of delegations between the two countries, it would be clear that a somewhat new phase had been ushered in relations between the USSR and Pakistan. A certain change in the Soviet attitude towards Pakistan could be easily seen from the tone of the Soviet press, which brought out several favorable articles on Pakistan. Pakistan’s new posture vis-a-vis Moscow was aimed at neutralizing the latter’s friendly attitude towards New Delhi, whereas the new Soviet policy towards Pakistan centered round weaning her away from both China and the USA.

The proximity in Soviet – Pak relations, which became noticeable during Ayub’s first visit to the Soviet capital, went on further increasing. Pakistan no longer remained an anathema to the Soviets in spite of her negative attitude towards the Tashkent Declaration and the ever-increasing flirtations with China. This was the period when a certain change of nuances could be observed in Pakistan’s attitude towards issues like colonialism, imperialism disarmament, détente, non-proliferation, etc.
After thus placing her Soviet policy on a new footing, Pakistan expressed her keen interest in Soviet military assistance. Ayub had already made cautious move in this direction during his first visit to Moscow in April 1965. On a purely good-will mission, the President of Pakistan had taken care to include in his entourage Air Marshal Nur Khan. In June 1966, Air Marshal Nur Khan paid a separate ten-day visit to the Soviet capital. He was accompanied by a group of senior army, navy and air force officers. Nur Khan held detailed discussions with his Soviet counterpart and met the Defence Minister Marshal Malinovsky. While speaking at a luncheon, given in his honour by Malinovsky, Nur Khan spoke about the cooperation between the armed forces of Pakistan and the USSR. The Pak military delegation visited a number of Soviet military installations, inspected several varieties of supersonic aircraft and held talks with G.S. Sidorovich, a highly placed Soviet official, responsible for military transactions with foreign countries.

Soviet desire to improve relations with Pakistan was reiterated by Premier Kosygin in the course of a speech, which he delivered in the Supreme Soviet in August 1966. Within less than a month after Kosygin’s reference to Pakistan, the Soviet Government offered Rs. 600 million credit to Islamabad and signed a fairly comprehensive agreement consisting of important economic and technical clauses.

In their desire to minimize the area of disagreement with Pakistan, the Soviets even went to the extent of omitting any specific reference to the Tashkent Declaration in the Soviet – Pak joint communiqué which was issued at end of the official visit of Pakistan’s Foreign Minister to Moscow in May 1967.22

A Suitable background was thus prepared for President Ayub Khan’s second trip to Moscow in September 1967. Ayub skillfully used this visit for soliciting arms assistance from the Soviets. At a Kremlin dinner on 25 September, he indirectly referred to India and complained to his host that “indiscriminate increase in armaments and the growing military imbalances in the sub-continent was also a danger”. In another dinner speech delivered in the presence of President Podgorny on 27 September, he asked for bringing an immediate end to the arms race in the Indo-Pak sub-continent. Since the Soviet Union was the biggest supplier of arms to India, Ayub tried his best to impress upon his hosts the need to give a further proofs of his country’s independent attitude towards Washington. Ayub Khan reiterated his support to Soviet proposals on several international issues. He lauded the Soviet role in the Arab-Israel War of June 1967 and decried outside intervention in
Vietnam, While obliquely having a dig at India’s inhibitions regarding nuclear non-proliferation the President of Pakistan observed, “the interests of all nations demanded that the emergence of a sixth nuclear power should be prevented under all circumstances and that a Non-Proliferation Treaty by concluded without delay. He offered his country’s acceptance of the proposed Nuclear Non-Profileration Treaty.

Ayub’s visit to the USSR proved fruitful. In the economic field, he succeeded in getting the extension of Soviet assistance up to 1975. Politically, his visit proved a bigger success. The joint communiqué issued after the conclusion of the visit avoided any reference to the Tashkent Declaration. He succeeded in persuading Premier Kosygin to pay an official visit to Pakistan, an invitation which had been pending since April 1965. From the military point of view also, the visit proved considerably successful. Ayub ably presented before the Soviets country’s case for arms assistance.

The first ever visit of the Soviet Prime Minister to the capital of Pakistan (17-20 April 1968) took place at a very opportune time. The period of Pakistan’s agreement regarding American Communication Base at Peshwar was to expire on 1 July 1969. According to the terms of the agreement, each signatory could terminate it after giving one year’s notice. Obviously this date of notice was due within less than three months after Kosygin’s visit. Ayub first wanted to read the mind of Kosygin and gauge the volume of expected Soviet military assistance.

From all available accounts, it seems that Kosygin’s visit proved a prelude to another break-through in Soviet-Pak relations. On an invitation from the Soviet Government, a high-power military delegation of Pakistan led by the Commander-in-Chief, General A.M. Yahya Khan visited Moscow on 28 June 1968 and held discussions with the Soviet Defence Minister, Marshal Andhrei Grechko. From both sides, high-ranking officials and defence experts took part in the negotiations.

The above developments in relations between Pakistan and the USSR were being viewed in India with some anxiety. The Government of India had been cautiously watching these moves for more than three years. Soviet readiness to supply arms to Pakistan was conveyed to the Government of India through a letter of the Soviet Premier, which was handed over to Prime Minister Indira Gandhi by the Soviet Charge ‘d’ Affaires in New Delhi, Nikolai Smirnov.
The Government of India expressed its reactions in two ways. Since President Zakir Hussain’s visit to Moscow was to begin on 8 July 1968, exactly a day after Yahya Khan left Moscow for home after concluding his negotiations with Soviet authorities, it was left for him to take up this matter in direct talks with the Soviet leadership.

President Zakir Hussain used his visit to the Soviet Union (8-18 July) for conveying the Government of India’s apprehension over the arms deal with Pakistan to the Soviet leadership. In the course of a luncheon speech in the Kremlin on 10 July, President Hussain made an indirect reference to the Soviet agreement for arms supply to Pakistan. He observed, “it is of utmost importance for our two Governments to ensure that nothing shall be allowed to cast the slightest shadow on the friendship between our two countries”

As regards Prime Minister Indira Gandhi’s reaction, it was more forthright and spontaneous. While talking to newsmen in Calcutta on 10 July, she remarked, “We are not happy with the reported Soviet offer of arms to Pakistan … we doubt whether the Soviet Union will be able to control Pakistan. If Pakistan uses the arms received by it against us”. She, however, made it clear that the arms deal would not cause any change in India’s foreign policy. “Every country is free to give aid to any another, it is none of our business to interfere”, She added. Indira Gandhi wrote to Premier Kosygin by way of drawing his attention to the possible repercussions of arms supplies to Pakistan on the objectives of step-by-step relaxation in the strained Indo-Pak relations.23

The issue of Soviet arms deal with Pakistan was raised at a meeting of the Congress Parliamentary party held in New Delhi on 19 July. By way of explain Soviet motives behind this arms deal, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi noted that in the fast changing international situation, the USSR was trying to improve her relations with countries like Turkey, Iran and Pakistan. She informed her party MPs that the Soviet leaders had assured India that their relationship with Pakistan would not in the least affect their ties with India.

In the Lok Sabha discussion on Soviet arms deal with Pakistan, which was held on 22 July, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi informed the House that she had written to the Soviet Government expressing her concern on the supply of arms to Pakistan. While conceding the point that “the Soviet Union, like any other country” was “entitled to form her own judgment as to where her interests lie and how to promote them”, she noted: we are bound to express our misgivings and apprehensions to the Soviet leaders in all
frankness.” Referring to the Soviet explanation, the Prime Minister observed, “they have further assured us that they would not do anything to weaken friendship with our country, to injure our interests … they have told the authorities in Pakistan that they will stand by their agreements with India and fulfill all their commitments to us”. While referring to the many sided relations between India and the Soviet Union, Indira Gandhi requested the House to view the new development “in the context of the stability of these relations”. She went further to remind the House, “when Pakistan was getting.. a very vast amount of military equipment as free gift…. From its military allies that was the time when we were helped by the friendship of the Soviet Union.

The adjournment motion, which was brought forward by the right-wing opposition parties in the House on 22 July in order to censure the Government over the issue of Soviet arms deal with Pakistan and to regret the Soviet action as an “unfriendly act”, was defeated in the Lok Sabha by 206 to 61 Votes.

From the discussion of the attitude of the Government of India towards the Soviet arms deal with Pakistan, it becomes clear that Prime Minister Indira Gandhi tried her best to put things in the right perspective. She appraised the Soviet leaders of India’s concern. Since quiet diplomacy and patient persuasion were the cardinal requirements of this situation, she maintained unflinching balance, adopted an independent but a clear and cautious approach and thus succeeded to a considerable extent in both modulating angry public opinion in the country and mollifying aggressive opposition in the parliament.

The reaction of the right-wing opposition parties to Soviet arms deal with Pakistan was, however, quite sharp.

As regards the Jana Sangh, the President of this party, A.B. Vajpayee described the Soviet action as an act of betrayal. Balraj Madhok, a Jana Sangh M.P. called for immediate re-thinking on India’s foreign policy. This party alleged that arms supply to Pakistan would be an “about-turn” on the part of the USSR. It went to the extent of establishing “a link between arms supply to Pakistan and Soviet quest for an outlet to the Persian Gulf… The Jana Sangh asked for “regretting” this “unfriendly act” of the Soviet Union.24

Socialist members of the Parliament and leaders of both factions of the party demanded that the Government should condemn the Soviet action. Nath Pai, Deputy Leader of the PSP in the Lok Sabha, brought forward a resolution, which asked for
regretting Soviet arms deal with Pakistan. While expressing deep concern over arms deal between Pakistan and the USSR, Swatantra leaders Minu Masani criticized “Soviet policy of equi-distance” between New Delhi and Pindi.

If we examine the various allegations levelled by the right-wing political parties of India against the Soviet decision to supply arms to Pakistan, it would be evident that their combined efforts were primarily aimed at pressurizing the Government of India for taking an extreme position in the matter. Such a hasty action would for taking an created a wedge between Moscow and New Delhi. The demand of the opposition in the Parliament to condemn Soviet arms deal with Pakistan as an unfriendly act would not only have been unprecedented but unbecoming also of a mature country like India.

Pakistan was already receiving arms from the USA, Britain, France and people’s Republic of China. Against none of these countries the parliament had taken pains to pass a resolution of condemnation. The Government of India thus did well by loading its protest through diplomatic channel.

Soviet policy behind the supply of arms to Pakistan was in fact an important part of Moscow’s general policy of weakening the various military pacts formed by the West to encircle the USSR. To some extent, the Soviets had succeeded in weakening the NATO by opening several new vistas in their relations with France and West Germany. This had encouraged them to concentrate now on reducing pressures from CENTO. In view of Britain’s declared withdrawal east of Suez, the strategic significance of the Persian Gulf area had immediately shot up. This did not escape the eyes of the Soviets, who cautiously put their relations with Turkey, Iran and Pakistan on an even keel. There were reciprocal gestures from these as well. The visits of Soviet leaders to these countries had proved very successful. Moscow thus decided to sign an arms agreement with Pakistan with the limited objective of disengaging her from the West and China.

There is no denying the fact that Moscow’s new attitude towards Pakistan was a distinct departure, which was considered vital to the Soviets in the wake of their serious differences with the Chinese leadership. The Soviets were pre-occupied with the task of containing the influence of a belligerent China in South Asia. Naturally, in their outlook Pakistan had assumed added strategic and geo-political significance Pakistan’s proximity with the southern borders of the USSR increased the former’s strategic importance
particularly in view of estranged Sino-Soviet relations following the Cultural Revolution in China. Peking was already laying claims to a vast chunk of Soviet territory. Moscow was cautiously watching Ayub’s growing disenchantment with his Western allies, who had imposed an arms embargo on his country during the Indo-Pak War of 1965. Pakistan was anxiously looking for alternative sources of supplies and replacements. The Soviets calculated that such a policy would warm the Pakistan hearts and help them (the Soviets) in weaning this country away from Washington and Peking. Moreover, an arms deal was ideally suited to achieve a breakthrough in relations with Pakistan, which had a military regime.

The change in Soviet attitude towards Pakistan and for that matter even arms deal with the latter was not aimed at India. Right since that Indo-Pak War of 1965, the Soviets had been working hard to bridge the gulf between India and Pakistan and bring them closer to each other. Bilateral settlement of Indo-Pak disputes had all along remained the central theme in Soviet South Asian policy. In order to have some leverage with Pakistan and to use it in bringing about harmony in Indo-Pak relations, the Soviets devised the policy of giving a token arms aid to that country to earn her goodwill. Since India had already been getting bulk of her arms supplies from Moscow for several years. It was considered desirable by the Soviets to make a gesture to Pindi.

Soviet agreement to sell some non-lethal arms to Pakistan, which had little significance in military terms, should not be construed as any cooling-off in Indo-Soviet relations. New Delhi had not lost its importance in the eyes of Moscow. The element of inter-dependence in Indo-Soviet relations had rather increased further in view of China’s strained relations with both these countries.

**India’s Concern Over Events in Czechoslovakia**

The type of fury and furore which had gathered in the country on the issue of the Soviet arms deal with Pakistan re-appeared in the wake of developments in Czechoslovakia in August 1968.

In the Lok Sabha discussion on the Czechoslovak issue on 21 August, Swatantra leader N.G. Ranga asked the Prime Minister “to deplore” and “to condemn” the Soviet action in that country. Similar views were expressed by the Jana Sangh and the Socialist leaders.
Prime Minister Indira Gandhi expressed profound concern of the House to the People of Czechoslovakia and expected that “the forces which had entered Czechoslovakia will be withdrawn at the earliest possible moment and the Czech people will be able to determine their future according to their own wishes and interests and that whatever mutual problems there may be between Czechoslovakia and its allies, will be settled peacefully”

The Prime Minister further explained as to how New Delhi was placed in a delicate situation “when grave responsibilities are cast on government in whatever they say or do”. She added, “the dictates of wisdom enjoin upon us to tread carefully and with great circumspection”. While reiterating the importance of “political realities” which a “government has to deal with”, she did not mince words in admiring the “dignity” and “calm” of the “brave and valiant Czechoslovak people”, who were facing the “tragic situation” with the method of satyagraha.

In the deliberations of the Security Council held on the aforesaid issue on 21-22 August, India’s representative G. Parthasarathi reiterated India’s firm “respect for the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Czechoslovakia”. Taking exception to “intervention” in the “internal affair” of this country, he asked for the withdrawal of foreign troops” from there and for the “security” of her “leaders and people”. While explaining the reason of India’s decision to abstain from voting on the West-sponsored draft resolution, Parthasarathi observed that New Delhi was opposed to such “judgment of condemnation”.

New Delhi Reassured of Soviet Goodwill

Moscow’s view of India did not get blurred on account of its improving relations with Pakistan. Views expressed by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi on the events in Czechoslovakia also did not adversely affect Indo-Soviet relations. The fierce attacks of the right-wing opposition parties of India on the country’s friendly relations with the USSR also failed to dilute Indo-Soviet friendship. The development of Soviet-Pak relations did not affect the steady growth and all-round expansion of friendly ties between India and the USSR. On a number of occasions, the Soviets took care to allay India’s apprehensions and re-assure her of their continuing goodwill. Soviet Deputy Foreign
Minister Nikolai Firyubin, who visited New Delhi in the third week of September, told B.R. Bhagat, Minister of State for External Affairs, that Soviet friendship with India would be used for promoting Indo-Pak cooperation.

Towards the end of October 1968, Defence Minister Sardar Swaran Singh visited Moscow for eight days and held important discussions with top Soviet leaders. On 26 October, Swaran Singh told newsmen in Moscow that the Soviet leaders had full understanding of India’s “economic problems and also of the situation” that the Government was facing “in the defense of sovereignty and integrity” of the country. In an interview, he observed, “The politics of the two countries in vital fields continue to remain unchanged and this matter was highlighted in the course of the exchange of views”. On his part, Soviet Defence Minister Andrei Grechko declared in a banquet speech, “Indo-Soviet friendship is unshakable and nothing will be allowed to cast the slightest doubt on it” Swaran Singh thus returned home with assurances from the highest Soviet authorities that the military balance in the sub-continent shall not be tilted against New Delhi, the Soviets won’t allow their arms to be used against India by Pakistan and that bilateral solution of the existing disputes between India and Pakistan alone could ensure peace in the sub-continent. The Soviet leaders promised India further economic assistance and offered to augment her defence capability as well.

India’s reactions to Sino-Soviet border clashes and to Brezhnev’s proposal of collective security in Asia bear testimony to the fact that relations between India and the USSR had successfully overcome much of the stresses and strains put on their mutual relations by various hostile forces.

As regards Sino-Soviet border dispute, the Government of India could hardly conceal its sympathy with the Soviet cause. While replying to a debate in the Lok Sabha on foreign affairs on 8 April 1969, Dinesh Singh, India’s Minister for External Affairs, referred to the frequent Sino-Soviet border violations and clashes between the Chinese and Soviet troops over the Damansky island in the Ussuri river. He then observed, “…. Judging by our own experience with China, we are not surprised that the Chinese Government is adopting similar postures towards the Soviet Union—the act tactics of provoking border incidents in order to re-open the whole boundary question, and these are familiar to us. Our position is quite clear. We are not in favor of altering historically established borders. Should some grave differences arise, they should be settled peacefully
by bilateral discussions. We are against the use of force to change positions unilaterally”. While welcoming the Soviet offer to the Chinese Government to solve Sino-Soviet border dispute through peaceful negotiations, he declared, “…we support the Soviet stand for upholding respect for historically formed frontiers and for the non-use of force for settling bilateral questions…”. Soviet appreciation of India’s position in this matter was revealed from the publication of Dinesh Singh’s views on this matter by the TASS on 9 April 1969.

So far as India’s attitude towards Brezhnev’s proposal of collective security in Asia is concerned, this was also very encouraging. Initial approach of India on this issue was one of caution, because there was every likelihood of China’s sharp reactions to it. After some elaboration of Soviet proposal in the official circle of the USSR, the Government of India found itself in a better position to express its considered views on this matter. While observing that the proposal of collective security in Asia was not aimed at creating a military alliance, Prime Minister India Gandhi proposed that economic cooperation and political stability should be given priority in Asia. Foreign Affairs Minister Dinesh Singh reiterated this stand of the Government of India in the course of his reply to a question in Rajya Sabha on 31 July 1969. He observed, “…we feel that the problem of Asia is really a problem of economic development of the countries and not so much military problem. We are really anxious to cooperate with other Asian countries to develop our economy and also their economies…” India’s view of Soviet proposal of collective security in Asia was rightly appreciated and summed up in the Indo–Soviet joint communiqué, which was issued at the end of Foreign Minister Dinesh Singh’s visit to Moscow (11-15 September). This document referred to agreement between the Foreign Ministers of India and the USSR that the political and economic development of the countries of Asia and cooperation amongst them on the basis of equality, mutual benefit, respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty and non-intervention in each other’s internal affairs formed the best basis for the preservation and consolidation of peace, stability and security in Asia.

India continued to receive Soviet goodwill even in the wake of serious political instability in the country which was caused by a split in the rank and file of the INC towards the end of 1969. The polarization of the political forces in India had enveloped her into unprecedented turmoil. The Soviets could not remains unconcerned. They came out to hail the various progressive measures taken by the Government of India and commended
the victory of V.V.Giri in the presidential election as a great triumph of democratic forces in the country. Leading articles in Pravda and Izvestia appraised the Soviet people of the various socio-economic changes, brought about by the Government of India, and expressed their deep friendly concern over the extremely complex political situation in the country.

The Soviet press remained fully alive to the serious political situation in India. New Times blamed the Syndicate leaders for joining hands with the jana sangh, Swatantra and other right-wing elements. S.K.Patil, Atulya Ghosh and Morarji Desai were criticized for their “right-wing views and close links with Big Business”. While referring to Bombay and Ahmedabad sessions of the divided Congress, New Times correspondent, A. Iverov observed that even the Congressites, who had rallied round Indira Gandhi were “ not a homogenous mass either ideologically or politically. There were a few reactionary elements among them, who would try to prevent the Government form carrying out progressive measures…” This journal criticized Supreme Court’s judgment regarding bank nationalization and noted that “the Court’s stand aroused the indignation of the democratic forces.” Several special articles were published in this weekly, which referred in detail to the acute political situation in India and lauded some of the progressive measures taken by Indira Gandhi’s Government.

Leading dailies of the USSR representing the views of the Government and the CPSU expressed friendly concern on the complex political situation in India caused by the consolidation of right-wing political forces in the country towards the end of the year 1969. Izvestia wrote about the “rightist maneuver” behind the removal of the President of the INC from the office of the party. While writing on the eve of the 80th birth anniversary of Jawaharlal Nehru, Pravda correspondent V. Mayevsky paid tributes to Nehru, lauded his achievements and observed: “Right-wing parties like the Jana Sangh, Swatantra and rightist forces in the INC have stepped up their attacks on the domestic and foreign policies of the country, depending of support from monopoly capital within and outside India” Mayevsky spoke high of India’s stand on Vietnam, Arab - Israel conflict and other issues of international significance. He made frontal attack on the opponents of Indira Gandhi’s Government. Izvestia commentator V. Kdryavtshev wrote an article entitled “A Blow to the Plans of Reaction in India” in which he blamed imperialist circles. Rightist elements like the Jana Sangh, Swatantra and conservatives in the INC for creating recent
troubles in the country. While paying tributes to Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, he observed: “India’s progressive forces can continue to rely on support from all progressive circles in the world”. Pravda also came out in defense to the progressive measures of Indira Gandhi’s Government and laid stress on “the unity of all leftist, democratic and progressive forces” in India. Izvestia continued to write on the deteriorating political situation in India in several issues.27

Throughout the year 1970, Pravda and Izvestia gave wide coverage to the grave political crisis in India, wrote extensively on the activities of the rightist parties in the country and lauded the progressives steps, which were taken by the Government of Indira Gandhi. Both the newspapers appreciated the abolition of the privy purses of the Indian princes. Pravda considered it as “an important step in the further democratization of the India society”, and observed that this step put “an end to feudal anachronism” in the country. Izvestia called it a “defeat of princely lobby”.

Moscow For The Furtherance of Tashkent Spirit in The Indian Sub-Continent

A survey of Soviet relations with both India and Pakistan in the entire post-Tashkent period indicates that Soviet South Asian policy was primarily based on the furtherance of this historic Declarations which was in a way the Soviet version of détente in the Indian sub-continent. While maintaining close relations with India and Pakistan, the Soviets very carefully steered clear of any involvement in the internal disputes of this region. There was thus a remarkable contrast in Soviet attitude towards the Indian sub-continent and the attitude of peking as well as of the west towards this region. While China and the West played on the mutual differences between India and Pakistan in order to gain a strong foothold in this region. The Soviet Union scrupulously avoided this course, tried her best to normalize relations between India and Pakistan and thus largely succeeded in winning the confidence and respect of both these countries. Since such as policy was in general interests of India, Pakistan and the Soviets themselves, the leadership of the USSR took care not to do anything on its part, which might defeat the very purpose, behind the Tashkent Declaration. This is why despite all inhibitions of Pakistan with regard to this document and her flagrant violations of it, the Soviet Government all along insisted on its implementation.
It is true that the Government of Pakistan honoured the Tashkent Declaration more in breach than in observance. It is also true that it openly came out against even nominal references to this Agreement in several joint communiqués with the Soviet Government. But it should always be borne in mind that the Soviets very carefully dissociated themselves with this recalcitrant attitude of the Pak Government. For Pakistan, the Tashkent Declaration might have been just a make-belief, but for the Soviets it was an affirmation of the principle of peaceful coexistence. It is worth mentioning here that at the insistence of Pakistan, no reference to Tashkent Declaration was made in the joint communiqué issued at the end of Kosygin’s short visit to Pakistan in May 1969, but the Soviet Premier remembered to make a fervent reference to this document and pledge his support to it in this banquet speech. Since the Tashkent Agreement was Kosygin’s own handi-work, the tried his best to unfreeze the Indo-Pak stalemate. In June 1970, when President Yahya Khan visited Moscow, he showed his unwillingness to allow any reference to the Tashkent Agreement in the Soviet-Pak joint communiqué. No reference to it was made from the side of Pakistan, but the Soviet Premier made the position clear and requested both India and Pakistan to take further steps in order to seek mutually acceptable solution of all their disputes. In quite unambiguous terms, he criticized the opponents of the Tashkent Agreement. Not only this, a clear reference to it was made in the joint communiqué from the Soviet side, which expressed the hope that a solution of Indo-Pak problems in the Tashkent spirit would be in the “vital interest of the people of Pakistan and India and in the interest of peace on the whole world and in that area.

India’s own view regarding the Tashkent Declaration was somewhat similar to that of the USSR. In the course of his luncheon speech, delivered in the Kremlin on 23 September 1970, the visiting Indian President, V.V. Giri, emphatically declared that the Tashkent Declaration was a character of good neighborliness. While admitting that India received several setbacks in her endeavors to improve her relations with Pakistan, Giri expressed the hope that India would not intend to give up her efforts. The Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, N.V. Podgorny, expressed sincere wishes of the Soviet Government to India and remarked that the complex and difficult struggle, which the Indian patriots were waging against external and domestic forces, would get sympathy from the Soviet people. He further added that Soviet-Indian friendship would be developed and mutual cooperation would be expanded. He warned the evil forces, which might try to disturb the friendship between India and the Soviet Union.
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