CHAPTER - I: INTRODUCTION
DOCTRINAL FOUNDATIONS

The study of any aspect of Soviet policy - internal or external - requires a proper understanding of the doctrinal foundations on which it is based. Soviet Union's ideological posture toward the Gulf should be viewed within the broader framework of Communist principles pertaining to colonial and semi-colonial areas - in current parlance the developing countries. These principles which originate in the writings of Marx and Engels, have been formulated and revised a number of times since the October Revolution, by Soviet leaders from Lenin to Gorbachev.

Marxism is an intrinsically European current of thought, which originally took form as a response to the problem of the most advanced capitalist countries of Europe and North America. One of the most striking developments in the history of Marxism, however, has been its ultimate triumph in relatively under-developed countries of the Third World. To Communists everywhere these developments posed difficult problems.¹

Marx and Engels

Marx's and Engels' writings about non-European

societies are relatively brief, fragmentary, disparate and sometimes contradictory.

In a series of articles on British Rule in India Marx develops a conception of Indian civilization, and of Asian civilization in general, as not only different from that of Europe but clearly inferior to it. Thus he condemns the "idyllic village communities" of India as "solid foundations of Oriental Despotism", which have "restrained the human mind within the smallest possible compass... depriving it of all grandeur and historical energies". While criticizing the British rule in India as brutal and exploitative, Marx, nevertheless, commends it for having dissolved "these semi-barbarian, semi-civilized communities... and thus produced the greatest, and to speak the truth the only, social revolution ever heard of in Asia".2

In another article Marx says "England has to fulfil a double mission in India: one destructive, the other regenerating -- annihilation of the old Asiatic society, and laying of the material foundation of Western society in Asia." Among the British contributions to India he enumerates - political and administrative unity, a well organised

and trained army, electric telegraph, railway system, steam power, a free press and above all private property in land.\(^3\)

Though his primary concern was to change the European society, Marx, nevertheless, envisaged Europe in a world wide context, and in this context, he believed Asia could play an important role. In an article "Revolution in China and in Europe" he came out with two important formulations. Firstly that the capitalist development in Europe and its expansion throughout the world was bound to create a single world economic system and ultimately lead to a "general commercial and industrial crisis". Secondly that revolutionary upheavals in Asia can have important repercussions in Europe. "The next uprising of the people of Europe" he wrote "may depend more probably on what is now passing in the Celestial Empire...than on any other political cause that now exists".\(^4\)

Thus far in our discussion one fact that clearly emerges is that in Marx's view Asian societies would have to pass through the capitalist stage of development before they can advance to socialism.

A very contentious and hotly debated issue has been

whether Marx ever thought of the possibility of a "non-capitalist path of development" in the backward countries.

R. Ulyanovsky quotes from "German Ideology and the Principles of Communism" in which Marx and Engels formulated the idea that a socialist revolution in Europe would "completely change and greatly accelerate" development in the backward countries. Ulyanovsky interprets the phrase "completely change" to mean bypassing capitalism.²

Leaving aside the views of the Soviet scholars, an objective reading of Marx's writings makes it clear that he never suggested the possibility of bypassing capitalism for the Asian countries. There is, however, a rather peculiar example - Russia, categorised by Marx and Engels as an "Oriental Depotism" - about which they did concede such a possibility. In their foreword to the Russian edition of the "Manifesto of the Communist Party" Marx and Engels felt that the "Russian 'Obschina' (village community), a form of primeval common ownership of land" can "pass directly to the higher form of communist common ownership" without passing through the capitalist stage of private ownership, provided socialist revolutions take place in Russia and the West simultaneously.⁶

The same logic was later extended to Asian societies by Lenin and others, and became the starting point for the theories of "non-capitalist path of development" in the backward countries.

Lenin and Stalin

Marx as the above discussion shown assigned an important but limited role to Asia, as a possible catalyst to revolution in the West. Also, he saw the only salvation for the people of the East in "Europeanisation" of their societies. It was left to the adaptive genius of Lenin to understand and appreciate the real significance of Asia and to bring Marxism to Asia.

Lenin had a direct experience of the colonial problem due to the presence in the Tsarist empire of a large percentage of non-Russians. More importantly Russia itself was a country halfway between Europe and Asia from the standpoint of economic and social development.  

In his work 'Imperialism, the Highest stage of Capitalism' Lenin sets forth the idea that the 'weakest link' of

7. Encausse and Schram, n. 1, p. 4.
capitalism is located in the under-developed and the colonial areas. The metropolitan bourgeoisie, is able, by virtue of the excess profit obtained from the colonies, to placate, temporarily, part of its own working class. From this analysis of imperialism Lenin draws the conclusion that the successful revolt in the colonies was a precondition for the revolution in Europe. His support for the 'national liberation movements' was a natural corollary to this.

The concept of "national self-determination" can be traced to the first Congress of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party (RSDLP) in March 1898. However, it was elaborated much later.

On Lenin's stance Stalin wrote an essay "Marxism and the National Question", during his stay in Vienna in 1912-13. In it he discussed, in detail, the concept of "nation", its development and the related problems. His main formulations were later on adopted in the form of "Report on the National Question" by the Seventh All Russian Conference of the RSDLP in April 1917. The Report supported the right of nation to self-determination.

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10. Ibid., pp. 54-58.
The right of nationa self-determination, however had only limited applicability within Soviet Russia. In the above mentioned report itself Stalin makes it clear that the question of secession from the Soviet Russia was to be decided only by the "party of the proletariat" and "in the interest of the proletariat".\textsuperscript{11} Three years later in 1920, while presenting "The Policy of the Soviet Government on the National Question in Russia" he rejected the demand for secession by calling it "counter revolutionary".\textsuperscript{12}

Outside Soviet Russia, support for the "national self-determination" and the "national liberation movements" became the cornerstone of Soviet policy in the Third World.

Lenin and Stalin were conscious of the importance of the East from the beginning. As early as 1916 Lenin pointed out "We shall exert every effort to foster association and merger with the Mongolians, Persians, Indians, Egyptians... for otherwise socialism in Europe will not be secure."\textsuperscript{13} Similarly in an article "Don't Forget the East" Stalin says that East provides "inexhaustible" reserve of "natural resources" and an "obedient manpower" to the West. Hence "It is

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., p. 56.
\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., p. 68.
\textsuperscript{13} V.I. Lenin, "A Caricature of Marxism and Imperialist Economism", in \textit{Collected Works} (Moscow, 1964), vol. 23, p.67.
the duty of Communists to intervene in the growing spontaneous
movements in the East to develop it further into a conscious
struggle against imperialism."\(^{14}\)

In his address to "The Second All Russia Congress of
Communist Organisations of Peoples of the East" on November 22,
1919, Lenin calls upon the "representatives of the working
people of the East" to take a lesson from the Bolshevik revolu-
tion and organise workers and peasants against imperialism
and feudalism. He also calls for an "alliance of the foremost
proletarians of the world with the labouring and exploited
masses of the East."\(^ {15}\)

The Second Congress of the Communist International
(July 19-August 7, 1920) was held at a time when the Bolsheviks
had nearly won the civil war, but revolution in Europe, after
the failed attempts in Hungary and Germany, no more appeared
to be a foregone conclusion, at least in the near future.
Hence the Bolsheviks were turning their "revolutionary" atten-
tion to the East.

The Congress is particularly remembered for the lively
debate between Lenin and the young Indian Communist Manavendra

\(^{14}\) J. Stalin, Works (Moscow, 1953), vol. 4, pp. 174-6.
\(^{15}\) V.I. Lenin, Collected Works (Moscow, 1965), vol. 30,
pp. 152-62.
Nath Roy on the question of support to the liberation movements in the colonies. Roy was opposed to the bourgeoisie led liberation movements and felt that Comintern should organise the colonial proletariat and the peasantry and transform these movements into revolutionary struggle.\textsuperscript{16}

Lenin on the other hand, in the "Report of the Commission on National and Colonial Question" (July 26, 1920) favoured supporting the bourgeoisie led national liberation movements in the colonies since they "had the significance of bourgeoisie democratic revolution" and were at that point of time "an objectively revolutionary force." He did, however, reformulate his position in one respect, on Roy's suggestion. He agreed to substitute the term "national revolutionary" for the term "bourgeoisie democratic" making it clear that "we as communists should and will support 'bourgeoisie democratic movement' in the colonies only when they are genuinely revolutionary". He also accepted Roy's proposition that the "reformist bourgeoisie" would compromise with imperialism to oppose revolutionary movements in the colonies.\textsuperscript{17}

The distinction between the "progressive national bourgeoisie" and the "reformist bourgeoisie" in later years,

\textsuperscript{17} V.I. Lenin, \textit{Collected Works} (Moscow, 1966), vol. 31, pp. 240-5.
became convenient designations used by the Soviet leadership
to legitimate its dealings with the post-colonial states,
in accordance with the exigencies of Soviet interest.

The Executive Committee of the Comintern elected
by Second Congress, appointed a sub-committee of five
(M.N. Roy was one of the members), called the "Small Bu-
reau". The latter in turn passed two resolutions (1) To
hold the First Congress of the Oppressed Peoples of the
East at Baku, and (2) To set up a Central Asiatic Bureau of
the Comintern at Tashkent. 18

Critics have often attributed motives other than
purely revolutionary and altruistic to Soviet espousal
of the cause of national liberation movements: to undermine
British and French power in the Middle East by encouraging
disturbances in the colonies; to portray Soviet Russia as
a friend and champion of the colonial people and to pene-
trate and eventually dominate the national liberation
movements. 19

After the death of Lenin in January 1924, Stalin
sought to associate himself with the Leninist tradition

18. For details see "Revolution Turns Eastwards" in Roy,
n. 16, pp. 390-6.
19. Alvin Z. Rubinstein, ed., The Foreign Policy of the
and thus strengthen his position against his rivals for power. In April 1924, at the Sverdlov University, he delivered a series of lectures on "The Foundations of Leninism". In his speech on "The National Question", he reiterated Leninist position on the intimate connection between the vitality of the national liberation movements, the success of proletarian revolution in Europe and the preservation of socialism in the Soviet Union. The same theme was repeated in yet another speech made by Stalin on "The Political Task of the University of the Peoples of the East."

"The Theses on Revolutionary Movements in Colonies and Semi-colonies" adopted on September 1, 1928 at the Sixth Comintern Congress accepted the "objective possibility of non-capitalist path of development for the backward countries" and set before itself the task of organising communist parties in the colonies. It instructed them to keep their identities distinct and to differentiate between the so-called "reformist bourgeoisie" and the equally bourgeois "national revolutionary movements". The theses while rejecting any alliance with the former, allowed only "temporary cooperation" with the latter provided the Communists are allowed to carry out revolutionary propaganda and activities. Thus restrictions were put on Leninist policy of "united front".

21. Ibid., pp. 173-86.
In view of the rise of Nazis in Germany, who were implacable enemy of the Bolsheviks, the Seventh Comintern Congress allowed the local Communists to enter into collaborative alliance with even the "reformist bourgeoisie". It came out with a new tactic of "Popular Front" comprising of Communists, Socialists, and bourgeoisie democratic parties to effectively deal with the menace of Fascism and Nazism. 

Under Stalin the Comintern was transformed from a voluntary association of Communist parties into a strictly controlled subordinate organ to the Soviet state policy. It was utilised to assert Soviet Union's unquestioned leadership of the international communist movement. Slowly it began to lose much of its earlier importance as was apparent from the decreasing frequency of Comintern Congresses. It was formally disbanded in 1943 in order to reassure the West that the Soviet Union had no intention of exporting revolution.

The end of the Second World War period witnessed yet another about turn in Soviet ideological posture towards the Capitalist West and the Third World. The old suspicion and

enmity between the Soviet Union and the West reemerged with renewed ferocity, but under a new name — the "Cold War". It was in these circumstances that Andrei Zhdanov, speaking at the opening session of the Cominform (Communist Information Bureau) in September 1947 came out with his famous 'two camp' thesis which left no possibility of a third, uncommitted position. Neutralism, as professed by many newly independent countries like India, was condemned as dishonest and disguising a client relationship with imperialism. The "united front" tactics was nearly given up, for the time being at least.

Khrushchev

The international situation underwent important changes during the nineteen fifties. The Soviet Union, once an international outcaste, was now the unquestioned leader of an ever burgeoning "socialist bloc", a nuclear weapon equipped "super power" engaged in a global contest with the West. It was also the time when a large number of former colonies were gaining political independence. The Soviet Union was, naturally, keen to befriend them, especially since many of these countries adopted state planning and such other "socialist" methods for their socio-economic

25. Quoted in Ibid., p. 12.
development and followed a non-aligned and generally anti-West foreign policy.

The post-Stalin Soviet leaders, particularly Nikita Khrushchev, took due cognisance of these international developments and tried to reinterpret the Marxist-Leninist thought on international relations accordingly. Khrushchev was bold enough to even make some "ideological innovations".

The main theme of Khrushchev's foreign policy was peaceful coexistence between states with differing social systems and peaceful settlement of international disputes and universal disarmament.

Coming to the developing countries, Khrushchev discarded Stalin's "two camp" or the rigid bipolar world view and conceded that a vast "Zone of Peace" including "peace loving states both socialist and non-socialist, of Europe and Asia, has emerged in the world". He admitted that there are countries, "which though not socialist, cannot be classed as the countries of capitalist system either. Those countries which have won national independence as a result of their

27. N.S. Khrushchev, Report to the 21st Extraordinary Congress of the CPSU (New Delhi, 1959), pp. 74-75.
movements for liberation, want to take their own road". They are "not interested in starting a war... adhere to a policy of neutrality and strive to safeguard themselves against the hazards of participation in military blocs".

The ideological recognition of the independent position of the Afro-Asian countries was crucial to improvement of Soviet relations with countries such as Egypt, India, Syria, Iraq, etc.

Replying to the Western propaganda that the Soviet Union intends to export its revolution, Khrushchev emphasised that "the establishment of a new social system... is the internal affair of the people of the country concerned." Taking a sharp break with his predecessors Khrushchev conceded that there can be various "forms of transition to socialism in different countries" and that "peaceful transition to socialism is also possible". He even accepted parliamentary democracy as one instrument of transition to socialism.

The concept of "non-capitalist path of development" in the backward countries, enunciated by Lenin and championed

29. Khrushchev, n. 27, p. 125.
32. Ibid.
by the Second Communist International, was revived at the Moscow Conference of 81 Communist and workers Parties. The idea was reiterated at the 22nd Congress of the CPSU.33

The Leninist policy of support to the "national liberation movements" as an integral part of the fight against imperialism was whole-heartedly and virtually supported by all the Party Congresses during Khrushchev's time and later. The old Communist tactic of "united front" was revived and modified by Khrushchev under a new name "National Front". Its scope was considerably broadened by Khrushchev when he said "When a people fight for its national independence all patriotic forces come together in a unified national front".34 Nearly two years later the Moscow Conference of 81 Communist and Workers Parties in its Manifesto listed the components of the front as "the working class, peasantry, intellectuals and petty and middle urban bourgeoisie".35

The post-Stalin Soviet leadership needed an ideological justification for having friendly relations with and providing assistance to the non-communist developing countries. The Moscow Meeting of the 81 Communist and Workers Parties came out with the concept of "National Democratic State."36

34. Khrushchev, n. 27, p. 70.
35. Quoted in Lenczowski, n. 24, p. 16.
36. Ibid., p. 17.
As modified and elaborated by the 22nd Congress of the CPSU, it refers to radically oriented non-communist developing countries that adhere to non-alignment, adopt anti-Western foreign policies and pursue domestic programmes aimed at building socialism through a "non-capitalist path of development".

**Brezhnev**

Major international trends which influenced the Soviet foreign policy in the post-Khrushchev period were: large number of former colonies (especially in Africa) gaining political independence and the strengthening of the Non-Aligned Movement; Soviet Union attaining military strategic parity with the United States and then seeking 'detente' with the West and; Sino-Soviet split and subsequent Sino-American rapprochement.

The new Soviet leadership reversed many of the policies and programmes of the Khrushchev era, in domestic field. But no such radical departure was made in the foreign policy.

Discussing the goals of the Soviet foreign policy Brezhnev said that it consists:

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"in ensuring, together with other socialist countries, favourable international conditions for the construction of socialism and communism; in consolidating the unity and cohesion of the socialist countries, their friendship and brotherhood; supporting national liberation movements and engaging in all round cooperation with young developing states; consistently standing up for the principle of peaceful coexistence among states with different social systems; giving a resolute rebuff to aggressive forces of imperialism and safeguarding the mankind from another world war".38

The old policy of support to the national liberation movements was reiterated at all the Party Congresses held during the Brezhnev period.39

Another theme which was frequently discussed during this period was the "non-capitalist path of development". At the 23rd Congress Brezhnev commends it as the "best way" for the newly free countries to overcome backwardness and poverty. There was also an implied criticism of those liberated countries which followed the capitalist road.40

At the 24th Party Congress Brezhnev again endorsed the "non-capitalist path of development" but also referred to "the difficulties and occasional defeats" which were caused by the "unceasing attack by the neo-colonialists and

38. Documents and Decisions of the 24th Congress of the CPSU (New Delhi, 1971), p. 3.
40. 23rd Congress, n. 39, p. 35.
and domestic reactionaries.41

But the time of the 25th CPSU Congress the difficulties faced by the socialist oriented countries followed the "non-capitalist path of development" were considerable. To explain these Brezhnev noted that class struggle in "the socialist oriented countries" was intensifying. He positively noted the example of India and Egypt, who were carrying out progressive changes. Insistence on "non-capitalist path" as the best way was however, absent in this report.42

During the Brezhnev period Soviet scholars and commentators wrote extensively on the theme of "non-capitalist path of development".43 Some Soviet scholars endorsed the notion of "revolution from above", when they opined that in the "socialist oriented countries" "the socialist basis is shaped with the most active intervention from above."44

By the closing years of the Brezhnev period the realization dawned on the Soviet leadership and academics that the socialist oriented countries were faced with great many difficulties, while those following the capitalist way have made

41. 24th Congress, n. 38, p. 21.
44. B. Solodnikov's intervention in a discussion on "Theory & Practice of Non-Capitalist Way of Development" International Affairs (Moscow), no. 11 (November, 1970), p. 3.
faster progress (especially those in East and South East Asia). This led to a perceptible change in Soviet pronouncements and policies.

In his report to the 26th Party Congress, Brezhnev, while speaking about the "newly free countries", admitted that "the picture is a motley one". He elaborated "After liberation some of them have been following the revolutionary democratic path. In others capitalist relations have taken root". Talking about the "socialist oriented states" Brezhnev claimed that "their number has increased". He discussed their successes and also the difficulties faced by them. Coming to other states Brezhnev welcomed the revolution in Iran and talked very warmly about India. What interesting is that he found "no obstacle in having friendly cooperation with Indonesia and for that matter any other ASEAN member country." This is also evident from Soviet Union's increasing contacts with the capitalist states of the Third World.

Soviet scholarly writings during the last years of Brezhnev era also show awareness of the problems of economic and social development forced by "the socialist oriented countries." They admit that capitalism had "engulfed large areas of the Afro-Asian World".

Gorbachev: The New Thinking

When Mikhail Gorbachev assumed the leadership of the Soviet Union, the "second cold war" was already at its height. The Soviet commitments and aid obligations in various parts of the world - from Vietnam and Afghanistan to Cuba and Nicaragua - had become a great burden on the Soviet economy. They also threatened its security interests by stimulating the formation of hostile anti-Soviet coalitions and by fuelling the arms race with the United States. Soviet state interest, in Gorbachev's view, required reduction of East-West tension and a lowering of the defense costs to relieve the pressure on Soviet economy and spare the vital resources for its restructuring.47

Gorbachev initiated far reaching changes in every sphere of Soviet life - economy, polity, foreign policy and even ideology and culture - under his well known "Perestroika" (restructuring) programme. He maintained that Perestroika had become an "urgent necessity" because of the stagnation and decline of USSR's economic and technological development during seventies and mid eighties, the "gradual erosion of ideological and moral values" of the Soviet people, discouragement to creative thinking and criticism which affected the

47. W. Raymond Duncan and Caroline McGeffert Ekedahl, Moscow and the Third World under Gorbachev (Boulder, 1990), Chapter 4.
culture, arts and journalism and the lack of responsiveness and accountability on the part of the Communist Party and the Soviet Government. So drastic were the changes under "Perestroika" that Gorbachev himself called it a "revolution".

Gorbachev's foreign policy was based on a new world view in which "new economic, political, scientific, technical, internal and international factors are beginning to operate." The main points regarding international relations emphasised by Gorbachev in his report to the 27th CPSU Congress were that: "promoting revolutions from outside...is futile and inadmissible"; "with nuclear war being totally unacceptable, peaceful coexistence rather than confrontation of the systems should be the rule in inter-state relations"; the "global problems affecting all humanity" - nuclear disaster, ecological threat and the problems of the developing states - can only be solved jointly; and the world is becoming "interdependent and in many ways integral".

The idea of an "inter connected, interdependent and essentially integral world" was further elaborated by Gorbachev in his book *Perestroika* and became the cornerstone of his

49. Ibid., p. 49.
"New Thinking" on foreign policy. Gorbachev stressed the need for "a more secure and reliable world" where "war is not a means of achieving political, economic, ideological or any other goals". He recognised the "right of every nation to choose its own path of social development" and maintained that "ideological differences should not be transferred to sphere of inter-state relations." He found a direct link between disarmament and development. Above all he emphasised the priority of "common human interest" over "class interest".51

Gorbachev and the Third World

Before the coming of Gorbachev the importance of the Third World states for the Soviet Union lay in their usefulness as "natural allies" in latter's world wide struggle against imperialism and capitalism. Under changed circumstances Gorbachev began promoting peaceful coexistence and even friendly cooperation, especially in economic and technological field, with the capitalist world. Developing world no more enjoyed the same importance as earlier.

In his report to the 27th CPSU Congress and his book

51. Gorbachev, n. 47, pp. 139-49.
Perestroika, Gorbachev did criticise the West, especially the United States for exploiting the "former colonies" and "semi-colonies" but not as harshly as his predecessors.  

Gorbachev talked about the problems of developing countries, along with issues like nuclear and ecological threat, as having global ramifications and hence requiring a joint East-West approach to solve them. In chapter 5 of his book Perestroika, Gorbachev discussed the problems and prospects for the Third World. He is particularly concerned with "the poverty and inhuman living conditions, illiteracy and ignorance, mal-nutrition and hunger, alarming child mortality and epidemics." He was very critical of inequitable economic relations between the developed and the developing countries and called for the establishment of a new world economic order. Gorbachev compared the third world debt to a time bomb. He also discussed the origin and nature of regional conflicts and called for negotiations to resolve them.

During the later half of Gorbachev period, we find that the Third World was accorded little place in important

52. XXVII CPSU Congress, n. 48, p. 21 and Gorbachev, n. 47, p. 171.  
54. Gorbachev, n. 47, chapter 5.
foreign policy statements. At the 19th Party Conference (June-July, 1988) Gorbachev did not mention the national liberation movements although India and Afghanistan were mentioned.55

Similarly at the 28th CPSU Congress, Gorbachev omitted the developing countries or the Third World in the foreign policy section of his report. It is only in the context of USSR's foreign economic relations that he spoke about the need for making adjustments in his country's relations with the Third World.56

A better idea of Soviet thinking on the Third World can be had by going through Soviet writings on the subject during the Gorbachev period. The unresolved problems of the Third World were seen as worsening "the prospect of universal peace."57

During a panel discussion on "The USSR and the Third World" organised by the Soviet Review Forum, the participants felt that "Imperialism is no longer interested in keeping the countries of the former colonial world in a condition of a

55. 19th All Union Conference of the CPSU: Documents and Resolutions (Moscow, 1988).
56. CPSU Central Committee, Political Report to the 28th CPSU Congress and Party's Tasks, Pravda, 3 July 1990.
backward periphery" and that "the collapse of colonial system did not lead to any notable weakening of imperialism as a system, meaning its basis, the economy." It was asserted that on the contrary "the formation of new independent states, new markets and new economic areas even strengthened capitalism. The countries that emerged from colonial rule might have been anti-imperialist, but not necessarily anti-capitalist also. "We under-estimated the potentialities of capitalism in the Third World". The participants maintained that the idea of "non-capitalist development" for the newly independent countries, though fruitful, was based on "Utopianism, social illusions and weak logic." They asserted that "the anti-colonial struggle has long been over" except for some areas like South Africa and Palestine. Finally they felt that USSR should build relations with the Third World countries on "the principle of mutual economic benefit" rather than "act on the 'a ring to every sister' principle." 58

The earlier sympathetic attitude of the Soviet media toward the Third World was replaced by a hard headed and "pragmatic" approach. Thus the nuclear and missile potential of the Third World countries was criticized and there was even talk about joint efforts with the West to regulate the

"risk zones" in the Third World. Regarding the sale of conventional weapons also a well coordinated, multilateral and international approach was suggested. On environmental issues, concern was expressed at the "spread of dirty technologies" in the developing countries and they were criticized for taking a "politically accusatory and categorical approach." While still sympathising with the demand of the developing countries for a New International Economic Order (NIEO) there was a feeling, nevertheless that the slogan for a NIEO was "hampering... a productive discussion and solution of the world economic problems".\(^5^9\)

Soviet assessment of Non-Alignment Movement also underwent change during this period. It was no more considered a "natural ally" in the common struggle against imperialism. In changed circumstances its usefulness was seen in terms of its potential towards the solution of global problems, like nuclear disarmament, ecology and human rights. Nodari Simonia, a leading academician, went to the extent of declaring that it will "dissolve" in the 21st century.\(^6^0\)

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60. "What is the Outlook for the Non-Aligned", New Times, no. 10 (March 6-12, 1990), p. 23.
GEO-STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE OF THE GULF

President Eisenhower of the United States described the Gulf in 1951 as the most "strategically important area in the world." Nearly three decades later, responding to the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, one of his successors, President Carter, in his State of the Union Message on 23rd January 1980, warned that "An attempt by an outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be considered an assault on the vital interests of the United States. It will be repelled by use of any means necessary, including military force." Still a decade later on 6th August 1990, four days after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, when another American President George Bush announced the "Operation Desert Shield" involving the deployment of US forces, and those of other nations (by the end of the year their number was 28) to ensure the flow of oil and protect Saudi Arabia from possible Iraqi invasion, he was only re-emphasising the paramount importance of the Gulf in the present day world.

Geographically the region is centrally located between the Mediterranean Sea and the Indian Ocean and between Asia

The Gulf Region
and Africa (see the map). It lies athwart major routes from Europe to the Far East and from Asia to Africa.

The geographic importance of the Gulf is complemented by its economic significance. Between 1950 and 1979 the worldwide fossil fuel consumption quadrupled, especially the production of oil, "the most versatile and easily transported of all energy sources." This rate of growth in consumption slowed down between 1975 and 1985, but since 1986 it has resumed. More than any other raw material oil is vital for the functioning of the modern industrial society. For a time during the 1970s and 80s it seemed that the developed nations would switch over to nuclear energy in view of the uncertainty regarding the availability of oil (especially after the oil embargo of 1973). But the 1979 incident at the Three Mile Island reactor and the Chernobyl disaster of 1986 illustrated the dangers of nuclear energy. "Consequently oil will remain a vital source of energy for some time to come."\(^{64}\)

With the above fact in mind one can better appreciate the economic significance of the Gulf, which accounts for nearly 60 per cent of the world's proved oil reserves (see Table 1). What is even more significant is the amount of oil imported by the developed countries and others from the Gulf (see Table 2).

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Reserves (billion barrels)</th>
<th>Production (thousand barrels per day)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>4,555</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>2,090</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iran</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>2,310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kuwait</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>1,270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Arab Emirates</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>1,650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subtotal</td>
<td>551</td>
<td>11,875</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rest of the world</td>
<td>366</td>
<td>50,320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major Gulf countries</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>as a percentage of world</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2

Petroleum Shipped Through the Strait of Hormuz, 1986
(in thousand barrels per day)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Destination</th>
<th>Saudi Arabia</th>
<th>UAE</th>
<th>Iran</th>
<th>Kuwait</th>
<th>Qatar</th>
<th>Bahrain</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>797</td>
<td>831</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>2226   (37%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>635</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>781    (13%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>364</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>705    (12%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>321</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>471    (8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>438    (7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Germany</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>215    (4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>210    (4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>73</td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td>102    (2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td>55     (1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>409</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>743    (12%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3105</td>
<td>1055</td>
<td>772</td>
<td>727</td>
<td>241</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>5946   (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Gulf Petroleum Exported by Pipeline

(in tbd) from Iraq to:

- United States: 81
- Japan: 161
- West Europe: 486
- Others: 218

(in tbd) from Saudi Arabia to:

- United States: 50
- Western Europe: 100

The Gulf states also represent one of the most lucrative markets in the world. Vast purchases of armaments, industrial and petroleum plants, manufactured goods and services are an important component of world trade. The foreign currency holdings and investments of the Gulf states in Europe and America have become truly staggering.\footnote{Amirsadeghi, n. 61, see Introduction.}

The Soviet Union also had legitimate interests and goals in the Gulf region. It was near the proverbial "soft belly" of the USSR and hence, in the words of John C. Campbell, "a possible launching point for hostile action against Russia or a prime target of Russian expansion."\footnote{John C. Campbell, "The Gulf Region in Global Selling", in Ibid, p. 1.} The Western economic interests in the region only added to their security concerns. The presence of more than fifty million muslims mostly in the contiguous Soviet republics made them an easy target for anti-Soviet fundamentalist Islamic propaganda. Thus the broad Soviet objectives in the Gulf were (1) reducing Western influence (2) expanding Soviet influence (3) obtaining some economic benefits and (4) ensuring its security interests.\footnote{Roger Kanet, Soviet Strategy in South West Asia and the Persian Gulf (Urbana, Illinois, 1985), p. 7.}
The Russian state was born in the vicinity of Moscow and gradually expanded in all directions. However, unlike the West Europeans who created huge colonial empires, the Russians expanded into contiguous lands. Under Tsar Peter the Great (1689-1725), Russia began to push towards the south and east. This brought her into conflict with the Ottoman and the Persian empires. Peter, in his so-called "Testament" or "Will" published (sic) in 1775, is said to have advised future Russian rulers.

"Approach as near as possible to Constantinople and India. Whichever governs there will be true sovereign of the world. Consequently, excite continual wars, not only in Turkey, but in Persia... In the decadence of Persia, penetrate as far as the Persian Gulf,..."  

The validity of the "Testament" has been questioned for long and it is now generally discarded as a forgery by serious scholars. Peter's ambition was limited to the vast plain between the Black and the Caspian seas.

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Under Tsar Alexander, the "Tsar of Peace", Russia intensified her campaigns against Persia. This marked the beginning of a century long rivalry between the Tsarist Russia and Great Britain which was anxious to protect her Indian Empire. The long wars with Turkey and Persia aroused Russian interest in the countries lying south of her adversaries. The Russians examined the possibility of supporting the local separatist movements. In 1809, the Russian foreign Ministry offered support to the Sulayman Pasha of Baghdad who wanted to become independent of the Ottoman control. He was also instigated against Persia. This incident is interpreted by many as a proof of Russian moves in the direction of the Gulf. However, these Russian initiatives should be seen in the context of her rivalry with the Ottoman and Persian empires, rather than as suggesting any ambition on her part in the region.

In course of the various Russo-Persian wars during the nineteenth century, the latter lost territories to the former by the treaties of Gulistan (1813), Turkkomanchayi (1828) and Akhal Khorasan (1881). After the signing of the Treaty of Turkkomanchayi, Russian political influence and

72. Ibid., pp. 20-25, 36-53.
73. Yodfat and Abir, n. 68, pp. 21-22.
74. For the text of the first two treaties see J.C. Harewitz ed. Middle East and North Africa in World Politics: A Documentary Record (New Haven, 1975) pp. 187-99 and 231-37 respectively.
economic penetration of Persia increased continuously.
The Russian trained and office red Cossack Brigade (organised in 1879) became the most effective military force in Persia and an important political tool in the hands of the Russians. 75

From 1888 onwards Russia built a number of railways connecting it with Persia. There was even some talk, at the lower government levels, to extend this railway line to the Gulf port of Bandar Abbas. The extension of Russia's railway system to the Persian border contributed much to the expansion of Russian influence in Persia at the close of the nineteenth century. 76

Under changed international circumstances, the old rivals, Russia and Britain patched in 1907 77 and signed a Convention (August 31, 1907) which divided Persia into Russian (northern portion) and British (southern) spheres of influence, with a neutral zone in between. 78 After this Russian influence became preponderant in northern Iran.

Here it would be appropriate to deal with yet another

76. Yodfat and Abir, n. 68, pp. 24-25.
78. For text see Hurewitz, n. 74, pp. 538-41.
popular legend about Russian intentions towards Iran and the Gulf — Russia's alleged quest for "warm water ports". Lord Curzon said, a century ago that Russia "yearns for an outlet upon the Persian Gulf and in the Indian Ocean". It is true that the Tsar's powerful minister of finance S. Iu. Witte advocated strong Russian presence and even annexation of certain areas in Iran. But the region he valued was the north, which possessed Iran's best economic assets. He also wanted to build a pipeline from the Baku oil fields to some unspecified place on Iran's Gulf coast in order to give Russia less costly route to deliver its own oil to the Asian markets. But, as Muriel Atkin points out in a well argued piece, this "had nothing to do with primeval instincts". The motive was economic — "an attitude that many of his Western contemporaries shared."  

Soviet Policy After 1917

After the revolution of 1917, the new Bolshevik regime's first priorities were survival and consolidation of

power. Attention was focused on Europe and the regime dealt with the East in order to influence developments in Europe. The Soviet "Eastern policy" was intended to create difficulties for the colonial powers (especially Britain), so as to distract them from fighting the new Soviet regime. 82

Two months after coming to power, in their famous appeal "To All the Toiling Moslems of Russia and the East" Lenin and Stalin declared "the treaty on the partition of Persia" as null and void and also promised to withdraw Russian troops and establish relations on the basis of equality. 83

There were, however, some Russian Communists like K.M. Troinovsky who thought that Persia was important since it might become "key to revolution in the East". 84

The new Soviet regime while trying to win confidence and goodwill of the Persian Government, also provided aid to those who were opposed to that government. A Persian Communist Party was organised at Baku in 1917. Originally called Adelet (Justice) it was renamed Iranian Communist Party in 1920. 85

The Soviet Red Army also supported a local rebel Kuchuk Khan

82. Yodfat and Abir, n. 68, p. 28.
83. Lenin-Stalin 1917 Selected Writings and Speeches (Moscow, 1938), p. 666.
85. Ibid., p. 99.
to establish a Soviet Republic of Gilan in the Persian territory. 86

A major event in the Soviet policy towards the "Eastern" countries was the signing of the 1921 Soviet Persian Friendship Treaty (similar treaties were also signed with Turkey and Afghanistan). Soviet Russia renounced all Tsarist concessions and privileges, recognised Persia's sovereignty and agreed to evacuate its troops. All the Persian debts were cancelled and the Russian Bank, railway, roads and ports were handed over to Iran.

The Treaty, however is more remembered for the controversial Articles 5 and 6. Article 5 commits each signatory to ban from its territory "any organisation or groups of persons...whose object is to engage in acts of hostility against Persia or Russia or against the allies of Russia (that is, the other Soviet Republics)". Article 6 is even more important. It states that if some third party or foreign country should establish a military presence in Iran in order to strike at Soviet Russia, and if the Iranian government could not stop such activities, then "Russia shall have the right to advance her troops into the Persian interior for the purpose

86. Sepehr Zabih, The Communist Movement in Iran (Berkely, 1966), chapter I.
of carrying out the military operations necessary for its defence." 87

In order to clarify misgivings voiced in Iranian Majlis, the Soviet government sent a note specifying that the treaty provisions were "intended to apply only to cases in which preparations have been made for a considerable armed attack upon Russia... by the partisans of the regime which has been overthrown, or by its supporters among those foreign powers which are in a position to assist the enemies of Soviet Russia". 88 Despite this assurance the USSR invoked these provisions to occupy northern Iran in 1941 and in mid 1950s to condemn Iran's membership of pro-western alliance systems. 89

After the signing of the 1921 Treaty, the Soviets withdrew their support to the Gilan Republic of Kuchuk Khan and the Persian forces occupied it.

Reza Shah, who was proclaimed the new ruler of Iran in 1925 by the Majlis, embarked upon a programme to modernise his country. In October 1927, he signed a Treaty of Guarantee and Neutrality with the Soviet Union and expanded his country's

88. "Note to the Iranian Foreign Minister from the Russian Representative in Tehran (12 December 1921)", in Ibid., p. 94.
trade and economic relations with the latter. However, Reza Shah's fear of communism prompted him to improve relations with the Nazi Germany also during the nineteen thirties. This led to a cooling of Soviet-Iran relations. 90

Soviet conduct with regard to Iran and the Gulf during the Second World War has been a topic of great controversy. Molotov is said to have informed the German ambassador in Moscow that the Soviet Union was prepared to enter into pact with Germany, Italy and Japan, delineating spheres of influence provided that among other things "the area south of Batum and Baku in the general direction of the Persian Gulf is recognised as the centre of aspirations of Soviet Union". 91 There are, however, others who argue that too much should not be read into this proposal since it was basically a German initiative to whett Soviet ambition and distract its attention from Europe. 92

Despite Shah's proclamation of neutrality, after the start of the Second World War, his known pro-German sympathies, the activities of the Nazi's in his territory and the usefulness of Iran in sending supplies to the Soviet Union after the

91. The "German's Ambassador's Telegram to the German Foreign Office", in R.H. Magnus, Documents on Middle East (Washington, 1969), pp. 56-57.
German attack on the USSR in June 1941, prompted Britain and Soviet Union to occupy Iran in August 1941. After the end of the war the Soviet Union refused to withdraw her troops from Iran and helped the Kurds and the Azerbaijanis to establish Autonomous republics in northern Iran. The Soviets finally withdrew on May 9, 1946 when the tactful Iranian Prime Minister promised autonomy to the Kurds and Azerbaijanis and also oil concessions to the Soviets. He also inducted Tudeh members in his cabinet. None of the promises were, however, fulfilled once the Soviets went back. Soviet Iranian relations for the remaining Stalin era were strained.

In 1953 during the Prime Ministership of Mossadeq when the Shah fled the country, the Tudeh (Communist Party of Iran) got an opportunity to bid for power. But the Soviets hesitated in supporting it. The Shah returned with CIA help, crushed the revolt and banned the Tudeh. After that the Shah forged close relations with the US and the West. Iran became a member of the Baghdad Pact.

93. F. Eshraghi, "Anglo-Soviet Occupation of Iran in August 1941", Middle Eastern Studies, vol. 20, no.1, January 1984, p. 27, also see passim.
The post-Stalin leadership in the Soviet Union tried to dissuade Iran from joining the Western alliance. In December 1954 and May 1957 Soviet Union and Iran signed treaties to settle their border dispute. Negotiations for a non-aggression pact however failed and in March 1959 the Shah unilaterally abrogated Articles V and VI of the 1921 treaty. Two days later, Iran signed a defence pact with the US. Soviet Union reacted sharply to these developments. Soviet-Iranian relations for next three years were icy.

There was a marked improvement in Soviet-Iran relations after 1962. In September 1962 when the Shah promised to prohibit all missile sites and foreign military bases from the territory of Iran, and never to become an instrument of aggression against the Soviet Union, the Soviets responded positively.

For its part Moscow wanted to wean away Tehran from the West and also to set an example before the other third world countries. In 1963, Brezhnev visited Iran and in

99. For the factors that induced the Shah to make this announcement see Ramazani, n. 71, chapter XIII.
1965 the Shah visited Soviet Union. During these visits agreements concerning economic and technical assistance to Iran were concluded. In 1967, the USSR was reported to have signed a secret arms agreement with Iran.

The Soviets were interested in the establishment of close economic relations, in the hope that Iran's ties with Western countries would be weakened and it would create a certain Iranian dependence on the Soviet Union.

The momentum of Soviet-Iran relations continued during 1968-1970 despite Shah's apprehensions and mild criticism of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia. Soviet Premier Kosygin visited Iran in April 1968 and the Shah made a ten-day visit to the Soviet Union between 24 September to 4 October 1968. In 1970, the Soviet President made two visits to Iran in March and again in October at the inauguration of natural gas pipeline at Astara.

The resulting agreements greatly influenced the pattern of expanding economic cooperation and realistic political interactions. Over the next decade or so, the

103. Pravda, April 8, 1968.
104. Pravda, October 5, 1968.
105. Pravda, April 1 and October 30, 1970.
Soviet-Iranian relationship became a show-piece of Moscow's policy of peaceful coexistence.106

Soviet scholars, through steering clear of controversial subjects, were nonetheless writing solid works on Iranian history, linguistics, culture and economics.107

Soviet Union and Saudi Arabia

Two years after establishment of relations with Iran, the Soviets got an opportunity in Arabia. The cable sent by King Husayn, in which he announced his assumption of the Caliphate in March 1924 to Chicherin, the Peoples Commissar for Foreign Affairs, was seen by the Soviets as an opportunity to establish in Arabia an outpost from where British imperialism could be observed.108

They established diplomatic relations with the Hashemite Government of Hejaz, at a time when British relations with the Hejazi King had become strained. When Ibn Saud captured Jeddah at the end of 1925 and declared himself King of Hejaz and the Sultan of Najd the Soviets were the first to recognise his

106. Rubinstein, n. 90.
new title. 109

In June, Ibn Saud called a Congress at Mecca to settle his claim to sovereignty over Mecca and al-Medinah. The strong Soviet delegation supported Ibn Saud's claim. The Soviet presence at the Congress was seen as a way of reminding the Arabs of the existence of a large anti-imperialist power and to improve Soviet image in the Muslim world. 110

Soviet interest in Saudi Arabia began to wane after the failure to negotiate a trade agreement in 1928. There was some movement in Saudi-Soviet relations during the 1930s - when a Soviet credit was accepted in 1931 and when Emir Faisal visited Moscow in 1932. 111 However by 1934 the Soviet Union got disillusioned by Ibn Saud's growing reliance on Great Britain and his suspicion about the activities of the Soviet Muslims posted to Hejaz. 112 Moreover during the mid-thirties the Soviets were themselves seeking cooperation with England against Germany and Italy. And finally the purges within the Soviet Union and increasing pre-occupation with events in Europe led to the recall

of all Soviet personnel from Saudi Arabia and Yemen in 1938.  

Soviet attempts to improve relations with Saudi Arabia and Yemen would, at one level prove that Soviet policies towards a particular country depended on the country's foreign policy, not its internal political system. However, this can be partly explained if one is reminded that Lenin himself had preached the necessity of anti-imperialist action as a first step on the path to real independence and eventual social transformation. In this light the Soviet policy of friendship for anti-British regimes despite their reactionary internal set up, was not contrary to the Leninist ideology.

Soviet policy towards Saudi Arabia, and Third World in general, during the remaining of the Stalin period (i.e. between 1938 to 1953) was one of neglect and disdain, first because of the Soviet involvement in the Second World War and then the Stalin-Zhdanov "two camp" thesis, as discussed elsewhere.

The post-Stalin Khrushchev leadership in Soviet Union revised the "two camp" thesis and accepted the neutral or non-aligned stand of the majority of the Third World countries.

114. Ibid., p. 18.
It also tried to befriend those of them which were anti-West to some degree. Saudi Arabia because of its opposition to the Baghdad pact was one such country. Thus Sovetskoye Vostokvedenie picked out Saudi Arabia as an example of a country not yet "liberated from the economic oppression of imperialism" but "at present pursuing a sovereign policy." 115

Soviet policy and press comments regarding Saudi Arabia throughout the sixties alternated between appreciation of some of its anti-West policies and friendly overtures and denunciation of its internal set up. The criticism was more because of Soviet frustration at Saudi Arabia's continuing links with the West. Thus one article by Andreysan praised the "independent oil policy" pursued by "a number of oil producing Middle Eastern countries... in face of foreign oil companies". But at the same time he also criticized the "ruling feudal and other reactionary elements" of these countries as anti people schemers who were trying to get more profit from these "outsider" companies for "their own enrichment" and for financing development programmes which would result in development without social change. 116

115. Quoted in Ibid., p. 32.
Similarly, when Crown Prince Faisal assumed control of Saudi Affairs in 1962 and initiated some reforms the Soviet media noted that despite his "liberal" ideas he was prosecuting his opponents and allowing the "democratising" measures to lapse. But when Faisal emphasised in an interview to a Soviet journalist touring Saudi Arabia for the first time since 1930s, that the Saudis had "no quarrel with the Soviet Union" and that "there are no obstacles to the development of relations and cooperation", it seemed that a new era might begin in the relations between the two countries. An article in Soviet press noted that for the first time that USSR still had diplomatic relations with Saudi Arabia, although neither side maintained missions.

This slight thaw in Soviet-Saudi relations was soon followed by mutual bickerings when Saudi Arabia tried to forge an "Islamic Pact" and was bitterly opposed by President Nasser of Egypt, who was close to the Soviets. Soviet writers charged that "the Islamic Pact is an imperialist creation similar to the notorious Baghdad Pact, an instrument for

118. Izvestia, 29 November 1964.
combating the Arab national liberation movement and a means of bolstering the reactionary forces in the region.\textsuperscript{120}

One constant source of friction between the Soviet Union and Saudi Arabia during the sixties was their support to opposing sides in the Yemeni civil war.\textsuperscript{121}

The mutual antagonism and suspicion between Saudi Arabia and Soviet Union was due to some fundamental reasons. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is some sort of theocracy governed according to the principles of Wahabi Islam and a traditional alliance between the state and the church. Quite naturally the Saudi Ulama and the rulers have viewed communism as a "corruptive atheism intent on subverting the muslim world and the Saudi monarchical capitalist system".\textsuperscript{122}

During the 1950s and 1960s radical ideologies - Nasserism and Bathism apart from communism - were viewed by the Saudis as disruptive forces serving interest in the region.\textsuperscript{123} A staunch anti-communist the Saudi King Faisal saw the increasing Soviet influence in Nasser's Egypt and the Soviet intervention in Yemen's civil war and support for South Yemen's new Marxist

\textsuperscript{120} S. Sterkina, "Behind the Screen of Islamic Pact", \textit{International Affairs}, no. 4 (April 1966), pp. 86-87.
\textsuperscript{121} For details see Page, n. 111, Chapter 4 and 5.
\textsuperscript{122} Mordechai Abir, "Saudi-Soviet Relations and the Iran-Iraq War", \textit{Middle East Review}, vol. XXII, no.1 (Fall 1989, p. 10.
regime as a "Soviet plot to gain control over Persian Gulf oil." 124 It was because of these suspicions that the Saudis never trusted Soviet Union and did not normalise relations with them.

Soviet Union and Iraq

During the last stages of the Second World War, diplomatic relations were established between the Soviet Union and Iraq. They were broken off in 1955 by Prime Minister Nuri-al-Said after Moscow criticized his government's decision to join the Baghdad Pact. 125 When Colonel Abd-al-Kerim Kassem assumed power after a coup in July 1958, Moscow promptly recognised his government. This initiative and the subsequent improvement in Moscow-Baghdad relations after Kassem resumed diplomatic ties with USSR, were based, above all, on Soviet appreciation of the anti-Western stance adopted by the Kassem regime. 126 In 1959, Kassem terminated Iraqi membership of the Baghdad Pact.

There were other areas of congruence of views between

Iraq under Kassem and the Soviet Union in 1958-59. The Soviets supported Kassem's opposition to Nasser's attempt to incorporate Iraq into the UAR, a union of Egypt and Syria. The Iraqi Communist Party and the Kurds who supported Kassem's position on UAR, were given considerable political freedom by him. This further endeavoured him to Soviets. However, once the threat from the Pan-Arab and pro-Nasserite groups receded, Qasem began to harass the Iraqi Communists and refused to give autonomy to the Kurds. The Soviet Union, which was sympathetic to both these groups was naturally annoyed. But it tried to maintain an impression of even-handedness by expressing the hope that Iraqi authorities would stop the war against Kurds and reach some settlement with them.

The Arab Socialist Renaissance Party popularly known as the Ba'th staged its first coup in Iraq in February 1963. Soviet relations with the new regime deteriorated sharply due its terror campaign against the Iraqi Communist Party and its military crackdown against the Kurds.

On November 18, 1963 the Ba'th regime was overthrown and for the next five years Iraq was ruled by the two Arif brothers - Abd-al-Salam Arif (November 18, 1963 to April 13, 1966) and Abd-al-Rahman Arif (April 16, 1966 to July 1968). They stopped the persecution of the Communists and on February 10, 1964 reached an agreement with the Kurds. It led to an improvement in Soviet-Iraqi relations. Moscow even resumed arms supplies to Baghdad. 131

Soviet-Iraqi relations encountered some difficulties, mainly due to Iraq's resumption of military offensive against the Kurds in 1965-66. However, this irritant was removed when Iraq granted many of the Kurd demands. The Iraqi Prime Minister al-Bazzaz visited Soviet Union in July-August 1966 and relations between the two countries again became normal and cordial. 132

Following the six day Arab-Israel war of June 1967, during which the Soviet Union sided with the Arabs, Soviet image in the Arab world improved considerably. This provided

Soviet Union with a good opportunity to improve relations with Egypt, Syria and Iraq.

Soviet Union's willingness to place its bilateral relations with Republican Iraq at stake on issues concerning Iraq's internal policy reflected first and foremost the relative low priority - compared to Cairo and Damascus - it assigned to its ties with Baghdad. Moscow's support for the overthrow of Ba'th and Arif brother's regimes was rooted to various degrees in its desire to assure the Iraqi Communist Party a significant role in the coalition government. Moscow valued the Kurdish rebels because they shared the Iraqi Communists' goal of establishing a coalition government in Baghdad. Hence it viewed the Democratic Party of Kurdistan which contrary to the ICP was not a pro-Soviet party - mainly as a means of promoting the Iraqi Communist Party (ICP). It is no wonder that Moscow vehemently condemned the war against the Kurds only when it was waged by a regime such as Ba'th which was attempting to liquidate the ICP, whereas war against Kurds under Qasim and Arif Brothers provoked relatively mild Soviet protestations. 133

Soviet Union cautiously welcomed the July 1968 coup which returned the Ba'th to power. In an article in Pravda,

E. Primakov favourably referred to Ba' th Party resolutions adopted in early 1968 (before the coup) in which it resolved to avoid the mistakes of the past and work for the establishment of a "United Front" with all "Arab progressive and nationalist organisations including the Communist Party."\(^{134}\)

One issue on which the Soviet Union gave whole hearted support to the Ba' th regime was its demand to the West owned Iraqi Petroleum Company to increase production as well as royalty due to Iraq.\(^{135}\) As can be expected Moscow saw a unique opportunity to weaken some of the major Western economic interests in the Middle East and to improve its own ties with a major Arab producer country. It concluded many agreements to strengthen Iraq's capability to extract process and market its oil. The agreements signed in June and July 1969 and March 1970 are noteworthy in this respect.\(^{136}\)

On March 11, 1970 the Ba' th issued a Manifesto, which later came to be known as the "March Manifesto", granting political and cultural autonomy to the Kurds. The Soviet Union welcomed the Manifesto. Thus, one major irritant in Iraqi-Soviet relations was removed.\(^{137}\)

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135. Arab Report and Record (ARR), 1968, pp. 204, 324.
Soviet-Iraqi economic ties started growing after the July 1969 agreement. Next important milestone was the comprehensive economic agreement signed during the visit of Soviet economic delegation in April 1971. By the end of 1970 and early 1971 the Soviet Iraqi trade had grown considerably and Soviet Union was the second biggest exporter to Iraq after Britain. 138

However, at the end of nineteen sixties and in early 1970, Egypt and Syria still took precedence over Iraq in Soviet Middle East strategy mainly because of their direct involvement in the Arab-Israel conflict, which Moscow regarded second in significance to the Vietnam war. 139

Soviet Union and Kuwait

When Kuwait became independent on 19 June 1961, the Soviets were un-impressed. The reason was the new Anglo-Kuwait agreement (which was to replace the 1899 treaty that made Kuwait a British protectorate) which stipulated that Britain would render assistance to Kuwait in case of an aggression. The Soviets regarded this arrangement as an instrument of neo-colonialism. 140

140. Page, n. 111, p. 61.
Soon afterwards Iraq laid claim to Kuwait as its integral part, and on Kuwaiti Emir's request Britain started landing troops in Kuwait. Soviet press, while totally ignoring the Iraqi claim declared the British action as "totally unjustified". Other articles criticized the Emir for the backward condition of his people and for having "betrayed his people by opening doors to foreign invaders." It further said that Kuwait's independence was "illusory". The Soviet representative vetoed Kuwait's entry into the UN claiming that due to its political and economic dependence on United Kingdom, "Kuwait essentially remains a British colony."

In February 1963, the Ba'ath party assumed power in Iraq. Piqued at their anti-Soviet and anti-Communist stance, as pointed out elsewhere, the Soviet Union agreed to establish diplomatic relations with Kuwait in the Spring of 1963 and two months later also endorsed Kuwait's membership of the United Nations. However, the real breakthrough in Soviet-Kuwaiti relations came only after the departure of Khrushchev.

142. "Kuwait" International Affairs, no. 9 (September 1961), pp. 113-4.
144. A.R. Assiri, Kuwait's Foreign Policy: City State in World Politics (Boulder, 1990), p. 22.
145. SCOR, yr 18, mtg 1034, pp. 15-16.
In February 1965, the two sides signed an economic and technical cooperation agreement by which USSR agreed to help Kuwait in irrigation projects, fishing industry and road building.\textsuperscript{146} The Soviet press also began to favourably depict Kuwait's social development and its great achievements in education and public health and urban construction, though it also pointed out the social problems which remained.\textsuperscript{147}

Kuwait had a variety of reasons for establishing and strengthening relations with the Soviet Union. It calculated that good relations with Moscow would induce the Soviets not only to restrain Kuwait's external enemy Iraq but also discourage the leftist opposition groups within the country.\textsuperscript{148}

During the latter half of the 1960s, Soviet-Kuwaiti relations were a mixed lot. While the economic cooperation and trade between the two countries increased substantially, the cultural ties were not very satisfactory, at least from the Soviet point of view. Soviet commentaries on Kuwait were not very complementary about the internal or foreign policy of the rulers. The continued importance of the British and American advisors and companies, especially in the oil sector,

\textsuperscript{146} Pravda, 27 February 1965.
\textsuperscript{147} Yu. Bochkarev, "Awakened Peninsula", International Affairs, no. 9 (September 1965), p. 89.
\textsuperscript{148} Mark N. Katz, Russia and Arabia: Soviet Foreign Policy Toward the Arabian Peninsula (Baltimore, 1986), p. 158.
and the poverty and hardship of the non-Kuwaiti immigrant workers were criticized. Kuwait's foreign policy also received some approbation for its alleged pro-West and pro-Saudi Arabia tendency, although its stand in the June 1967 Arab-Israel war (when it cut off oil supplies to the West and praised Soviet support for the Arab cause) and its decision in May 1968 to annul the 1961 defence treaty with Britain were acclaimed. 149

Soviet Union and the National Liberation Movements in the Gulf

Gulf has a long history of radical movements - Nasserism and Ba'thism being the two most popular and successful of these. But here we are mainly concerned with Marxism oriented revolutionary movements, the most well known of which was the Dhufar rebellion in Oman. A brief account of this movement and particularly the Soviet attitude and policy towards it would be crucial to our understanding of how the Soviet Union balanced its ideological commitment of support to revolutionary movements with the requirements of its state interest.

Dhufar, inhabited by the Jibali tribe, came under Omani control between 1829 and 1879 but still enjoyed a large

149. For details see Page, n. 111, pp. 119-20.
amount of local autonomy. It was only during the 1950s that Sultan Said bin Taimur asserted his authority over the province and made Salala, the provincial capital, his permanent residence. He also treated the local populace very harshly. This was resented by the Jibalis, who revolted. In 1965, the Dhufar Liberation Front (DLF) was founded. However, it was not until 1968 that this largely tribal revolt was transformed "at least theoretically into a Marxist and Arab nationalist revolutionary movement under the name Popular Front for the Liberation of Occupied Arabian Gulf (PFLOAG)." The PFLOAG broadened its objective from "liberation of Oman" to eliminating the traditional oppressive monarchical rule "by revolutionary strategy" from the entire Arab side of the Gulf and then uniting it under a single Arab state.

The adoption of Marxism-Leninism by the PFLOAG proved to be a mixed blessing. It certainly procured the much needed external help from China and later on from the Soviet Union. But at the same time, it also alienated many of the Jibalis, who were doing the real fighting, since they were hardly interested either in Marxism or Arab nationalism. They simply wanted emancipation from the oppressive Omani rule.

boradening of its objective to include the entire Gulf also proved to be a mistake because it brought the Front in conflict with powerful forces like Iran and Saudi Arabia. However, for the time being the Front achieved impressive success. By the end of 1970, it was able to gain control of most of Dhufar and also increased its clandestine presence in the other countries of the Gulf, notably Bahrain and Kuwait.

Soviet reaction and response to the developments in Oman was limited. The Soviet press did note, with satisfaction the formation of PFLOAG. The front's commitment to "scientific socialism" and its objective to overthrow existing regimes and fight imperialist forces was applauded. The joint communique issued at the time of Iraqi Foreign Minister Shaikhli's visit to Moscow in March 1969 expressed both the countries "resolute support of the people of Oman... and of other territories...fighting against imperialist oppression". But it did not mention PFLOAG or any other organisation directly. It shows Moscow's unwillingness to give open support to the Front in official statements.

154. Ibid., p. 166.
A few months later a Pravda correspondent A. Vasilyev visited Dhufar and sent some encouraging reports. He praised the popularity and the efficient organisation of the Front and condemned the brutality of the British who were helping the Sultan against the Dhufaris. One thing which worried the Soviets was Front's close connections with the Chinese. During the 1970s, USSR substantially increased its support to the Dhufaris, but that would be discussed in the next chapter.

**British Announcement of Withdrawal**

The British Prime Minister Harold Wilson announced on January 16, 1968 that "all British forces in the Far East (except Hong-Kong) and the Persian Gulf were to be withdrawn by the end of 1971."

Britain also suggested that in order to deal with the post-withdrawal situation a regional defence pact should be created. The proposal was endorsed by the US, which also suggested the inclusion of Turkey and Pakistan in such a pact. However, due to strong opposition from UAR, Syria and Iraq to any Western sponsored pact, it was rejected by Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.

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Soviet reaction to the British announcement of withdrawal and the proposal for a regional defence pact was predictably negative. They accused the West and the US of trying to maintain their presence in the Gulf to exploit its oil resources and to prevent the successful development of national liberation movements in the region.\(^{160}\) However in anticipation of a 'vacuum' that the British withdrawal would create the Soviets increased their activities in the region. Soviet military vessels visited Iraqi port of Unm Qasr for the first time in May 1968 and again in 1969 and 1970.\(^{161}\)
