CONCLUSION & EPILOGUE
Indo-Soviet relations made a heady start when Nikita Khrushchev began a flamboyant courtship with the third world and particularly with India. Pandit Nehru carefully nurtured the relationship and bequeathed a legacy of strong friendly ties with the Soviet Union. Though Mrs. Gandhi's commitment to socialism was much more diluted than her father, yet the fact that she had grown up in a liberal surrounding with 'labourite' tendencies and particularly being a product of the 1930s when Utopian or Fabian socialism had caught the imagination of many, she had developed a natural proclivity to lean towards radicalism that made her call for a more evenly balanced social order in India. In the final analysis, however, one could say with a degree of certainty that at times her radical populist catchcalls were instruments in propping up her power base. Her socialist rhetoric became an intrinsic part of the intense power politiking she was involved in throughout her period of Prime Ministrieship. In any case, Mrs. Gandhi had not been dogmatic or doctrinaire in her approach to socialism or even to the Soviet Union. She only went as far as the socialist concept could be adapted to Indian conditions and when it became imperative to inject a dose of liberalisation to the Indian economy, she did not hesitate to do so. The beginning of liberalisation could thus be traced to 1974.
and this became more pronounced during her second stint as Prime Minister in 1980. The period during which Mrs. Gandhi assumed power was indeed critical for India and she did face a considerable dilemma for charting out a course for India's foreign relations. With both the United States and the Soviet Union locked in their own cold war rivalry and neither showing any keen interest in the affairs of the subcontinent, Mrs. Gandhi could have leaned on either super power to resuscitate India's sagging economy. Perhaps, retrospectively, one could say that India's economic salvation lay only in liberalising which should have started from the mid-sixties for that would have helped India make great progress in terms of quality and price of the Indian industrial products. But, then, it is equally pertinent to bear in mind that there were very few in the government or even in the bureaucratic set up who would have so easily accepted abandonment of the Nehruvian concept of a mixed economy with primacy for the public sector. The imprint of the Nehruvian legacy was too deep and too emotional to be eradicated so soon and so easily. The Congress Party, particularly, wedded to the concept of socialism and the establishment of an egalitarian society, would have lost its raison d'être had the public sector been sacrificed for the benefit of private enterprise. Moreover, private
enterprise and conservatism within the Congress were closely identified with the Old Guard of the Congress against whom Mrs. Gandhi and her generation of radical thinkers had raised their banner of revolt. But the most obvious obstacle to liberalisation was the United States itself, for, in opening out the gates of international financial institutions to India, the United States always demanded a price and she was most vociferous in her denunciation of India's non-aligned status.

In the circumstances the Soviet sympathy for the NAM and its identity of interests with that body on such issues as imperialism, colonialism, disarmament, development and apartheid made Moscow attractive for India and other countries of the NAM. However, Mrs. Gandhi's choosing of the Soviet option was not one of her making in the sense that she merely responded to the call of realpolitik. On the contrary, the growth, development and maturity of Indo-Soviet relations were largely due to the compulsions of the subcontinental and continental politics where New Delhi's perceptions converged with that of Moscow's. Pakistan against India and China against the Soviet Union and with the United States siding the Sino-Pak axis, brought about a congruence in Indo-Soviet relations that assumed a great degree of stability as the decade of the 'seventies progressed.
Apart from Indo-Soviet defence co-operation especially since the subcontinental war of 1971, trade, economic, scientific and technological co-operation between the Soviet Union and India became far more significant and assumed permanent characteristics. The most striking feature of this co-operation was its being based on equality and mutual benefit and due account for long-term economic priorities of both countries. India was the major trade partner of the Soviet Union among the developing nations while the Soviet Union stood second on the list of India's trade partners. Bilateral economic co-operation was highly instrumental in tackling the most outstanding tasks of India's development. The Soviet Union rendered tangible assistance in creating India's heavy industry. At least seventy major projects were built in India with Soviet assistance which formed the core of its non-ferrous metallurgy, heavy engineering fuel and energy complex. Again of considerable importance was the fact that Soviet-Indian ties were not confined to only political, trade and economic spheres, they also encompassed cultural exchanges and scientific co-operation and other aspects. The driving spirit behind the Indo-Soviet economic co-operation was of course the Soviet sponsoring of the Indian public sector. Thus the comprehensive character of Soviet-Indian ties made for their stable and at the same time dynamic development.
This is, however, not to say that the Soviet Union extended such vital aid to India without keeping its own interests in view. One of the primary considerations in the Soviet political mind was aimed at influencing India to qualify its non-alignment by leaning toward the Soviet Union. Another vital theme that continued to dominate the whole history of Soviet Indian relations, was the Soviet Union's threat perception of China. Moscow considered India a befitting counter to Chinese aggressive and hegemonistic ambitions in the Asian continent. Thus India's playing of the China card' in the fall of 1972 and again in mid 1976 influenced the Soviets into a variety of concessions towards India recognising some of the Indian positions regarding the Sino-Indian border, further aid, rhetorical support and an offer of crude oil.

Critics of India's Soviet policy did have a point when they remarked that the Soviets had been able to influence New Delhi's role in the Non-Aligned Foreign Minister's conference in early 1981. But it is equally important to remember that India changed its stance when it met resistance from within the non-aligned fraternity. More significant was the fact that it was largely through India's efforts that the idea of the Soviet Union being the 'natural ally' of the NAM was scuttled. Moreover, India's opposition to the Asian security scheme and its
reiteration as 'unacceptable' the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, indeed were proofs of India's advocacy of its non-aligned credentials. Mrs. Gandhi's remark to Brezhnev in New Delhi in December 1980 that Indo-Soviet friendship is of equal importance to both India and the Soviet Union\(^2\), was significant, for that was her way of reminding her guest of his country's need for India. Mrs. Gandhi also drew attention to the essence of the bilateral relationship that the relationship had been important and had paid dividends to both partners. It was indeed ironical that instead of a super power asserting and exerting its influence on its weaker ally, the record of Indo-Soviet relations revealed just the opposite, as, on the whole, it was the Soviet Union's need for India that had been greater.

From the Indian point of view, the real significance of the relations between the two countries becomes transparent when one analyses that for all that Moscow had provided New Delhi, it was without anything tangible to show for its enormous investment in India—no naval facilities for its Indian Ocean flotilla, no privileged access for repair and replenishment facilities and no particular popularity in the country at large.\(^3\) Nor did the sale of advanced weaponry help Soviet hard currency earnings since the rupee–rouble trade was
bilateral and barter in character. In the area of trade the best that Moscow could hope for was to pressure India into purchasing Soviet machinery and commodities to offset Soviet manufactures produced in Indian factories and industries developed with Soviet assistance.

By the time of Brezhnev's death in November 1982 there were already signs that the USSR had begun to reassess both third world politics and its role in the developing world. Dismayed by the upheavals of the mid-1960s when several key Soviet clients were ousted in military coups and stung by the reverses in Somalia and Egypt in the mid-1970s, the Soviet Union moved to reevaluate the dynamics of third world politics and its involvement in that dynamics. As Neil MacFarlane points out that the USSR became far less sanguine about the prospects for revolutionary development in the third world. In the economic sphere the Brezhnev regime sought to increase trade with those states whose products and resources could benefit the Soviet economy. And Andropov during his brief tenure as General Secretary indicated to Soviet clients that while 'progressive orientations merited Soviet praise, they could expect only limited Kremlin help. Indeed he strongly urged them to proceed by themselves. Mrs. Gandhi's sharp political mind had been quick to grasp the deficiencies in the Soviet economy and
the decay that had already started eating into its vitals. Thus, Mrs. Gandhi's priority in 1980 was not the perpetuation of a socialist oriented public sector economy, but the introduction of liberal doses of relaxation thereby preparing the Indian economy to gradually move away from the rigid state-owned concept towards a market oriented economy which seemed to be the inevitable way out of a messy economic stagnation. As Melvin Goodman rightly noted, the signals that the Soviet Union was rethinking its third world policy were received with alarm by many 'progressive' leaders who faced abandonment of their patron. The Indian economy under Mrs. Gandhi was showing increasing signs of flexibility and it was not by coincidence alone that her successor regime talked in terms of unrestrained liberalisation and cooperation with the West. Indeed Mrs. Gandhi's Cancun trip and her state visit to the United States had not been in vain, for, the United States had already begun perceiving India as a large country with tremendous market potential. Retrospectively, one could logically infer that there was not much of a choice for Mrs. Gandhi but to opt for the Soviet Union as India's ally, in the face of hostile American attitude towards India. But her political sagacity lay in not going to the absurd limits in converting India into a surrogate of the Soviet Union. 'It was always limited within a certain frame, whatever the
rhetoric, and she was very careful in guarding her own interests, though. Her Soviet policy, however, was not just guided by her domestic political compulsions, but were also essentially dictated by strategic geopolitical considerations. But significantly enough, as Surjit Mansingh rightly asserts, this alliance never assumed the characteristics of a strategic partnership. India acquired almost anything it wanted from the Soviet Union on its own terms and Mrs. Gandhi had often emphasized upon the non-exclusive nature of the Indo-Soviet relationship which did not preclude other friendships. In fact an American analyst depicted Indo-Soviet relations 'not as sign of India's dependency on the Soviet Union, but rather as part of Soviet courtship of India'. Shashi Tharoor, however, argues, 'In both domestic and foreign affairs, Mrs. Gandhi transformed the system to ensure her personal survival and dominance. In political development terms, Mrs. Gandhi throughout preferred to rule rather than reinstitutionalize, to control rather than re-orient, to subvert rather than balance, she mastered tactics and ignored strategy. Inevitably, this had its repercussions on both the creation and conduct of foreign policy. In the same breath, though, Tharoor concedes that Mrs. Gandhi handled the Bangladesh conflict effectively. To say that she 'ignored strategy' seems far from convincing; It needed to have a leader with a
supreme sense of masterly strategic planning to visualise and execute successfully a crisis of the magnitude of Bangladesh, and Mrs.Gandhi's handling of the Bangladesh crisis was by all means the handiwork of a genius. And even her Soviet policy was not unjustified. As veteran parliamentarian and leader of the opposition Madhu Limaye himself states, 'No other person in our time whether Shastri or Morarji would have been able to handle the situation as superbly as Mrs.Gandhi did'. Her Soviet policy was justified in the circumstances prevailing at that time in India's own national interest and in the larger interest of peace. Thus, Mrs.Gandhi's Soviet policy was not only a major contribution to India's foreign policy but also towards global policy at a critical time. What was of significance was that India's Soviet connections had not made her compromise on its non-alignment. To cold warriors India showed there was a viable, plausible and respectable alternative to accepting either super power. Perhaps the most important factor in India's Soviet connections was that it was not influenced by purely narrow, national considerations like either Yugoslavia's or Egypt's, but there was always the scope for working with the Soviet Union in a broader, global perspective—witness the Delhi Declaration on Nuclear Disarmament signed during Rajiv Gandhi's tenure as Prime Minister. Hence India's Soviet connections which began
earlier than either Yugoslavias and Egypts and survived them later, were much more than a transitory phenomenon. In answering a critical question as to whether India's regional security increased during the Indira Gandhi years, William L. Richter\textsuperscript{13} makes an emphatic 'yes' and that sums up the success of Mrs. Gandhi's handling of India's foreign relations. Finally, and that is of immense significance, Mrs. Gandhi's adroit balancing of India's super power relations, in the long run has bailed India out after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Since India had never been a committed ally of the Soviet Union like either Cuba or Iraq, India did not find any difficulty in adapting to a new international order where under a unipolar power structure a market economy had become a craze. Thus Mrs. Gandhi's oft repeated words that 'one friendship did not stand on the way of another' stood vindicated, for, while India hailed its Soviet friendship it never failed in trying to improve bilateral relations with the United States and that effort is beginning to pay dividends at a time when Russia itself has been depending upon American largesse for its economic sustenance.

The Chernenko interlude was too brief to bring about any structural or fundamental change in the working of the Soviet system and as for Indo-Soviet relations, Chernenko carried forth the tradition bequeathed him by
his predecessors, Brezhnev and Andropov. Chernenko's death in March 1985 heralded a new era in the Soviet Union and standing at the apex to preside over this new political thinking was the young and dynamic Mikhail Gorbachev. Gorbachev represented change not only in the Soviet Union but his very approach to co-existence inculcated a sense of necessity and even urgency in the United States to bring about a 'real' arms reduction. The essence of Gorbachev's new thinking was not to look upon the United States as a competitor but as a fundamental, powerful reality with which the Soviet Union had to co-exist peacefully. Indeed, in Gorbachev's ideas one witnessed a great transformation in the Soviet foreign policy from the day of Stalin and his successors' obsessive preoccupation with the United States, Gorbachev worked relentlessly to ease tensions with the United States and exerted himself to bring about an internal reconstruction of the Soviet state whose economy was on the verge of a cataclysmic collapse. Thus though an equation with the United States remained at the top of the Soviet agenda, clearly the nuances and subtleties in bringing about this equation, had changed. In Gorbachev's new thinking arms reduction, both conventional and non-conventional, lay at the basis of any meaningful change for the development of the Soviet economy. His outstanding achievement was the initiation and the formal
ratification of the INF Treaty since for the first time in the history of disarmament the emphasis was on the elimination of a potent nuclear weapon and not mere limitation. To initiate an era of disarmament, Gorbachev was even willing to gamble with national security, for at the end of the ratification, it was apparent that the Soviet Union had given up more than the United States. His sincerity made Reagan publicly declare an end to his long held belief that the Soviet Union was the epitome of contemporary history's 'evil empire', and even Mrs. Thatcher declared Gorbachev to be a man with whom 'we can do business'.

At home Gorbachev's effort was concentrated on ridding the Soviet Union of the tired, bland, old leadership represented by Brezhnev and his immediate successors. He not only criticized Brezhnev's archaic handling of state affairs, but was also determined at clearing the obstacles which an ossified bureaucracy had strewn in the path of rational policy making. He was even more concerned with reducing the influence of the Soviet military establishment in political affairs. Thus, having realised the importance of assembling 'new' teams in both national affairs and international relations by the time of his ascension to the highest position in the political hierarchy of the Soviet State, he had already made up his mind as to who had to be 'retired' as well as
those who would take their place. He summoned to his aid in the Kremlin the best brains the Soviet Union could provide who would 'not only follow his vision but who could adjust that vision to the realities of the larger world'. In other words, besides bringing in definite views into his politburo office, Gorbachev was equally determined to staff the Soviet policy making system with people who shared his vision and championed his dynamism. Strong-willed and clearly 'free of false sentimentality' that marked the traits of an outdated Brezhnevian era, Gorbachev effectively separated the entrenched, moribund foreign ministry bureaucrats from their patrons in the Kremlin and hence from their influence in the national security process. Gorbachev reduced the emphasis on the personalised decision making process epitomised by the performance of the Brezhnev politburo and conferred more responsibility on the Central Committee Secretariat, a body he believed he could more effectively manage as Party Chairman, but one he also believed better represented the needs and interests of the Soviet Union. Gorbachev's 'purge' and subsequent reshuffling of the 'inner circle leadership dramatically illustrated his political style as well as his adroit management of the established power structure. Already his name was bound in an unbroken link with the Russian terms 'glasnost'- openness- and 'perestroika'- restructuring- which provoked a sense of
appreciation and understanding in the Soviet Union and abroad.

The most important members of the new thinking were Petrovsky, the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, Primakov, the Director of the prestigious World Economy and International Relations and reportedly a close adviser to Gorbachev. Burlatsky and Bovin were senior political commentators for Literaturnaya Gazeta and Izvestia respectively. Fyodor Burlatsky, once a speech writer for Khrushchev became a leading figure in Gorbachev's glasnost campaign and argues that the influence of 'external' factors on social-economic including communist systems 'is greater than ever before'. But perhaps the most outstanding of all the 'new generation political thinkers' to 'be enlisted to assist Gorbachev in his restructuring of the Soviet decision making process was Alexander Yakovlev who stood in direct opposition to some of the senior Politburo members like Egor Ligachev. A former ambassador to Canada and a party professional Yakovlev was initially given responsibility for coordinating Soviet propaganda activities at home and abroad. Under his leadership, Soviet propaganda was 'metamorphosed into pure public relations'. Yakovlev shared views similar to those of Gorbachev and 'he became a special behind the scenes player in establishing the Gorbachev profile'. Moreover, Yakovlev shared Gorbachev's view that Soviet foreign policy would be more
successful if it could demonstrate flexibility rather than a confrontation with the West and Yakovlev emerged as Gorbachev's principal inside director on foreign policy matters. Yakovlev, largely believed to be the mind behind this shift in policy, was given the chief responsibility of publicising 'glasnost' at home and abroad. And glasnost's opportunity lay in opening of the Soviet Union's relatively outdated economy to the larger, and infinitely more successful commercial world. Yakovlev intended approaching a declining but still powerful American commercial sector. It also envisaged great opportunities for emancipating the primitive Soviet economy and coordinating it with the sustained economic and financial growth of the Japanese and other Western oriented economies. Yakovlev, representing the counter to the Marxist-Leninst tradition argued all economies were complementary and that the markets of the Soviet Union and the other socialist states were intertwined with those of the capitalists and that one market was no less dependent on the other. According to this new economic concept, with the new centres of economic power in Japan and the Pacific as well as with the expansion of the west European and Indian economy, the United States' share of the economy would decline, especially in the third world. Thus the Soviet Union would be in a position to reap substantial benefits if it interacted with these opening
economies, and the need was to avoid the rigid zero-sum paradigms of the Marxist-Leninist economists. In fact, as Yakovlev believed, with the change of approach and thinking in the Soviet system, Soviet opportunities for accelerated economic growth and modernisation had never been better. Indeed in Yakovlev's, new thinking Soviet theorists like Varga, Zimmerman, Arzumanyan and a host of others of the same school had come back to life. Varga's views on economic interdependence, the comparative stability of the capitalist economy and the advisability of co-existing with the United States, stood vindicated with Yakovlev's sponsoring of those very ideas that had created a turmoil in Stalin's Russia during the fifties.

Gorbachev apparently concluded Soviet foreign policy drifted from its central objective during the Brezhnev years, had adopted distant struggles it little comprehended, had squandered precious national and human resources and had needlessly elevated tensions without demonstrating practical need or ideological purpose. Soviet mistakes, he believed—such as the decision to use regular Soviet forces in Afghanistan—were a consequence of erroneous 'single factor' analysis, for, too little attention had been given to inter-related, regional and other broader phenomenan. According to Gorbachev, during Brezhnev's reign the Kremlin leaders lost their sense of
timing as well as proportion and thus failed to grasp significant changes in the late twentieth century world. An article by historian Vacheslav Dashichev cited by Alvin Z. Rubinstein, was one of the most telling re-evaluations of Brezhnev's actions—that USSR chased petty gains and wound up sheltering unstable, radical governments. Not only was this costly but in several cases, the U.S. viewed Soviet activities as threatening. Gorbachev's new priorities were reflected in his speech to the 27th Congress of the C.P.S.U. Whereas Brezhnev at both the 25th and 26th Congress waxed poetic about the shifting corelation of forces and the 'progressive' victories in the third world Gorbachev devoted only a scant few lines to this topic. Nevertheless, going by Andropov's confession, mentioned earlier, that the third world could 'proceed by themselves', clearly implied that when Gorbachev acceded to power in March 1985 an initial reassessment of the Soviet role in the third world had already occurred. Following the virtual collapse of the communist government in Afghanistan, Soviet third world specialists urged leaders of the less developed countries to 'go slow' so as not to alienate segments of the populations and pay attention to native traditions such as Islam. Given Gorbachev's priorities and the new realism regarding the developing world Soviet foreign policy began to change. Gorbachev pursued political 'detente' with the
U.S. and acknowledged the centrality of the Soviet-American relationship in the overall Soviet foreign policy. Unlike his predecessors who failed to prevent the deployment of intermediate-range missiles in Europe, Gorbachev proceeded with arms negotiations and in the end accepted Reagan's 'zero option' with regard to the third world. Gorbachev's USSR recognised what Henry Kissinger called 'linkage' between Soviet behaviour in the third world and the super power relationship and looked for a new approach to regional conflicts.

Being convinced that the world was passing through a great transition, Gorbachev became acutely conscious of the fact that innovative thinking was unavoidable and he endeavoured to make Soviet foreign policy more functional and purposeful. Thus he quickly recognised the urgent need to deal directly with the American President with whom neither Brezhnev nor Andropov nor Chernenko sought meetings.

In India, the new generation represented by Rajiv Gandhi witnessed a new dynamism that was soon to overtake the Soviet Union. Brought up under typical western setting and education, and married into a western family, Rajiv Gandhi inherited a legacy from his mother, where the relevance of the west for India's progress and development
had become almost inevitable. Deciding to carry forward from where his mother had left on liberalisation, Rajiv's policies and the youthful mindset around him thought it imperative for India to look towards the West and the United States to accelerate the pace of India's scientific and technological advancements. Rajiv's vision of the 21st century encompassed a highly sophisticated and technically advanced India in an age of electronics and super computers. A leap from mediocrity to excellence, in his opinion, needed an over-hauling of the Indian economic priorities. He perceived liberalisation in India could succeed only with the help of international financial organisations like the IMF and the World Bank. It was no mean irony indeed that when Rajiv nurtured ideas of opening out to the west, the Soviet Union appeared outdated and lagged far behind the United States in the technological race. With the Soviet economy in a state of stagnation there was not much that India could expect from the Russians. Indeed, India had developed to a level at which Soviet civilian technology was not good enough for its most sophisticated needs and that seemed to dictate closer economic links with the West and Japan. Hence just as the Gorbachev-Yakovlev combine strove to broaden the base of the Soviet economy, the Rajiv team in India sought to extricate the Indian economy from its 'socialist' orientation and tried to link it with the more
successful and expanding economies of the world. Thus, on completion of his visit to India in 1986, though Gorbachev had agreed to render assistance for a wide range of expansive, high profile projects, he left with an unallayed cause for concern—the mend in U.S.-Indian relations. Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's improving relationship with the Reagan administration was evident when one month before Gorbachev's visit, Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger received a warm welcome because of greater U.S. readiness to sell India various high-tech items and efforts to expand trade.

Yet, however, it was significant that an expansion of Indian ties with the West did not automatically lead to a more pro-west position in global politics. Both India and the Soviet Union had invested so much towards the cementing of their relationship that it would have been most unlikely for both to have drifted apart so easily. By any reckoning, India could not have jeopardised its defence relations with the Soviet Union, built up over decades. Both Moscow and New Delhi were acutely conscious that in a changing security environment, the other would be a reliable partner in a crisis. The Soviet Union did not grudge India's expanding economic links with the West as long as India did not pay a political price for the benefits. At the same time the Gorbachev leadership tried to expand its own economic and scientific links with India.
In the late 1980s there were instances of change in the Soviet-Indian relations and such changes became apparent on both the Soviet and the Indian sides. In 1986 Yakovlev advised Gorbachev to speak out on the long term Soviet-Asian interests and Gorbachev responded to this recommendation. Gorbachev spoke about the need for cooperation not confrontation in developing the Soviet Union's underdeveloped and heretofore neglected East and Central Asia regions. However, the two areas in which there seemed to be the most change were Asia and the Middle East. Gorbachev aimed Soviet policy toward Asia in his speech at Vladivostok in July, 1986. Using this Far Eastern locale to stress the USSR's role as an Asian power the General Secretary proposed to ameliorate ties with Japan and China. He hoped for the normalisation of ties between China and Vietnam, resolution of tensions between North and South Korea and again proposed turning the Pacific and the Indian Ocean into a zone of peace. It was also in this major speech that Gorbachev announced the initial withdrawal of six divisions from Afghanistan.

The most important from the Soviet point of view was the substantial improvement in Sino-Soviet relations. By the time of Gorbachev's visit to New Delhi in November 1986 Soviet diplomats were reported to be cautioning India that Moscow was giving priority to improving relations
with China even though that might be against the wishes of New Delhi. The implication of the Soviet diplomatic warning to India was that the Soviet Union might stay neutral, if hostilities flared up on the Sino-Indian border. The new thinking in the Soviet Union made it apparent that normalisation and improvement of relationship with China was much more crucial to Moscow than Indo-Soviet relationship. Yet, however, it was significant that Soviet statements since Gorbachev's Vladivostok speech, still gave India a high profile. In fact, when if Gorbachev's policy toward Afghanistan had changed toward India it showed a remarkable continuity. The special place India held in his thinking was evident at the 27th Party Congress of the CPSU. It was the only other third world country mentioned by name in his report.

A Soviet survey of India's work in chairing the NAM from 1983 to 1986, published in 1987 appeared to reflect the views of those in Moscow who wished to cultivate the more conservative third world governments rather than the socialist and socialist oriented regimes. It expressed uncritical support for India's policies in Asia, the Indian Ocean, Africa, the Middle East, Central America, world disarmament and North-South relations. More significantly, Soviet recognition of India's role in the NAM came from the highest level in Gorbachev's Vladivostok speech. 'The recognised leader of this movement is great India, with its moral authority and traditional wisdom,
with its unique political experience and huge economic possibilities.²⁷

At the Harare Summit of NAM in September 1986, Rajiv Gandhi played the role of a unifier and consensus builder. He called for a Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan and an end to American interference in Nicaragua. In spite of criticisms made in the past of the Indian stance in Afghanistan, India was invited to chair the Afghanistan committee. The meeting reaffirmed the basic positions of the 1983 New Delhi Summit.

Gorbachev's state visit to India in November, 1986 also highlighted the importance the Soviet leadership attributed to its relationship with the world's most populous democracy. The trip, his first to a third world country was intended to convey a sense of India's importance internationally and to the Soviet union. The high water-mark of the Gorbachev visit was the signing of the Delhi Declaration by the leaders of the two countries which formulated principles for a nuclear weapon free and non-violent world, serving as an example of a new politico-philosophic approach to the crucial problems of relations between states²⁸.

Though on a formal level relations between the two countries were good, there were in fact simmering strains
that needed careful understanding and sorting out in private meetings. Primarily Moscow's incipient reconciliation with Beijing made New Delhi nervous, for, at a time when there was little movement in its own quest for better relations with China, Sino-Soviet relations were proceeding steadily. 'The equanimity with which Gorbachev regards India's courtship of China only heightens India's deep-seated anxiety over possible shifts in regional power alignments.' Accordingly, Gorbachev, sought to reassure India of the Soviet Union's steadfast friendship. Gorbachev also understood that India's fear of the U.S. military build up of Pakistan was justified and that meant that New Delhi placed a premium on Soviet support for its position vis-a-vis Pakistan.

Nevertheless, a source of concern for Gorbachev was the imbalance in Indo-Soviet trade. India's export of civilian goods in the 1980s were considerably more than its imports. The balance of payments accounts was kept in approximate symmetry by the arms that India bought. If India were to turn to the west for the next generation of weapons (80 per cent of its arms were bought from the Soviet Union), Moscow would lose much of its leverage in New Delhi and would have found itself unable to tap into India's sophisticated electronics and computer industry. Again, Gorbachev had to find a way to allay India's suspicions of Soviet interference in its domestic
politics. This was an old source of tension. Rajiv Gandhi had learned from his mother to keep a wary eye on Moscow's relations with the CPI. During the late 'eighties, the view that was widely accepted in New Delhi was that 'the CPI was a way of both signalling and subverting' and it was jested that 'half of the party was in the pay of Moscow, the other half in the pay of the Indian Government'\(^\text{31}\). For the Soviet Union India was not simply another third world nation. India's military establishment, the fourth largest in the world 'was Moscow's pacifier within the subcontinent and it was also seen as an actor in the China equation\(^\text{32}\). Hence the traditional foci of Soviet interests were constant. As both Rubinstein and Kanet\(^\text{33}\) indicate, Soviet – Indian relations continued to be the cornerstone of Moscow's policy. Despite the lack of ideological affinities, parallel political and strategic concerns served to underpin this relationship. Though the ties were not without strains, the Friendship and Co-operation Treaty of 1971 remained in tact and Moscow was willing to provide New Delhi with sophisticated equipment and licensing agreements so as to cushion the relationship. Meetings between Gorbachev and Rajiv Gandhi held between 1985 and 1988 had greatly promoted Soviet-Indian relations, raising them to a qualitatively new level and the Soviet Union and India were resolute in furthering and deepening every
sphere of their relations. This was emphatically demonstrated during Gorbachev's November 1988 visit to India. After all, which other Asian country did Gorbachev visit twice? The legacy continues.