

CHAPTER 4

THE SOVIET UNION AND THE INDIA-PAKISTAN WAR, 1965

Keeping in mind India's set back in the Sino-Indian border war of 1962 followed by the demise of Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru in May 1964, the Pakistani leaders came to believe that India was overtaken by political instability and there was no Indian political leader of Nehru's stature.¹ In contrast, the Pakistani leaders convinced themselves that their country presented a picture of political stability. Ayub Khan was booming with confidence after his victory in the 1965 presidential election. Relations with China were excellent. In order to reduce its dependence on the United States, Pakistan had started cultivating communist China especially after the border war of 1962.

During a visit of President Ayub Khan, it was claimed that Sino-Pakistan friendship was not based on expediency but it was a matter of long term policy. In the joint communique issued at the end of the visit there was a re-affirmation that the Kashmir dispute should be solved in accordance with the wishes of the people of Kashmir as pledged to them by India and Pakistan.

1. G. W. Choudhury, The Last Days of United Pakistan (Bloomington, 1974), p. 20.

There was consolidation of friendship in diverse ways-- establishment of air links between the two countries, construction of the Sinkiang-Gilgit road, opening of a Chinese consulate at Dacca, etc. Pakistan maintained that China was a peace-loving nation and it did not constitute any danger to any country.

It was during President Ayub Khan's visit that Pakistan for the first time rejected the "Two-Chinas" scheme of the United States. It was stated in the joint communique that President Ayub Khan reiterated Pakistan's opposition for creating two Chinas.

With the improvement of its relations with Pakistan, China also showed greater understanding in respect of Pakistan's membership in Western military alliances. China appeared to have accepted Pakistan's explanation that its membership in the military pacts was not directed against China. On being pointed out the contradiction between Pakistan's membership of the SEATO and Pakistan's friendship with China, Chou En-lai said:

We do not deny that there is a certain contradiction. It is precisely for this reason that development of friendly relations between China and Pakistan has been a process of gradual accumulation.[2]

-
2. Chou En-lai's interview with the correspondent of the Associated Press of Pakistan in the Dawn, 11 April 1963.

Interestingly, the United States was not expected to take exception to Sino-Pakistan friendship because the United States, at that time, was exploring the possibility of using Pakistan as a mediator in an effort for bringing about a rapprochement with China. This was because of the realization by the United States that the People's Republic had come to stay as a political fact. On the other hand, the United States sadly realized that the other China, its own crony, was a myth. Communist China, after its nuclear explosion, was on the threshold of Great Power status. Besides, it had under its sway a large chunk of humanity. Its mighty presence in the world, on no account, could be ignored by the United States. Hence the United States efforts to explore the possibility of building a bridge with China. Pakistan was found to be of use in the role of a mediator. In July 1964, Ayub Khan said that half of his talks during Chou En-lai's visit to Pakistan was devoted to Sino-American relations.³

The Soviet Union tried to get a foothold in Pakistan in the context of its differences and difficulties with China. For nearly a decade after the Chinese Revolution in 1949, Sino-Soviet relations were very warm and very close. Their friendship was further cemented through the Sino-Soviet Treaty of friendship for twenty years signed

3. Morning News (Dacca), 14 July 1964.

in Moscow by Stalin and Mao Tse-tung. Massive Soviet economic aid came in handy for China's industrial development and the building up of her defence forces. China directly and the Soviet Union indirectly fought on the same side in the Korean war.

However, towards the end of the fifties, these relations came under stress and strain. It began with ideological dispute on the role of the socialist countries in world politics. China then challenged Soviet Union's ideological bona fides and doubted Soviet credentials to lead world revolution. China claimed it had discovered the key to the revolution in the colonies and semicolonies. As early as 1939, well before the victory, Mao had written the Chinese Revolution and the Chinese Communist Party, a declaration of equality with the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Mao was determined to assert the independence of the Chinese Communist Party from the CPSU.

After the Communist take-over in Peking, the superiority of the Chinese line was proclaimed at the conference of Asian trade unions held in Peking, under the auspices of the World Federation of Trade Unions. In his key note address Liu Shao-Chi claimed that the road taken by the Chinese people "to defeat imperialism and its lackeys and to establish the People's Republic of China is

the path that should be taken by the peoples of various colonial and semicolonial countries in their fight for national independence and democracy".⁴

This assertion of the superiority of the Chinese line was interpreted as an indirect indictment of the Soviet revolutionary policies and the Soviet failure to bring about revolutions in other countries. Mao Tse-tung of course acknowledged his indebtedness to Lenin and Stalin. At the same time he forcefully projected his own line as the line to be adopted by the world communist movement and the revolutionary masses in the colonies and the semi-colonies.

Thus in Chinese view, Soviet Union was not sufficiently revolutionary and the Soviet revolution was no model. China looked upon with suspicion the Soviet efforts for peaceful working relations with the West. Khrushchev's policy of 'peaceful coexistence' was frowned upon. The Soviet leadership was accused of revisionism, ever ready to collaborate with American capitalists and imperialists for the domination of the world.

Sino-Soviet relations were further strained when in 1962 war erupted on the Sino-Indian border. The Soviet Union's ambivalent attitude angered the Chinese

4. Quoted by Bhabani Sen Gupta, The Fulcrum of Asia (Delhi, 1988), p. 57.

leadership. In a Soviet exercise of parity between China and India, China still felt that the Khrushchev leadership pointed the accusing finger at the leaders of China.⁵ From 1963 onwards, Sino-Soviet relations moved over the next phase, marked with extreme hostility. The dispute became direct and overt and China claimed leadership of the world communist movement. A new dimension was added to the dispute by the publication of Chinese territorial claims against the Soviet Union.⁶

The Soviet Union considered the Chinese territorial claims as blasphemous and unhelpful to communist unity and world revolutionary movement. Pravda published a mammoth report by ideologue Mikhail Suslov to a plenary meeting of the CPSU Central Committee on "The Struggle of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union for the Unity of the International Communist Movement". The report was the

-
5. In a secret letter the CPSU sent to the communist parties of the countries of the socialist camp, towards the end of January 1963, there was a sharp and candid criticism and condemnation of the Chinese actions. China, it was alleged, "invaded" India "without even informing the USSR, beforehand". The Soviet Union had "many times willingly offered to mediate". India was "willing to negotiate", Chinese, in contrast, used negotiations "only to gain time for aggressive actions".

See David Floyd, Mao Against Khrushchev; A Short History of the Sino-Soviet Conflict (New York, 1963), pp. 366-367.

6. Gittings, Survey of the Sino-Soviet Dispute, 1963-67 (London, 1968), pp. 158-161.

bitterest and most comprehensive attack yet made by the Russians against the Chinese, whose deviation was described as Petit bourgeois, nationalistic, and re-Trotskyite.⁷ The ideological war was in full swing.

In the circumstances, the Soviet Union was not expected to alienate Pakistan further and drive it into the Chinese camp. After Ayub Khan's visit, the Soviet unwillingness to annoy Pakistan by openly siding with India in the Indo-Pakistan disputes, was very much in evidence.⁸

Calculating that the strategic environment was in Pakistan's favour, Ayub Khan made up his mind to find a military solution to the Kashmir issue. Pakistani strategists told him that India would not be in a position to face two fronts simultaneously.⁹

Pakistan used the Rann of Kutch War to assess the international support it could muster. It noted to its satisfaction that the Soviet Union was strictly neutral and there was no reason to think that the Soviet attitude

-
7. Robin Edmonds, Soviet Foreign Policy: The Brezhnev Years (London, 1983), p. 23.
 8. R. Vaidyanath, "Recent Trends in Soviet Politics Towards India and Pakistan", International Studies, Vol. VII, No. 3, January 1966.
 9. R. D. Kwatra, "Sino-Soviet Wooing of Pakistan", Indian Express, 7 May 1969.

would change in the near future. Extending full-throated support to Pakistan, China for the first time intervened in a conflict between the two partners of the sub-continent.¹⁰ The Chinese Press reports were totally partisan.¹¹ On 4 May 1965, China issued a statement on the India-Pakistan border conflict. This statement was a scathing attack on India, charging India with following "big nation chauvinist and expansionist policy". It completely endorsed the Pakistani stand.¹²

The Chinese support emboldened Pakistan. Its strategists calculated that China would open a second front and India would find herself in the unenviable position of fighting in two fronts. And they hoped that the advantage would be Pakistan's. The British-sponsored Rann of Kutch agreement also gave Pakistan the hope that international pressure would prevail upon India to grant concessions to Pakistan in Kashmir. Pakistan had expected the Security Council to find a solution to the Kashmir problem and had relied on the Western powers to bring this about. As long as it could count on Western support in the Security Council, it could have presented its people

10. Bhabani Sen Gupta, n. 4, p. 193.

11. The reports in the People's Daily of 14 April 1965, which quoted news from Morning News of 13 April 1965.

12. See P. L. Bholia, Pakistan-China Relations (Jaipur, 1986), p. 128.

at least with a measure of political gain over India.¹³ It did not anticipate Soviet opposition or a Soviet veto for India in the Security Council. It was felt that everything was going the Pakistani way and the environment was very congenial for the strike. Pakistan was convinced that it could not bargain for a better situation.

Pakistan felt the need for an urgent operation also because it was greatly concerned about the pace of integration of Kashmir with the Indian Union. It feared that unless it acted swiftly and gave India a deadly strike, Kashmir would be lost for ever. Hence Pakistan's "Operation Gibraltar" to capture the Kashmir valley. Pakistan hoped that the intervention of its army would lead to insurgency in Kashmir, cause discomfiture to India and the Kashmir issue would again be in international limelight.¹⁴

The United States and the Soviet Union expressed themselves against the armed confrontation whereas China extended full support to Pakistan. China did not take any peace initiative. Instead, it appeared that China wanted Pakistan to continue the war. Chinese behaviour amounted to adding fuel to the fire and fishing in

13. Bhabani Sen Gupta, n. 4, p. 197.

14. See excerpts of A. M. Yahya Khan's interview with Altaf Quereshi editor of an Urdu paper, quoted in Indian Express, 15 January 1979.

troubled waters. Everyone knew that China could have restrained Pakistan's hand and had it not been for Chinese encouragement Pakistan would not have ventured the operation. The United States and the Soviet Union were determined to thwart the Chinese moves.¹⁵

President Ayub Khan made a vain attempt to get the United States mediation to put an end to the conflict. He knew that the United Nations intervention would only result in the restoration of the status quo and there would be no gain for Pakistan in Kashmir. On the other hand, Pakistan hoped, a United States intervention could be of benefit to Pakistan. However, Pakistan's request was unheeded.¹⁶ Besides, the United States expressed its

-
15. During the India-Pakistan conflict of 1965 the United States and the Soviet Union followed parallel policies in order to contain the Chinese influence in the region. The two powers joined hands in putting pressure on India and Pakistan to declare a ceasefire by the use of the strong word "demands" in the Security Council resolution, which reminded the contending parties of the Council invoking sanctions under Chapter 7 of the Charter, if considered necessary, and warning China to refrain from any involvement in the war. See UN Security Council resolution of 20 September 1965. UN Document S/RES/211.
 16. On 15 September 1965 President Ayub Khan told a press conference that the United States should play a more "positive role" and exercise its "enormous influence" on India and Pakistan in the current armed conflict.

See Morning News, 16 September 1965. A White House spokesman, Bill Moyers immediately ruled out any direct US intervention as proposed by Ayub Khan and affirmed that the United States supported peace operations through the United Nations. Ibid., 16 September 1965.

displeasure by suspending all military aid to Pakistan and India.¹⁷

The Soviet Peace Initiatives

Right from the beginning of the conflict, the Soviet Union expressed the view that the India-Pakistan conflict would only help the imperialist forces who sought to disunite and set at loggerheads the states that cast off the colonial yoke. It also adopted an attitude of strict neutrality. On 24 August Pravda published a commentary which expressed the Soviet desire for peace, without in any way going into the merits of the respective cases of India and Pakistan. Soviet-Indian friendship had come to stay, and, regarding the policy towards Pakistan, the Soviet organ expressed the wish: "We would like Soviet-Pakistani relations, like our traditional friendship with India, to be a stabilizing factor in the situation in Asia and to contribute to a normalization of relations between India and Pakistan".¹⁸

It is interesting to note that the Soviet Prime Minister's letters did not try to apportion the blame on India and Pakistan. Pakistan was the gainer because this was a marked deviation from the hitherto accepted Soviet

17. Rashmi Jain, US-Pak Relations 1947-1983 (New Delhi, 1983), p. 26.

18. CDSP, Vol. XVII, No. 34, 15 September 1965, pp.15-16.

line of unqualified support for India. There was also a tacit recognition that there was a dispute in Kashmir and a suggestion that it should be resolved through negotiations. Pakistan scored here because there was a clear change in the Soviet stance. According to a distinguished Indian scholar, the letter to Ayub Khan also contained the first recorded Soviet compliment to Pakistan's foreign policy.¹⁹ There were favourable comments on the new directions in Pakistan's foreign policy. It was clear that Pakistan was seen in a new light.

The Soviet Union noted with regret that the Chinese attitude was not helpful.²⁰ TASS in a release on 14 September, condemned the exploitation of the conflict by certain forces which had intensified the conflict by issuing instigatory statements.²¹ It was a clear message to China, even though that country was not mentioned by name. The Soviet press commentaries during the period

19. See Bhabani Sen Gupta, n. 4, p. 205.

20. Just contrary to the Soviet attitude was the policy adopted by China towards the conflict. The Chinese Foreign Minister Ch'en Yi made an unannounced stopover in Rawalpindi on September 4 on his way to Syria and Africa. After holding secret consultations with his Pakistani counterpart Z. A. Bhutto, he announced at a press conference his country's unreserved support for Pakistan. See H. P. Klaus, "China's Role in India-Pakistan Conflict", in China Quarterly (London, October-December 1965), No. 24. See also Dawn, 5 September 1965.

21. Quoted by S. P. Singh, Political Dimensions of India-USSR Relations (New Delhi, 1987), p. 123.

were fine examples of Soviet artistry in demonstrating strict neutrality in a dispute. These abounded in indictment of "outside forces", but stopped short of criticizing the belligerents. Pravda reported that "disturbing news" had been received from the "Indian" state of Jammu and Kashmir that an "armed conflict" had broken out between the two neighbouring countries. Pravda did not try to fix responsibility on any state. "Indian and Pakistan papers have given different versions of its causes. We shall not discuss which of the two versions more accurately reflects the course of events". Of course, Pravda complimented the Indian foreign policy. It said: "The Soviet Union highly appreciates the general orientation of India's foreign policy and its devotion to the principle of peaceful co-existence between countries with different social systems. It follows the policy of non-alignment and the Soviet Union has deep respect for the prestige of India which, as a great power, is playing a remarkable role in international affairs". As important as this high praise for India was the neutral stance Pravda for the first time took on the actual conflict in Kashmir.²² While highlighting the traditional and time-tested comradeship with India and admiring India's foreign policy, the Pravda commentaries also underlined that "Soviet aspiration for developing her relations with

22. CDSP, 15 September 1965, p. 16.

Pakistan proceeded from the assumption that her good neighbourly relations with Pakistan would not weaken her friendship with any third country".²³

It was obvious that the Soviet offer to mediate, before the Security Council had become active in the conflict, was prompted by the close physical proximity of the area of the conflict to the Soviet Union and by the distinct possibility that the tension in Kashmir would develop into a military conflict on a large scale.

Meanwhile, the UN Security Council was seized of the issue. The Soviet Union also joined in the efforts of the Council to bring about a ceasefire. The Soviet delegate expressed his deep concern on the gravity of the situation and asked both India and Pakistan to halt the conflict.²⁴ The Soviet representative, in his speech in the Security Council on 4 September 1965, called upon India and Pakistan to find a way out to put "an immediate end to the bloodshed in Kashmir and to halt this conflict". He emphasised the need for the two neighbouring countries resolving "the outstanding issues between them by peaceful means, with due regard for their mutual interests".²⁵

23. Quoted by S. P. Singh, Political Dimensions of India-USSR Relations (New Delhi, 1987), pp. 120-121.

24. SCOR, 20 Yr., Mtg 1237, 4 September 1965, p. 37.

25. Ibid.

A TASS statement appealed to the statesmen of both countries to display realism, restraint and an understanding of the grave consequences of a development of the armed conflict in order to find a peaceful solution of the outstanding disputes. The Soviet Government urged both sides to immediately halt all military operations and effect a mutual withdrawal of troops. Soviet Union reiterated its offer of good offices if both sides deemed that useful. It viewed with concern the widening of the conflict to new areas and the alarming prospect of other states becoming involved therein. It reiterated that the India-Pakistan problems had been "aggravated all along by imperialist interference and intrigue".²⁶

Even though Soviet position was neutral in the UN deliberations Soviet support was available for India on some important technical points and objections India had raised.²⁷

26. New Times, 17 September 1965.

27. The Indian delegation led by External Affairs Minister Swaran Singh objected to Pakistan's Foreign Minister Z. A. Bhutto's reference to the internal situation in Kashmir and India's domestic affairs. It held that this was a deviation from the agreed agenda and walked out in protest. Soviet Union supported the Indian position that the Council's deliberations should be only on "questions directly connected with the settlement of the armed conflict", i.e., complete ceasefire and withdrawal of armed forces. Soviet Union maintained that the main task was to consolidate the ceasefire. It obviously did not want to drag in the sensitive issue of Kashmir.

Unlike the Soviet Union, the United States had only peripheral interest in South Asian happenings. South Asia never enjoyed priority in United States foreign policy agenda and it continued to be so.²⁸ But the Soviet Union's case was different. War was being fought in its vicinity. Its major adversary, China, was at close quarters and was definitely in a position to exploit the situation to tilt the balance in South Asia in its favour. In 1962, during the Sino-Indian border war, Soviet Union was forced to be a silent spectator to Chinese expansionist programmes in South Asia because its hands were tied by communist fraternal relations with China.

The Soviet representative Fedorenko observed that the withdrawal of troops and all armed personnel by both sides from the positions they occupied upto 5 August 1965, must proceed more rapidly.

To assuage the feelings of Pakistan, the Soviet representative stated that "these are the questions that must be settled first, these are the questions to which attention must be given in the situation that has arisen". This meant that the Soviet Union had no objection to a discussion of the Kashmir problem by the Security Council at a future time. It was pointed out that the USSR has "constantly called for and calls for, strict compliance with the Council's resolution". See SCOR, Mtg 1247, 25 October 1965, p. 30.

28. Neither United States investments nor the volume of trade with the region was substantial enough to make the area an important partner; the main consideration which governed its South Asian policy stemmed from global pursuits and interests. The area's importance had fluctuated in rhythm with the shifts in US global policies. Put simply, the major US interest was to prevent the absorption of the area into the communists' orbit. See Stephen Philip Cohen (ed.), The Security of South Asia: American and Asian Perspectives (New Delhi, 1987), p. 120.

Soviet Union could not afford to allow China a free run in South Asia for a second time.

Chinese statements during the India-Pakistan war were extremely partisan and provocative. All support--moral and diplomatic--was extended to Pakistan. China's firm support for Pakistan for its just struggle against aggression" was affirmed and in a note on 8 September, India was warned that "it must bear responsibility for all the consequences of its criminal and extended aggression".²⁹ In order to exert pressure on India, China sent a protest note to India on 8 September. The Chinese Government charged India with serious border violations on the Sino-Indian border. China demanded that India must dismantle all the "aggressive military structures" it had "illegally" built beyond or on the China-Sikkim boundary, withdraw its aggressive armed forces "and stop all its acts of aggression and provocations" against China in the Western, Middle, and Eastern sectors of the Sino-Indian border.³⁰ It was a veiled threat by China to open a second front. India lodged a strong protest against this note and condemned China's support to Pakistan "to fan flames of war" and for threatening to open a second front against India.³¹ Chinese answer was another ultimatum on

29. Peking Review, No. 37, 10 September 1965, p. 6.

30. The Indian White Paper XII, pp. 43 & 46.

31. The Hindustan Times, 2 October 1965.

19 September which allowed three days for India to comply with Chinese demands. However, the Chinese ultimatum was not backed by military action. In fact, China never contemplated military action because it knew that it could not get away with it as the Soviet Union and the United States would not be silent spectators to the disturbance of peace and balance of power in South Asia. According to an analyst, Mao Tse-tung was reported to have told Ayub Khan that "if there is nuclear war, it is Peking and not Rawalpindi that will be the target".³²

Soviet Union watched the Chinese moves with utmost concern. It knew fully well that a Chinese intervention would escalate the conflict and South Asia might open yet another theatre of Sino-Soviet confrontation. Soviet Union disliked an open confrontation with China. But it could not remain a passive spectator, when India had to battle on two fronts against Pakistan and China.

Premier Kosygin advised both Pakistan President Ayub Khan and Indian Prime Minister Shastri to show utmost restraint in the interests of peace. The extension of the conflict, he pointed out in a veiled reference to China, would serve the purposes only of the external forces that

32. G. W. Choudhury, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and the Major Powers: Politics of a Divided Sub-continent (New York, 1975), p. 191.

would seek to divide the states which have liberated themselves from the colonial yoke and to set one against the other. Some forces are interested in weakening the unity of the Afro-Asian countries. These forces are not averse to instigating Pakistan and India to increase the bloodshed for their own ends, which have nothing in common with the interests of the Indian and Pakistani peoples.³³

Pravda criticized China for the partisan approach. It endorsed the Indian Prime Minister's statement that the People's Republic was attempting "to prolong the conflict and to expand its scale" by its threatening language and ultimatums. It expressed deep "concern" of the Soviet Union about reports of the movement and the concentration of Chinese armed forces on the borders with India".³⁴

The realization of the Chinese threat to India led the Soviet Union to initiate a South Asian peace process. The policy of strict neutrality in India-Pakistan dispute, and friendliness with Pakistan, very well cultivated by Khrushchev's successors, could be banked upon to ensure a positive Pakistani response to the peace initiative. However, in substance, Soviet policy remained pro-India in regard to the problems of India-Pakistan and Sino-Indian

33. UN Document, S/6685.

34. CDSP, 13 October 1965, p. 20.

relations. Undoubtedly, it was the Chinese factor which brought the Soviet Union in the role of a peace maker to end the South Asian conflict.

In response to a Security Council resolution of 22 September 1965, India and Pakistan agreed for a ceasefire. Soviet Union thereupon initiated the peace efforts. In a communication to Lal Bahadur Shastri and Ayub Khan, Kosygin offered his good offices for an India-Pakistan meeting at Tashkent to discuss all issues underlying the conflict.³⁵ Whereas India reacted formally to the Soviet offer, Pakistan was agreeable "in principle" to Soviet proposals. It kept the Soviet Union waiting till November, for a formal acceptance of the offer.³⁶

-
35. UN Secretary General U Thant had already proposed such a summit meeting between India and Pakistan during his visit to the sub-continent in September. India reserved its reply. Pakistan summarily rejected the idea. See Dawn, 18 September 1965.
36. It was after some initial hesitation that both India and Pakistan accepted the Soviet offer. Pakistan tried its best to put the condition that the central problem of Kashmir should have formed part of the agenda. India vehemently resisted the move and took the firm stand that India's sovereignty over Kashmir was not negotiable. Shastri assured the Parliament that he would not talk about Kashmir. See L. P. Singh, India's Foreign Policy: The Shastri Period (New Delhi, 1980), p. 99. Ayub Khan later disclosed that "Pakistan went to Tashkent as she did not like to turn down the request of the Soviet Union. Russia always applied the veto and it would have been a mistake to turn down their invitation, Ayub Khan felt. Statement of Rajshahi, 16 March, Morning News, 17 March 1966.

India had no reason to doubt the intentions of the Soviet Union, a long-trusted friend. It was explained in Parliament that India had two motives in accepting the Soviet offer for a peace conference at Tashkent. First, to clear up the after-effects of the war and, second, to improve the totality of relationship between the two countries.³⁷

The Tashkent Conference

On 4 January 1966, the Tashkent Conference, a post-war summit of the Prime Minister of India, Lal Bahadur Shastri, and the President of Pakistan, Ayub Khan, was formally opened by Soviet Premier Kosygin. This was the finest moment for Soviet diplomacy in Asia. If the participation of India, a major friend of the Soviet Union was natural, the Soviet success in ensuring the participation of Pakistan, by no means a traditional friend of the Soviet Union, was a major Soviet diplomatic triumph. That China did not want Pakistan to accept Soviet mediation was obvious. China was peeved by the similarity of approach of the two Great Powers towards South Asia. It was clear that the concern about China was shared by the United States and the Soviet Union.

37. Lok Sabha Debates, Series 3, Vol. 50, 16 February 1966, cols. 611-612.

If India and Pakistan were not quarrelling, and if their relations remained good with the Great Powers, China knew that it would be kept out of South Asia and the Great Powers could divert their attention and forces to containing Chinese influence in South Asia. What was at stake was China's deliberate and conscious effort to open a South Asian front in its quest for influence and power. China could not allow the slipping away of Pakistan from its orbit. So China had unleashed a vigorous propaganda campaign to dissuade Pakistan from going to Tashkent, which in Chinese view, would result in Pakistan being compelled to accept a dictated peace and the closing of Pakistan's options in Kashmir.³⁸

But disappointment was in store for China. In fact, China stood exposed. Apart from verbal support, Pakistan did not get any Chinese physical support during the war. Its ultimatum to India proved hollow sounding nothing.³⁹

38. For Chinese attempts to wreck the Soviet-sponsored Tashkent summit, see S. W. Simon, "The Kashmir Dispute in Sino-Soviet Perspective", Asian Survey, March 1967, Vol. VII, No. 3, pp. 185-186.

39. No one could be fooled by the Chinese charges against India. Really there was something silly and funny about it. China threatened to strike at India on the flimsy grounds of stealing some Chinese yawks and grabbing some Chinese territory by the Indian border guards near Sikkim. See Lok Sabha Debates, Series 3, Vol. 46, 1965, col. 6334.

Ayub Khan was politically sagacious enough to realize the limitations of China to support Pakistan against India in a war. He noted that no follow up action was taken by China in respect of the ultimatum. It was obvious that China disliked the idea of a direct confrontation with the Soviet Union for hegemony in South Asia. Ayub Khan took a lesson that Pakistan should not commit the mistake of relying on China and that Pakistan should balance its relations with all the three Great Powers.⁴⁰

It was this realization which brought the Pakistan President to Tashkent.

As far as India was concerned, notwithstanding the fluctuations in the Soviet attitude, there was the broad realization that the Soviet Union still considered India as the key factor and the Soviet Union's major ally in South Asia. During the thick of the September 1965 conflict, when Soviet neutrality seemed to be settled, India had received a reassuring message from Kosygin indicating Soviet support in the event of a Chinese attack.⁴¹

40. P. L. Bhola, n. 12, p. 131.

41. As a matter of fact, Kosygin had sent identical messages to Ayub Khan and Shastri. However, the letter to Shastri had a paragraph added, which quietly but firmly assured India of Soviet support against China. See The Statesman, 20 September 1965.

So India had no reason to doubt the bona fides of the Soviet Union. India was aware that the Soviet Union would never like to see India humbled or weakened. A strong and friendly India occupying a pre-eminent position in South Asia, was very much, a Soviet foreign policy interest. Notwithstanding the fluctuations in the Soviet attitude and the zig-zag nature of the course it pursued, there was throughout a broad assumption underlying Soviet policies towards South Asia, that India was the key factor in the region and that any policy which created distrust and dissension between the two countries was to be avoided. Any Soviet role of either mediation or peace-making in the region was to be consistent with what India would at any point of time regard as its vital national interest.⁴²

The Soviet Union could legitimately be proud of its achievement. The leaders of the two largest Asian countries after China, had accepted Soviet invitation and agreed for Soviet mediation. What greater diplomatic prize the successors of Khrushchev in the Kremlin could ask for? It was true that Khrushchev had cultivated India and friendship with India enhanced Soviet stock in Asia and the non-aligned community in general. But the

42. Sisir Gupta, "The Great Powers and the Sub-continent: A New Phase?" in M. S. Rajan and Shivaji Gunguly, (eds.), Sisir Gupta, India and the International System (New Delhi, 1981), pp. 180-184.

post-Khrushchev leadership was critical of Khrushchev for his single-track approach to South Asia and for driving Pakistan into the enemy camp. It sought to correct what it considered as a serious foreign policy blunder of Khrushchev. This serious lapse was being corrected.

Acceptance of Soviet invitation by India and Pakistan was a clear demonstration of Soviet Union's growing clout in Asia, and it was all the more significant because it was achieved at the expense of British and American influence. The point was poignantly expressed by an American correspondent at Tashkent. To a query from a Soviet newspaper correspondent, he stated that the most remarkable thing about the meeting was that "to cover it, I came not to London, but here to Tashkent".⁴³ An editorial in Times (London) talked of what Lord Curzan would have thought of Tashkent. Many old-fashioned Americans lamented the growth of Soviet influence in Pakistan, and Indians who have not been able to change their frame of reference, while the world has changed considerably, have drawn great satisfaction from the fact that Soviet Union has emerged as a peace maker in the

43. Quoted by M. S. Rajan, "The Tashkent Declaration: Retrospect and Prospect", International Studies, July-October 1966, Vol. VIII, Nos. 1 & 2, p. 24.

sub-continent.⁴⁴ It appeared for a time as though the Soviet Union and not China and the United States would be the relevant power for both the countries in the sub-continent.

Conscious of its new-found role as the peace maker in South Asia, aware of Indian and Pakistani sensibilities and anxious to convey the impression that it was strictly neutral, Soviet Union had a very delicate and tough job at Tashkent. It demanded a lot of tight rope walking and it must be said to the credit of Kosygin and his associates⁴⁵ that they acquitted themselves very well in their roles. After giving plenty of room for Shastri and Ayub Khan for private talks, the excellent Soviet negotiators led by Kosygin participated in the talks whenever necessary. They did a splendid job in identifying the sensitive issues. They sincerely advised Indian and Pakistani leaders to avoid discussion of these issues. Soviet Union knew very well that a Kashmir discussion would spoil the peace. Kosygin employed all his persuasive power, in his

44. Sisir Gupta, "Tashkent and After", published under the pseudonym "A Student of Indo-Pakistani Affairs" in India Quarterly (New Delhi, January-March 1966), pp. 3-17.

45. The weight of the Soviet delegation could not but impress Shastri and Ayub Khan with the seriousness of Soviet purpose. Besides Kosygin, Chairman of the Council of Ministers, the delegation included the seasoned Foreign Minister Gromyko, Defence Minister Malinovsky and Marshal Sokolovsky. See Bhabani Sen Gupta, n. 4, p. 227.

eight hours talking to Shastri and Ayub Khan separately, to break the impasse on Kashmir. Again there was deadlock on the issue of the inclusion of Kashmir in any final joint declaration to be issued. "A detente on any basic issue was considered impossible", commented an Indian writer, "unless a miracle happens", the Tashkent conference should end in an unmistakable note of disagreement".⁴⁶

Kosygin again put in his best efforts to reactivate the peace process. It was a difficult and unique role for the Soviet Premier. That he had braved it, indicated the intense desire of the Soviet Union to establish stability and peace in South Asia. While striving hard for an India-Pakistan accord, Kosygin took particular care to avoid the impression that a peace was dictated by the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union stuck to the stand that an agreement was to be arrived at only through bilateral negotiations and understanding. What Kosygin did was precisely "to bring to bear on the two leaders his tremendous power of persuasion to make them see each other's point of view in the interest of peace in the Indian sub-continent".⁴⁷ Kosygin, to borrow a phrase of the German statesman Bismarck, played the role of an 'honest broker'. He had no doubt in his mind that

46. The Hindustan Times, 10 January 1966.

47. See M. S. Rajan, n. 43, p. 8.

security in South Asia primarily depended upon India-Pakistan amity and understanding. He knew the limitations of the Soviet Union's ability to influence the process. But within his powers and fully aware of his limitations, and his country's best interests, he offered constructive help to achieve the peace objectives. The one thing that the Soviet leader constantly reminded the Indian and Pakistani leaders was the seriousness of the economic tasks and the complexity of the existing issues which stood before their countries. He tried to impress upon the leaders that peace had no alternative. There was also widespread speculation, the veracity of which, was very difficult to verify, that the Soviet Union did some armstwisting to get Shastri agree to an informal Kashmir talk between his foreign minister Swaran Singh and his Pakistani counterpart Z. A. Bhutto.⁴⁸

After six days of mutual discussions and casual consultations with the Soviet Premier and members of his delegation, Lal Bahadur Shastri and Ayub Khan signed the Tashkent Declaration which set the two countries on a course of reconciliation, and side by side, provided the machinery under Article IX for the settlement of the pending problems.⁴⁹

48. See L. P. Singh, n. 36, p. 101.

49. See Text, Tashkent Declaration (New Delhi) Government of India, Ministry of External Affairs, Publication Division, 1966, pp. 5-8.

The essence of the Tashkent Declaration was the resolve of the two countries to accept the cardinal principle of peaceful co-existence, to live in peace despite the existence of disputes and differences. It reversed the trend of last 18 years of continued tension and recognised, perhaps for the first time after the partition, that there was no virtue in constantly living in fear and war preparedness.

By virtue of the Tashkent Declaration, the Soviet Union scored a great diplomatic point. It was by common acknowledgement a remarkable victory of Soviet persuasive diplomacy. It was also unprecedented and uncharacteristic of the Soviet Union to assume such a role. In a way, it was a Soviet usurpation of a traditional Anglo-American role. Incidentally it was a time when the United States was sitting on the fence in South Asian affairs⁵⁰ and China had openly sided with one South Asian state against another. Naturally it was left for the Soviet Union to play the role of a mediator and it did that job admirably well, displaying rare diplomatic finesse, to the apparent satisfaction of both India and Pakistan.

50. Secretary of State, Dean Rusk, admitted the difficulties of his country in the following words: "Our problem has been, and obviously we have not succeeded, to pursue policies with Pakistan and India relating to matters outside of the sub-continent and at the same time try not to contribute to the clash between the two within the sub-continent". See, US Senate, Committee on Appropriations, Hearings, 89th Congress, First Session, 1965, pp. 18-19.

The Indian official spokesman C. S. Jha, said at a press conference at Tashkent on 10 January 1966:

. . . in the Tashkent Declaration, India and Pakistan have chosen to turn away from mutual conflict and have resolved to base their relations on peace, friendship and good neighbourliness.

He applauded the Declaration by stating that it contained a clause relating to the withdrawal of armed forces, observance of ceasefire line, non-interference and cessation of hostile propaganda. He commented further that "The Tashkent Declaration, sincerely observed and implemented, is a harbinger of peace, happiness and progress of 600 million people of the Indo-Pak sub-continent".⁵¹ This was endorsed by Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri, who, speaking after the signing ceremony, expressed the hope that the restoration of normal peaceful relations would promote "the cause of peace in Asia and throughout the world".⁵²

Pakistan President Ayub Khan, in his interview to the TASS News Agency, was highly appreciative of Kosygin's "statesmanship and far-sightedness in convening the

51. For details, see The Tashkent Declaration, n. 49, pp. 12-13.

52. The Times of India, 11 January 1966.

Tashkent meeting" and said the initiative by Moscow showed its genuine interest in peace".⁵³

The Tashkent Declaration did not contain any solution to the Kashmir problem. Leaving aside this failure, the Declaration was a major achievement and a giant stride to peace. The results of the Peace Conference were welcomed by most sections of world opinion. The delegates of the Solidarity Conference of the countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America applauded the Declaration.⁵⁴ It must be said to the United States' credit that it did not grudge this Soviet-sponsored settlement of the South Asian security crisis. The United States applauded and praised the Tashkent Declaration as beneficial not only for India and Pakistan but also for Indo-US relations.⁵⁵ Such a US approval of a Soviet peace initiative in the cold war climate augured well for Asian peace.⁵⁶ President Johnson

53. Dawn, 11 January 1966.

54. Statesman, 11 January 1966.

55. Department of State Bulletin, Vol. L, No. 1291, 23 March 1966, p. 442. Secretary Rusk's News Conference of March 6, 1966.

56. The Chinese obviously did not like this development. They saw in this a sinister Soviet revisionist scheme of collaboration with US imperialism for joint hegemony of the world. The most important point raised by Chen Yi in an interview with the Peking correspondent of the Japanese Communist Party Paper, Akahata, was that this collaboration could well be the precursor of a Soviet dilution of support for Hanoi's resistance of American aggression. Quoted by Bhabani Sen Gupta, n. 4, p. 236.

said "The United States values deeply the friendship of both India and Pakistan. Nothing we know is more painful or more costly to all concerned than a falling out between one's friends". President Johnson expressed these feelings while greeting the Prime Minister of India, Indira Gandhi, at the White House.⁵⁷

Pakistan also seemed pleased with its new status and importance in Soviet eyes. The Pakistani feeling was that "Kosygin played his part not as a representative of the world's revolutionary movement but as a classical peace maker in a classical situation of diplomatic mediation."⁵⁸

However, some sections of the Indian and Pakistani opinions adversely reacted to Tashkent. Prime Minister Shastri was criticized for mortgaging the country's honour and integrity. He would have faced a storm in India for the 'surrender', if he had returned to India.⁵⁹

57. Department of State Bulletin, Vol. LIV, No. 1399, 18 April 1966, p. 598. Exchange of Greetings, White House Press Release dated March 28.

58. Staff Survey, Pakistan Horizon, Vol. 19, No. 1, 1966, p. 5.

59. The untimely death of Shastri at Tashkent deflected what otherwise would have been sharp criticism, both in the ruling Congress and among the opposition parties, of the 10 January joint communique. See L. P. Singh, n. 36, pp. 104-105.

The Opposition parties, Bharatiya Jana Sangh, the Praja Socialist Party and the Swatantra Party (on a second thought) were extremely critical of the Soviet role. The Jana Sangh, which had already warned against the "sinister straws" in the Soviet wind at Tashkent even before the Conference had taken place⁶⁰ described this document as the "most dubious" one.⁶¹ Praja Socialist Party leader Surendra Mohan alleged that at Tashkent the Soviet Union succeeded in exercising greater pressures on India in order to curry favour with Pakistan. The party's view was that the Indian friendship had been taken for granted by the Soviet Union and it had shown over-anxiety to placate Pakistan. Surendranath Dwivedi went to the extent of saying that Shastri died at Tashkent due to Soviet pressures. Socialist leader and eminent parliamentarian Madhu Limaye called the Tashkent Agreement as a betrayal and defeat for India.⁶² Swatantra Party leader C. Rajagopalachari, a man gifted with a lot of common sense and practical statesmanship, initially welcomed the Declaration.⁶³ But his party, subsequently, made a retreat and the party organ came out with a warning against the revival of Tsarist Government of Russia.

60. Organizer (New Delhi), Vol. 19, No. 19, 26 December 1965, pp. 1, 9-10.

61. Ibid., Vol. 19, No. 22, 16 January 1966, p. 3.

62. The Statesman, 11 January 1966.

63. Dawn, 12 January 1966.

It regretted that both India and Pakistan were being brought in the ring of Russian sphere of influence.

The more liberal ranks of the Indian opposition were generally supportive of the Soviet peace initiative.⁶⁴ The Indian Communist Party leader Hiren Mukherjee expressed gratitude to the Soviet Premier for bringing out the concord between India and Pakistan.⁶⁵ V. K. Krishna Menon expressed satisfaction that peace was achieved "without the weight of the US and the UK, the old imperialist powers".⁶⁶ Progressive Indian opinion generally welcomed the new orientation of Indian diplomacy--a change from a policy of dependence on the West to that of trust in the Soviet Union.

There was mixed reaction in Pakistan too. The government-controlled press praised the Soviet Union for creating an atmosphere of friendly relations in the sub-continent arousing hopes for the removal of all the differences, including Kashmir, between the two countries. But Bhutto and some other prominent leaders questioned Ayub Khan's wisdom in accepting the terms of the ceasefire and the Tashkent Declaration. An opposition leader in

64. See J. B. Kripalani, Lok Sabha Debates, Vol. 50, Nos.1-10, 1966, 4 February 1966, col. 2102.

65. *Ibid.*, 14th Session 1966, Vol. L, No. 1, 15 February 1965, col. 661.

66. *Ibid.*, col. 997.

the National Assembly of Pakistan, Mukhesuzzamon Khan, attacked the President for not consulting either cabinet ministers or the party about Tashkent 'unlike Mr Shastri', who 'had a mandate from his nation' as well as his party.⁶⁷ Bhutto also expressed his reservations in a statement to the National Assembly. He said: "It is . . . worth repeating that the Tashkent Declaration contains no specific solutions to our difficulties with India, nor does it suggest specific solutions, to our disputes and differences with that country". He, however, pointed out that "the Tashkent Declaration forecloses no possibilities, blocks no avenues to the achievement of our legitimate aims and the vindication of our just rights Its significance lies in the fact that it provides a framework and a machinery for a renewed effort to seek a solution of disputes between India and Pakistan."⁶⁸ Bhutto defended it with great gusto in two statements issued from Larkana on 15 January and 9 February. He declared that it did not "detract one iota" from Pakistan's resolve to seek a just solution of the Kashmir dispute "under this very declaration or even outside its framework".⁶⁹

67. Pakistan, National Assembly Debates, Vol. 1, Nos. 1-12, 14 March 1966, p. 373.

68. Ibid., p. 360.

69. Quoted by Dilip Mukerjee, Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, Quest for Power (New Delhi, 1972), p. 53-54.

The Soviet Union enjoyed its new role and the world envied it. From the Soviet point of view, the considerations which impelled it to take the initiative might have been that, of all the Great Powers, the one directly concerned with the fate of South Asia was the Soviet Union, not the United States or the United Kingdom.⁷⁰

The success of the Soviet Union in winning Pakistan's hand of friendship was especially praiseworthy. The world watched with awe and envy the remarkably significant influence that the Soviet Union had achieved in South Asia by retaining India's friendship and gaining a new favourable equation with Pakistan, India's adversary. The Soviet Union showed a great determination to encourage India and Pakistan to promote mutually beneficial relations.

70. M. S. Rajan and Shivaji Ganguly (eds.), n. 42, p.257.