CHAPTER - IV

ENDURING INDO-SOVET RELATIONS IN PERSPECTIVE:

POLITICAL CHOICES AND MILITARY OPTIONS

From Lenin's time, soviet leaders have believed if any neighbour on their border is not neutral or friendly, the Soviet Union will be threatened by aggressive imperialist powers. The Soviets therefore, have traditionally concentrated near their borders large troops formations with the capacity to move quickly.¹

Therefore, within the Diplomatic objectives articulated in the framework of Soviet policy, India undoubtedly occupied a very significant place in Soviet operational diplomacy. The economic and military aid that was given, the political support that was extended, and the spate of Soviet literature published on India is an important proof of this diplomatic policy. Such a political line was understandable for India in addition to her big size and strategic situation or location which was politically stable and industrially more developed than the other countries in the region. Furthermore the policy of non-alignment so sedulously developed by Nehru, had given her a unique moral stature among the Afro-Asian countries. A close cooperation with India, it was probably felt, would make it relatively easier for the Soviet Union to vitiate and forestall the influence of unfriendly powers.

The rise of Soviet interest in India, therefore was not only

due to her inherent importance, but also to her potential power and ability to skew the delicate Asian balance in Soviet favour. It was the United States policy of containment to a large measure which emboldened the Soviet Union to seek India's friendship in 1954. And it was the exacerbation of Sino-Soviet dispute which led the Soviet leaders in 1960, increasingly to turn towards New Delhi in order to counter the expanding Chinese influence.

According to Maya Kulkarni:

The Soviet Union continues to regard India as a bulwark against Chinese hegemony and American influence in Asia. A politically stable and economically strong India alone can wield such countervailing influence. This is the basis of Soviet economic assistance and diplomatic support to India. (2)

The pattern of Indo-Soviet relations had assumed a somewhat low profile during the closing years of 1960s, as analysed in our first chapter because of Moscow's wooing of Pakistan and the supply of arms to that country. But the developments occurring at the regional and global level in 1969 marked a turning point in the contemporary international relations. There was US-Soviet detente and Sino-US entente while the Sino-Soviet schism further accentuated in the wake of border clashes on Sino-Soviet border in March 1969. The impact of these developments on the sub-continental politics was further strengthened. The clear demarcation of alignments -- Pakistan coming closer to China and the United States while convergence of the mutual interests between New Delhi and Moscow necessitating.

The Soviet Union, in the wake of its sharpening of differences with China had realized that it had gained very little leverage in Pakistan. The Soviet arms assistance to Pakistan had been subjected to strong criticism within India but New Delhi did not officially condemn or criticize Moscow. India's position was clear that since Pakistan had received sufficient arms supplies from Washington and Beijing, there was no need for additional supplies of arms to Pakistan by Moscow. Otherwise the Soviet military supplies to Pakistan could pose "a danger to India's security and peace on the subcontinent". Prime Minister Mrs. Gandhi was even reported to have said that India had been "noticing a shift in the Soviet thinking ever since the Tashkent Agreement". The low key dimensions of Indo-Soviet relations during 1969 could be gauged from the following statement of Mrs. Gandhi:

...We cannot but view with concern this further accretion of armed strength to Pakistan. The unavoidable consequence would be to accentuate tension in the subcontinent and to add to our responsibilities in regard to the defense and security of our country... The Soviet Union, like any other country is entitled to form its own judgement as to where its interests lie and how to promote them. But we are bound to express our misgivings and apprehensions to the Soviet leaders in all frankness. We do not question either the motives or the good faith of the Soviet Union, but we are convinced that this development cannot promote the cause of peace and stability in the subcontinent.

5. Foreign Affairs Record (New Delhi), vol. XI, no.4, April 1969, p.12.
On close scrutiny of the above statement one finds that India was not condemning the Soviet move of supplying arms to Pakistan but rather expressed its misgivings over a process at an operational level which could develop conspicuously negative consequences for India's security. The cautious and restrained attitude of India over Soviet military supplies to Pakistan was perhaps well calculated because Indian leadership seemed to be convinced that Soviet-Pakistan "honeymoon" was not going to last. India's presumptions came true in 1969, when in the wake of Sino-Soviet hostilities, Moscow failed to wean Pakistan away from China especially on the issue of the Soviet proposal of collective security for Asia. During May-June 1969 Soviet leadership continued pampering Pakistan but to no use. However, India on its part supported Soviet Union in latter's border conflict with China. On 8 April 1969, the then Foreign Minister Dinesh Singh said in Parliament:

Judging by our own experience with China we are not surprised that the Chinese Government is adopting similar postures towards the Soviet Union -- the tactics of provoking border incidents in order to reopen the whole boundary question... Our position is quite clear. We are not in favour of altering historically established borders. (6)

The Indian Foreign Minister further went on to add India "supported the Soviet stand for upholding respect for historically

formed frontiers and for the non-use of force for settling bilateral
questions.\textsuperscript{7}

In early May 1969, the Soviet Prime Minister, Kosygin
paid a visit to India to attend the funeral of India's President,
Zakir Hussain. The Soviet Premier publicly pledged soviet support
for India in case of any external attack.\textsuperscript{8} The Soviet Premier's
speech at Rajghat on 6 May 1969 was not reported by the Indian
media and Kosygin was not offended by it.\textsuperscript{9} He further laid
emphasis on economic links as the most tangible impetus to
friendship. Robert C. Horn has argued that during Kosygin's
visit, the draft for Indo-Soviet Treaty of Friendship was prepared
which both countries initiated only in August 1971.\textsuperscript{10} However there
is no substantial evidence to corroborate this fact. On the heels
of growing dissensions between China and Soviet Union, Moscow
tried to win over Pakistan to its side and with a view to contain
Chinese influence it mooted the proposal of collective security
for Asia with active involvement of India, Pakistan and other
countries of Asia.

SOVIET PROPOSAL FOR COLLECTIVE SECURITY SYSTEM FOR ASIA

Soviet policy makers advanced the proposal for collective
security system for Asia in the immediate aftermath of exchange
of hostilities between Moscow and Beijing on Sino-Soviet border

\textsuperscript{7} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{8} Pravda (Moscow), 7 May 1969, as cited in Robert C. Horn,
Soviet-Indian Relations, Issues and Influences (New York,
1982), p.28.
\textsuperscript{9} Surjit Mansingh, India’s Search for Power: Indira Gandhi's
\textsuperscript{10} Robert C. Horn, "India-Soviet Relations in 1969: A
watershed Year", Orbis (Philadelphia), vol.19, no.4,
Winter 1976, p.1543.
on the island of Demansky/Chenpano in the Ussuri River in March 1969. On 30 May 1969, the Soviet Premier during his visit to Pakistan, mooted the proposal for regional economic cooperation between India, Pakistan and Afghanistan. It is generally regarded as a precursor to the Brezhnev Doctrine of Collective Security System for Asia. On 7 June 1969, Leonid Brezhnev, General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), said in Moscow: "We are of the opinion that the course of events is also putting on the agenda the task of creating a system of collective security in Asia". There was no instant elaboration of this proposal by the Soviet leaders. However the noted British expert on Soviet affairs, Victor Zorza, writing in the Guardian remarked that "certainly Soviet diplomatic activity on the periphery of China is working towards a system for the containment of China but Kremlin would not, of course, like it to be seen as such". He further added that it could be a "propaganda ploy". A month after Brezhnev's announcement the Soviet Foreign Minister, Andrei Gromyko said on 19 July 1969 that the idea of "Collective Security" had evoked a broad international response, especially among the Asian countries. While allaying the fears that the setting up of a collective security system in Asia would be spearheaded against

11. Kabul Times (Kabul), 1 June 1969.
a certain country or group of countries, the Soviet Foreign Minister said: "This is the question of collective efforts of all Asian states, of safeguarding security in that part of the world in their common interests. The Soviet Government expresses the hope that the proposal to set up a collective security system in Asia will be studied by the governments of the interested states in all seriousness". The Brezhnev's proposal for establishing a collective system in Asia subsequently gained currency as "Brezhnev Doctrine".

For over two years, the Soviet leaders maintained silence over the Brezhnev Doctrine and there were no elaborate statements in this regard. It was on 14 March 1972 that the Soviet Premier Kosygin, at a banquet given in honour of visiting Afghan Prime Minister Abdul Zahir elaborated the Brezhnev Doctrine. The Soviet Premier said:

Measures of Asian states for the strengthening of collective security in that area would in our opinion contribute to the consolidation of peace in Asia. Such principles as renunciation of the use of force in the settlement of disputable issues between states, peaceful coexistence of states with different social systems, the development of mutually advantageous cooperation, that is, the principles which fully comply with the United Nations Charter and are in no way directed against any state. (16)

A week later, Soviet leader Brezhnev in his address to the Fifteenth Congress of the Soviet Trade Unions on 20 March 1972 said:

Collective security in Asia, as we see it, should be based on such principles as renunciation of the use of force in relations among states, respect for sovereignty and inviolability of borders, non-interference in internal affairs, extensive development of economic and other cooperation on the basis of full equality and mutual advantage. (17)

Thus the Soviet leadership, by March 1972, had finalised its scheme of establishing a collective security system in Asia. The incorporation of principles like renunciation of use of force, respect for sovereignty and non-interference in internal affairs etc. in the Brezhnev plan were keeping in tune with the principles of the UN Charter. However the inclusion of "inviolability of borders" indicated that Moscow "placed the onus for Sino-Soviet border tensions on Peking (Beijing) which had concluded final border agreements with most of the countries on its periphery, though notably not with the Soviet Union". 18

The Soviet proposals for "regional economic cooperation" and collective security system for Asia came at a time when the Sino-Soviet schism had reached its nadir on one hand and efforts were being made by Moscow and Washington to come closer to each

other. The entente cordiale between Moscow and Beijing which commenced with the advent of Communist regime in 1949 in People's Republic of China could last hardly a decade when the Sino-Soviet relations reached a critical stage by 1959. In October 1959 when Khrushchev visited Beijing, he was given a cold reception. On his return from Beijing, the Soviet Premier ordered the withdrawal of most of the Soviet experts who were helping the Chinese in a variety of fields. Apart from the ideological polemics between the two countries, the underlying reason for Chinese disenchantment with Moscow was latter's reluctance to provide nuclear expertise to the former.

With the passage of time, the rift between People's Republic of China and Soviet Union widened and its resultant impact was bound to affect the geopolitics of South Asian countries. After the Sino-Indian hostilities of 1962, India moved closer to Soviet Union while Pakistan because of its already strained relations with India mainly on Kashmir issue, started developing close relations with China. While commenting on the contemporary situation, Bhabani Sen Gupta wrote: "...the United States had no autonomous policy for South Asia and that the region's importance increased or fazed out in accordance with the vicissitudes of its central engagements with the Soviet Union and China".

The Sino-Soviet rift which had erupted during Khrushchev's period got further impetus in the wake of ascendancy to power by Brezhnev and Kosygin in Kremlin. During this period the Soviet influence in the Third World had suffered a setback following the downfall of Kwame Nkrumah in Ghana and Sukarno in Indonesia. Moscow also realized that it could not benefit from the fragile situation in Indo-China. In view of these developments, Moscow might have found opportunities in South Asia more appealing than elsewhere. After the military debacle of 1962, India's defence requirements had increased. The Soviet offer to meet India's defence requirements on reasonable terms as compared to US and Western aid with "strings" brought New Delhi and Moscow closer to each other. Between 1964 and 1969 India received some 90 per cent of its imported arms from Soviet Union, whereas as late as 1962 this was only about 10 per cent. China viewed this development as augmentation of Soviet influence in South Asia and threat to its own position in the region. Thus it sent friendly overtures to Pakistan to which the latter responded enthusiastically. Thus the region of South Asia had become vulnerable to Sino-Soviet rivalry.

When the Brezhnev's proposal for collective security system in Asia was envisaged in early June 1969, there had been skirmishes on the Sino-Soviet border along the Ussuri River.

Both Moscow and Beijing accused each other for starting the conflict. The seriousness of this confrontation ensured the Chinese rejection of Soviet proposal for collective security in Asia. The hardening of China's attitude coincided with Pakistan's unwillingness to entertain the Soviet proposal.

PAKISTAN'S RESPONSE TO BREZHNEV DOCTRINE

The Tashkent Agreement had brought Pakistani goodwill for Soviet Union and the period between 1966 and 1969 witnessed increased cooperation between Moscow and Islamabad in the form of mutual exchanges of visits of leaders of the two countries followed by economic and military cooperation. In June 1966, a Pakistani military delegation under the leadership of Air Marshal Nur Khan visited Soviet Union and the latter assured the Pakistani delegation that Moscow was considering the sale of arms to Pakistan. In April 1968, Soviet Premier Kosygin during his visit to Pakistan had assured the latter of the supply of soviet arms.

During the last week of May 1969, the Soviet Premier Kosygin visited Pakistan. On 30 May 1969, Premier Kosygin, while speaking in Islamabad mooted the idea of holding a conference for Regional Economic Cooperation including India, Pakistan and Afghanistan. The joint communiqué issued after Kosygin's visit reaffirmed the desire of both countries to improve their relations.

The communique further observed that such cooperation served the interests of the people of both the countries, the interests of the consolidation of peace in Asia and the world was not "directed against any third country". Incidentally Kosygin's Pakistan visit coincided with occurrence of border clashes in the Sino-Soviet border. Thus it was inevitable for Beijing to be apprehensive over the possibility of Pakistan's getting involved in the Soviet schemes of Regional Economic Cooperation and the Asian Collective Security. On 1 August 1969, Morning News in its editorial wrote: "We had too many woeful an experience of such so-called security groupings to be tempted again".

In the wake of Indo-Soviet friendship treaty of August 1971 and the Bangladesh crisis, it could not be expected of Pakistan to support or endorse the Brezhnev doctrine. In February 1972, Pakistan was contemplating to withdraw from Southeast Asian Treaty Organization (SEATO) which it did in November that year. Besides, as mentioned in the preceding pages of this chapter, Pakistan President, Z.A. Bhutto during his visit to China in February 1972 had failed to persuade Beijing for concluding a defence pact. However when Bhutto visited Soviet Union from 16 to 18 March 1972, the Soviets wanted to secure Pakistan's endorsement of Brezhnev Plan. But Bhutto on his return to Pakistan said on 26 March 1972 that Pakistan did not approve of Soviet proposal.

28. Morning News (Karachi), 1 August 1969.
However the Soviets did not relent in their persuasion. On 5 June 1972 the Soviet Ambassador in Islamabad, Rodionov made a strong plea for Pakistan endorsing the Brezhnev proposal.\(^{30}\)

It was not until 1973 that Pakistan categorically rejected the Brezhnev Plan. Z.A. Bhutto, the Prime Minister of Pakistan in an interview with Al Ahram said that he did not envisage any tension to arise between Soviet Union and Pakistan but he simply would not accept the Brezhnev plan.\(^{31}\) He further added: "Pakistan has suffered a great deal from pacts... the deeper question is Asian security whom ...".\(^{32}\)

**CHINA'S TIRADE AGAINST THE SOVIET UNION'S PROPOSAL FOR ASIAN COLLECTIVE SECURITY SYSTEM**

The outbreak of hostilities between Moscow and Beijing in early 1969 along the Sino-Soviet border provided further impetus to China's tirade against Soviet Union. Under these circumstances the advent of Brezhnev proposal in mid 1969 for establishing a collective security system in Asia was bound to attract severe Chinese criticism. In China's view the Brezhnev doctrine was a nexus between Soviet revisionism, United States imperialism and Indian reaction to encircle China. On 11 March 1969, Beijing had accused Moscow of trying "to form the anti-China encirclement".\(^{33}\)

While commenting on the visit of Soviet Premier to India in early May 1969, the New China News Agency (NCNA) reported on 8 May 1969, "A Chieftain of the Soviet Revisionist renegade clique, A.N. Kosygin, went to the Indian capital for three days recently to step

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30. Indian Express, (New Delhi), 7 June 1972.
32. Ibid.
up its military collaboration with the reactionary Indian Government for further anti-China activity.\(^\text{34}\)

While reacting to Brezhnev's speech of 7 June 1969, China pointed to the nexus between Moscow and Washington: "All the puppets and lackeys of US Imperialism in this region are to be unified in a general tool for US Imperialism and Soviet Revisionism and jointly opposing China and suppressing the revolutionary struggle of the Asian peoples."\(^\text{35}\) On 28 June 1969, China compared the Brezhnev doctrine with Dulles schemes, "something it [Soviet Union] picked up from the garbage heap of the notorious warmonger".\(^\text{36}\) The Peking Review in its issue dated 4 July 1969 while denouncing the Brezhnev plan wrote that "the Soviet revisionist social imperialism has run down a blind ally in opposing China".\(^\text{37}\)

The article further noted:

The so-called "system of collective security in Asia" is nothing more than an anti-China military alliance. It is another frenzied step taken by Soviet revisionism in its collusion with US imperialism in recent years to rig up a ring of encirclement around China and to make war clamours and threats of aggression against China.\(^\text{38}\)

China regarded Kosygin's plan for Regional Economic Cooperation and Brezhnev proposal for collective security in Asia as one and the same thing. The article in Peking Review further wrote: "Since the term "military alliance" has become too repulsive, the Soviet

36. Ibid.
38. Ibid.
revisionists have cloaked their plot with "economic cooperation". This is done to cover up the true nature of their anti-China military alliance and their repacious designs of political control and economic plunder of the Asian countries." 39

Beijing had become so obsessed with in its criticism of the Brezhnev plan that it suspected even India of being a party to it. While criticizing the visit of Indian Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi to Japan during the last week of June 1969, Peking Review commented: "The primary objective of Mrs. Gandhi's Japan visit was to take up with the Japanese reactionaries the question of effecting the Soviet revisionist's plot for an Asian collective security system". 40 However the Indian Prime Minister during her visit to Indonesia, said on 30 June 1969 at Jakarta that India would neither join nor endorse the Brezhnev plan. 41 But there was no perceptible change in Chinese perception about India's attitude towards the Brezhnev plan.

The Chinese leaders availed of every opportunity to criticize the Soviet proposal for collective security in Asia. On 13 July 1969, the Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai, in a speech given at the banquet in honour of Air Marshal Nur Khan, Member of Pakistan President's Council of Administration, who led a good-will and friendship delegation to China, said:

Flaunting the signboard of collective security, social imperialism actually aims at aggressive expansion

40. Peking Review, n.37, p.28.
41. The Hindustan Times, n.29, 1 July 1969.
against countries, trying to force them to abandon their sovereignty and independence. In order to realize this scheme it has put forward the so-called 'regional economic cooperation' by taking advantage of Asian countries desire to develop their national economics, vainly attempting thereby to lure them to its trap and gradually place them within its sphere of influence. (42)

The Chinese Premier further added that it was only natural that perfectly just the people of Pakistan and the righteous world opinion had exposed and rebutted Soviet schemes. The visiting Pakistani leader, Air Marshal Nur Khan in his reply refrained from making any reference to the Brezhnev Doctrine. 43

As already mentioned, China regarded the Kosygin's plan of "regional economic cooperation" as synonymous to the Brezhnev plan of collective security system in Asia. An article published in Peking Review of 18 July 1969 observed that "the so-called Asian regional economic cooperation is nothing but a trap for setting up a military ring of encirclement against China and for political control and economic plunder of Asian countries". 44 India's support for Kosygin's plan for "regional economic cooperation" was criticized. The article called India as the "errand boy of Soviet revisionism". 45 The article further went on: "As to the Indian reactionaries, they have all along pretended to disapprove of forming military alliances, acting as if they only favour 'regional economic cooperation' but this is a poor acting". 46

42. Peking Review, no.29, 18 July 1969, pp.5-6.
43. Ibid, p.6.
44. "Trap is the word for so-called Asian Regional Economic Cooperation", Peking Review, no.29, 18 July 1969, p.23.
45. Ibid, pp.23 ff.
46. Ibid, pp.24-25.
In early June 1969, the United States had declared that it would hold strategic arms limitation talks with the Soviet Union, which signalled the possibility of a US-Soviet thaw. China viewed the Brezhnev Doctrine as being prompted by the United States. The *Peking Review*, in its issue of 29 August 1969 observed: "The sinister Asian collective security system trotted out by the Soviet revisionist renegade is another step in its policy of allying with the US against China moving from diplomatic coordination to military collaboration with US imperialism".47

A Chinese commentator, An Chun-tao wrote that the Soviet proposal of collective security system in Asia aimed at cajoling and coercing the Asian countries into relinquishing their independence and sovereignty and which would help the Soviet Union to further expand its colonial influence in the Asian countries thus contending with "US imperialism for Asian hegemony".48 Chun-tao further wrote:

...Soviet revisionists social imperialism directly threatens the security of Asia, and yet it is shouting itself hoarse about safeguarding security in Asia... In a word, it is security for a handful of imperialists, revisionists and reactionaries. For the broad masses in Asia such security means misery, disaster and the greatest insecurity. (49)

It appears from the above analysis that during 1969, the Chinese criticism of Soviet proposals for regional economic integration and collective security in Asia had been very strong. During early part of 1970s the Indian subcontinent was embroiled

in the Bangladesh crisis and the resultant impact was that no serious thought was given to Brezhnev Doctrine by the countries of the region. However the proposal got a revival in 1972 and subsequent couple of years again witnessed the protagonists and antagonists trading charges against each other. During his tour of West Europe in June 1973, the Chinese Foreign Minister Chi Peng-fei had reportedly endorsed the West European proposal for an European security conference which came into being in 1975. The Novosty Press of Soviet Union commented in July 1973: "The establishment of a system of collective security and cooperation in Europe would become an important factor in accelerating the process of setting up of a collective security in Asia". 50

However China had been averse to Soviet proposal and questioned the Soviet Union, being a European power, evincing interest in peace and security in Asia. On 26 December 1973, a broadcast in Beijing Radio observed:

The Soviet revisionist clique began to put forth this proposal during this high tide against China after June 1969. However, it has always been reluctant to clearly explain the nature, motives, tasks and other basic problems concerning this system. It has only put forth some seemingly lofty tout empty principles such as 'no resort to force between countries', respect for sovereignty', 'no intervention in other countries' etc.... The Soviet Revisionist clique is good at selling dog meat under the label of sheep's head. (51)

Thus China was vehemently opposed to and was critical of Soviet proposals for regional economic cooperation as well as collective security system in Asia.

INDIA'S LUKEWARM ATTITUDE TOWARDS SOVIET PROPOSAL

India's attitude towards Brezhnev's proposal of collective security in Asia was one of caution. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi said on 10 June 1969 that "Unless each country is strong in itself, even collective security will not amount to much".\(^52\) In her view, the Asian collective security system proposed by the Soviet Union was probably meant to restrain the United States and China from "making inroads into Asia".\(^53\) She further added that during his recent visit to India, Soviet Premier Kosygin had told her that the Soviet Union was not thinking of any military set up in Asia. However she warned that there would be a power vacuum in Asia after the withdrawal of the British troops from the East of Suez and the settlement of the Vietnam conflict. In the wake of the fact that Beijing was showing indications to spread its influence in Asia, Mrs. Gandhi wanted all the countries in Asia to have political and economic stability to thwart Chinese expansionism.\(^54\)

India was also not opposed to Kosygin's proposal for regional economic integration. However, it was averse to the "anti-China orientation" of the proposal. At the same time India was also against "military overtones" of any proposal, which was designed to envisage unity and cohesion among the countries of Asia. Mrs. Indira Gandhi insisted that collective economic

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52. *Times of India* (New Delhi), 11 June 1969.
54. Ibid.
cooperation in Asia "should include everybody including China, in order to achieve economic strength for the region".\(^{55}\) She further added: "Our policy is very clear, we do not believe in any military alliance."\(^{56}\) This point was also reiterated by India's Foreign Minister, Dinesh Singh, on being asked at a Press Conference in Washington D.C. on 11 July 1969 whether the Indian Government was interested in collective security system in Asia as suggested by Moscow, he said:

> We are not interested in any collective arrangement of a military type. We are interested in closer economic cooperation which will be able to strengthen each individual country to defend itself, and will create interest in the area in which one would be interested in welfare, progress, development and stability of the countries concerned. (57)

India could not endorse the Brezhnev Doctrine mainly on two counts. In the first place, the military content of the doctrine was contrary to India's policy of non-alignment. Secondly, India did not want to be party to Soviet Union's widening rift with China.\(^ {58}\)

India rather proposed that economic cooperation and political stability should be given priority in Asia.\(^ {59}\) While reiterating this stand, Foreign Minister Dinesh Singh, told Rajya Sabha on 31 July 1969: "...we feel that the problem of Asia is really a problem of economic development of the countries and

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55. *The Hindustan Times*, n.29, 4 June 1969.
56. Ibid.
57. Cited in Noorani, n.33, p.119.
not so much a military problem. We are really anxious to cooperate with other Asian countries to develop our economy and also their economies...."60 India's view of Soviet proposal of collective security in Asia was appreciated. The joint communique issued in Moscow at the end of Foreign Minister Dinesh Singh's visit to Soviet Union in September 1969, referred to agreement between the Foreign Ministers of India and Soviet Union that the political and economic development of the countries of Asia and cooperation amongst them on the basis of equality mutual benefit, respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty and non-interference in each other's internal affairs form the best basis for the preservation and consolidation of peace, stability and security in this part of the world.61

Thus India's response to the Soviet proposal for collective security system in Asia was almost lukewarm. As Pakistan had rejected it and India was reluctant to be a party to it, the Soviet proposal for collective security system in Asia remained almost on paper in 1969 and the succeeding years. Soviet proposal of collective Security system in essence called for active Soviet involvement in the security affairs of Asia. Thus it was an effort to move toward the foreign policy goals of making the Soviet Union a major and "natural" power in the region. Given Moscow's competition with the United States and China it was also an approach toward containing and reducing the influence of

60. India Rajya Sabha Debates, vol.69, no.9, 31 July 1969, col. 1718.
Washington and Beijing while creating the opportunities for the expansion of the Soviet Union's own influence.

The Growing Dimensions of Indo-Soviet Friendship Treaty

The onset of 1970s was going to mark a watershed in Indo-Soviet relations which had attained low profile during late 1960s. Indian and Soviet interests had begun to converge as the Soviet Union failed to resolve its dispute with China and India was disillusioned by United States. Developments on two levels in 1971 made New Delhi and Moscow to acknowledge this convergence and to reinforce it with a treaty. At one level, a series of events occurred at the subcontinental level while on the other big powers were involved. This dual level geopolitics was connected to Pakistan, where the regional triangle of competition involving Pakistan, India and China met the global triangle of rivalry between the United States, Soviet Union and China. The civil strife in the Eastern Wing of Pakistan was the back drop for a realignment among the five countries resulting in the diplomatic stand off between Soviet Union and India on the one hand and US, China and Pakistan on the other.

The domestic political situation within India also contributed in bringing Soviet Union closer to India. During 1969 the ruling Congress Party underwent a split leading to the emergence of two Congress groups -- one headed by Mrs. Indira Gandhi and her supporters known as Congress(R) and the other as Congress(O) or Syndicatists. Mrs. Gandhi's Government undertook several "progressive" measures like nationalization of
banks, coal mines etc. The Soviet commentators hailed the progressive measures and also commended the victory of V.V. Giri in Presidential election as a great triumph of democratic forces in India. The Soviet press keenly watched and carefully commented on the political developments in India. Syndicate leaders like S.K. Patil, Morarji Desai and others were blamed for joining hand with the "right reaction" like Jana Sangh, Swatantra etc. Mrs. Gandhi's Government was praised by the Soviet Press. During 1970, the Soviet media continued giving enough coverage to developments in India.

On the other hand the deteriorating situation in the Eastern Wing of Pakistan during 1970 had also been attracting the attention of Moscow. During December 1970 elections, the Awami League under the leadership of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had emerged as the largest single political party having won 167 out of 169 seats allotted to East Pakistan in the total 313 seats of the Pakistan National Assembly. Awami League being denied its share in the Government launched civil disobedience movement against the military regime of Yahya Khan and by March 1971, the situation had taken explosive turn. On 2 April 1971, Soviet President Podgorny in a message to Pakistan's Chief Martial Law Administrator, Yahya Khan, made an "insistent appeal for the


adoption of the most urgent measures to stop the bloodshed and repressions against the population in East Pakistan and for returning to methods of a peaceful political settlement". 64 Yahya Khan in his reply sent on 5 April 1971 wrote that the situation was "normal". 65

The advent of Nixon administration in Washington had revived the entente cordiale between United States and Pakistan. As described in Chapter Two, Pakistan had played a part in the Sino-US rapprochement which commenced in early months of 1971. Thus the Nixon administration during 1971 not only continued the supply of arms to Pakistan but also blamed India for perpetrating tension on the subcontinent. The US tilt towards Pakistan combined with the growing Sino-US rapprochement "exacerbated the sense of insecurity and isolation prevailing in India during the summer of 1971". 66 The Yahya regime, in the wake of growing Sino-Pak and US-Pak relations, was emboldened. Islamabad became more vocal in its criticism of India and blamed the latter for uneasy situation in the Eastern Wing of Pakistan. By the beginning of August 1971, reports were afloat about the concentration of troops along the Indo-Pakistan border. 67

In view of the deteriorating relations between India and Pakistan and the growing US-Pakistan-China entente, New Delhi

65. Ibid, p.106.
66. Surjit Mansingh, n.9, p.143.
looked towards Moscow hopefully. The Soviet Union, as a result of an interaction of a number of global, regional and domestic variables, also realized that its foreign policy objectives would be better served by forging closer relations with India. Thus both India and Soviet Union with a mutual desire to confront the US-Pak-China axis, developed a natural arena for mutual consultation.

The first week of August 1971 witnessed hectic diplomatic activity in New Delhi and Moscow. In a sudden announcement on 6 August 1971, Soviet news agency Tass announced that Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko would be visiting India in a couple of days. Consequently, on 8 August 1971, Gromyko arrived New Delhi and announced the purpose of his visit as promoting "the cause of further developing and deepening the friendly cooperation between India and Soviet Union which will aid in the consolidation of peace in Asia and throughout the world".  

On 9 August 1971, Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko and India's Foreign Minister Sardar Swaran Singh, jointly announced the conclusion of the Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation between India and Soviet Union. The Indo-Soviet Treaty comprising a Preamble and twelve articles, was contracted for a period of twenty years, and provided significant incentives and opportunities for intensification of Indo-Soviet relations.

The Preamble and first four articles of the Indo-Soviet Treaty deal with general matters of mutual and international

68. Patriot (New Delhi), 7 August 1971.
importance. Article V envisages that both the contracting parties would maintain regular contacts on major international problems affecting their interests. Articles VI and VII refer to expansion of economic, scientific, technical and cultural relations between the two countries. Under Article VIII both countries are enjoined upon not to enter into any military alliance against the other party and not to commit aggression against each other. Article IX provides that both the countries have to abstain from providing any assistance to any third party, if it is engaged in an armed conflict with the other signatory. In case either party is being subjected to an attack or if it is threatened, both the parties shall immediately enter into mutual consultations in order to remove such threat and to take appropriate measures to ensure peace and security of their countries. According to Article X:

Each of the High Contracting Parties solemnly declares that it shall not undertake any commitment, secret or open, with regard to one or more states incompatible with the present Treaty. Each of the High Contracting Parties declare further that it has no commitments towards any other State or States and shall not undertake any commitments, that may cause military damage to the other party. (71)

The incorporation of this article was perhaps intended to give comfort particularly to the Soviet Union in its concerns about a possible Indian rapprochement with China and also to India regarding Soviet efforts to befriend Pakistan. 72

Speaking at the signing ceremony, Soviet Foreign Minister,

71. Ibid.
72. Horn, n.8, p.65.
Gromyko, while alluding to the previous record of cooperation between India and Soviet Union, further added: "The treaty provides an ever stronger political and legal bases for the cooperation". On 9 August 1971, Indian Foreign Minister, Sardar Swaran Singh told Lok Sabha that the Treaty should act as a deterrent to any powers that may have aggressive design on our territorial integrity and sovereignty. The Joint communique issued at the conclusion of the visit of Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko to India, referred to the Indo-Soviet Treaty "as an outstanding historic event for both countries". It also noted that the Treaty served as a genuine act of peace expressing the common policy and aspirations of Soviet Union and India in strengthening peace in Asia and the World. The joint communique specifically noted that the Treaty was not directed against any one but is called upon to become a factor for the development of friendship and good neighbour relative in accordance with the principles of the UN Charter.

The treaty evoked mixed reaction among the media and the political parties in India and the press abroad. In its editorial, Indian Express observed that by signing the treaty, India had "departed from the policy of non-alignment". Hindustan Times viewed the treaty as entailing alignment with the Soviet

73. Foreign Affairs Record, n.5, no.8, August 1971, p.163.
74. A. Appadorai, Selected Documents on India's Foreign Policy and Relations (New York, 1972), p.105.
75. M.S. Venkatramani, "Soviet Policy towards South Asia", India Quarterly (Delhi), July-September 1971, pp.51 ff.
76. Ibid.
77. Indian Express, n.30, 10 August 1971.
Union and the paper further added that India over reacted to the prospects of developments in Bangladesh by anticipating intervention on behalf of China or the United States.  

Most of the opposition parties in India, by and large, welcomed the signing of the Indo-Soviet treaty. Bharatiya Jana Sangh (BJS) while welcoming the treaty made it clear that the treaty should be judged in the context of and in terms of its contribution to the freedom of Bangladesh and to the efforts to counter US arming of Pakistan. While speaking in the Indian Parliament, BJS leader, Atal Behari Vajpayee, though welcoming the treaty also raised the question as to whether it could prevent India from taking unilateral action in the context of the Bangladesh crisis. Congress (O) leader, S.N. Mishra expressed some reservations about Soviet recognition of Bangladesh.

Swatantra Party's leadership also expressed mixed feeling. The veteran leader C. Rajgopalachari formally welcomed the treaty but lamented "the loss of an opportunity to America". Another Swatantra leader, Piloo Mody stated that the treaty pushed India into the Soviet camp from which India could expect many dangers and no benefits. He further added that the treaty marked India's steady drift into the "Soviet camp as a result of its past economic and military policies".

78. Hindustan Times, n.29, 10 August 1971.
79. Ibid.
81. Ibid, col.290.
82. Times of India, n.52, 10 August 1971.
83. India Lok Sabha Debates, n.80, no.78, cols 301-311.
The Socialist Party regretted the absence of any mention of Bangladesh crisis in the joint communiqué issued after the signing of the Indo-Soviet treaty and reminded the country of "Soviet Invasion of Czechoslovakia". Samar Guha, a socialist leader, expressed doubts about the Soviet intentions in the Indian Ocean and stated that the treaty could prevent India from obtaining foreign assistance from outside the Soviet bloc. For the Communist Party of India (CPI) the treaty served as a bulwark of peace and progress in Asia. It would be a deterrent to China, Pakistan and the United States and be helpful in the just struggle of the people of Bangladesh. While denouncing the critics of the treaty, the National Council of the CPI alleged that the same old reactionary forces which had wanted to drag India into the neo-colonialist net of imperialists had now started crying that the treaty signified the end of non-alignment.

However the Western Press was highly critical of Indo-Soviet Treaty. In its editorial, International Herald Tribune blamed Moscow for taking undue advantage of "India's distress to consolidate its position in Delhi". According to Washington Post, Soviet Union, by signing the Indo-Soviet Treaty, had taken over from the United States "the role of arbiter and dominant

86. India Lok Sabha Debates, n.80, no.78, cols 324-327.
88. Ibid, pp.7-8.
overseer in the sub-continent". For New York Times, the treaty meant the strengthening of Soviet influence in India: "It would create the danger of a local war leading to a big-power confrontation in the Indian subcontinent". Majority of the British press viewed signing of the treaty as an end to India's policy of nonalignment. The Times wrote: "India today discarded her policy of non-alignment and entered into a formal alliance with the Soviet Union". A similar stance was discernible from the Daily Telegraph and Guardian.

However there was no immediate official reaction to Indo-Soviet treaty from Islamabad, Beijing or Washington. While addressing a press conference at New York, on 9 August 1971, the US Secretary of State, William Rogers hoped that the Indo-Soviet Treaty would have a good effect. A couple of months later on 12 November 1971, the US Secretary of State said in Washington that the US Administration did not doubt that India's policy of non-alignment was undermined by the Indo-Soviet Treaty.

The Indo-Soviet Treaty caused much concern in Pakistan

92. The Times, n.25, 10 August 1971.
though there was no immediate direct official reaction. The semi-official *Pakistan Times* observed that the treaty posed a threat to Pakistan and China: "The Treaty amounts to a deliberate move to create a situation in which India may feel free to attack Pakistan with the assurance that the Soviet commitment to aid would provide a deterrent to Chinese intervention on our behalf".97 Similar views was reiterated by Z.A. Bhutto.98 During August-September 1971, Bhutto, the Chairman of Pakistan's Peoples Party, reportedly held closed door meetings with the Chinese diplomats in Karachi.99 A report published in an influential Urdu daily, *Nawai-Waqt* of Pakistan in the middle of August 1971 indicated that Islamabad was collecting facts and data for signing a defence treaty with Beijing.100 However the Foreign Office of Pakistan denied such reports.101

Beijing had maintained silence for sometime over the conclusion of the Indo-Soviet Treaty. However in October 1971, the Chinese Premier Zhouenlai told a group of visiting Americans in Beijing that he was prepared to accept the Soviet and Indian assurances that the Indo-Soviet Treaty was not directed against China.102 In December 1971 when the Bangladesh war broke out,

101. Ibid.
the Chinese delegate criticized the Indo-Soviet treaty during discussion on the war situationn in the Security Council.103

The foregoing analysis of Indo-Soviet Treaty reveals that its conclusion had evoked mixed reaction at home and abroad. The critics of the Treaty levelled three main charges against India:

i. That the Treaty provided an opportunity to Soviet interference in India's domestic affairs;

ii. That it restrained India from taking unilateral action in Bangladesh without the consent of Soviet Union; and

iii. That it put an end to India's policy of non-alignment.

However, a close analysis of the developments in the post-Treaty period have belied the above mentioned three objections. Since the signing of the Indo-Soviet Treaty, there has been no significant evidence that Soviet Union has tried to intervene in the India's domestic affairs. Rather under Article I of the Treaty both countries had pledged to "refrain from interfering in other's internal affairs". India had not signed any clause resembling Article 2 of the Soviet Egyptian Treaty of May 1971 which described Egypt as having "set itself the aim of restructuring society along socialist lines".104 Besides, during the four general


elections held since the signing of the treaty, several unprecedented changes have occurred on the political horizon of India and different political parties have come to power at the centre as well as in the states. The question of "ever remotest applicability of the Treaty in these domestic matters has never been posed".105

The second allegation that the Treaty restrained India from taking even unilateral action in Bangladesh crisis without the prior consent of Soviet Union also seems untenable. A categorical assertion in this regard was made by then Indian Foreign Minister, Sardar Swaran Singh on 9 August 1971 in Lok Sabha. He unambiguously declared that the Treaty should act as a deterrent to any powers that might have aggressive designs on India’s territorial integrity and sovereignty.106 He further reiterated that the Treaty would not debar India from taking any desirable action in Bangladesh and no country could restrain India from doing so "not even friendly country like the USSR....".107 On 15 August 1971, India’s Defence Minister, Jagjivan Ram asserted that there was no solution to the problem other than an independent Bangladesh and if needed India would help the freedom fighters in every possible way.108 As the subsequent events showed that Bangladesh became independent only because of India’s action, and Moscow did not restrain India from doing so. Thus Indo-Soviet Treaty did in no way debar India from

105. Singh, n.58, p.177
107. Ibid.
108. Times of India, n.52, 16 August 1971.
taking independent decisions.

The last contention that the Indo-Soviet Treaty put an end to India's policy of non-alignment is also a far-fetched surmise which is bereft of any rationale. Since the signing of Indo-Soviet Treaty, India's pursuit of the policy of non-alignment has not undergone even a slight change. Rather the Treaty envisaged the Soviet respect for India's policy of non-alignment. The critics generally have compared the provisions of the Indo-Soviet Treaty to those of Soviet-Egyptian Treaty were more stringent than the Indo-Soviet Treaty. Article 7 of the Soviet-Egyptian Treaty provided for immediate and close military cooperation for the removal of threat to peace or re-establishing peace. Article 8 of the same Treaty specifically promised Soviet assistance in training Egyptian forces and supplying them "with armaments and equipment... in order to strengthen their capacity". While Article IX of the Indo-Soviet Treaty undoubtedly envisages "mutual consultations" between the signatories for removing the threat but does not provide for the institution of a "joint command" or "collective defence capacity". Thus to compare Indo-Soviet Treaty with Soviet-Egyptian Treaty or any other such defence arrangement is to ignore the basic spirit of the Indo-Soviet Treaty. Moreover the Indo-Soviet Treaty "did not prevent India from purchasing defence equipment from the Soviet Union or elsewhere".

110. Mansingh, n.9, p.145.
Another point worth mentioning at this stage is that Moscow, apart from its growing schism with China, did not attempt to drag India into Sino-Soviet dispute after signing the treaty with India. India rather expressed the hope that Indo-Soviet treaty would provide "a pattern for similar treaties between countries in this region".111 While addressing the Lok Sabha, India's Foreign Minister Sardar Swaran Singh said that "such treaties between the countries of this region would stabilize peace and strengthen their independence and sovereignty".112 During the subsequent years, India's attempts at normalizing relations with Pakistan, United States or any other country have not been objected to by the Soviet Union. The Indo-Soviet Treaty has not also stood in the way of normalization of Sino-Indian relations.

Thus the conclusion of the Indo-Soviet Treaty was necessitated by the concomitant developments pervading the geopolitical scenario obtaining at that time in the Indian subcontinent. It did in no way affect India's sovereignty or territorial integrity nor did it affect India's steadfast commitment to the policy of non-alignment. It was rather designed to thwart the possibility of US-Chinese intervention on behalf of Pakistan in the sub-continent.


112. Ibid.
SOVIET UNION'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS BANGLADESH CRISIS

The conclusion of the Indo-Soviet Treaty marked a new era of friendship and warmth in the Indo-Soviet relations. In view of the deteriorating situation in the Indian subcontinent, Pakistan was trying to seek US intervention in the crisis while a good deal of Soviet support for India was forthcoming in the United Nations. However Soviet Union was still pursuing a policy of caution. The official Soviet press carefully refrained from using the term "Bangladesh". On 13 August 1971, Izvestia reiterated that the Indo-Soviet Treaty was not directed against any country nor would it bring any change in the Soviet policy of friendship with Pakistan. At this stage, Moscow was interested in the pacific settlement of the Bangladesh crisis and wanted the region to maintain peace and stability. As the Statesman later reported: "The burden of Soviet policy is that the vital issue is not independence but the preservation of peace in the subcontinent".

The mounting burden in the wake of influx of millions of refugees from Bangladesh to India posed a serious problem for India causing tension between India and Pakistan. In early September 1971, Pakistan's Foreign Secretary, Sultan Mohammed Khan visited Moscow. His visit was seen by the Pakistani government as a test of "the true nature of the Soviet

113. Horn n.8, p.67.
government's claim that the Indo-Soviet treaty is not directed against any country with which Moscow maintains friendly relations". 116 The Pakistani Foreign Secretary held talks with Soviet leaders like Gromyko and Firyubin but details of these talks were not made public. According to Karachi based Morning News, the talks were "timely and useful". 117 While no Soviet commentary stated Moscow's support for Pakistan's unit, "Firyubin did term the exchange of views—that is differences of opinion—a positive development and fruitful". 118

Consequently with a view to apprise Moscow of latest developments in the subcontinent, India's Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi paid an official visit to the Soviet Union during the last week of September 1971. The Soviet Premier, Kosygin in a speech at a luncheon given in honour of visiting Indian Prime Minister said on 28 September 1971:

All friends of India and Pakistan expect from the Pakistani authorities an early political settlement in East Pakistan which would take into account the legitimate interests of its population (and which) would safeguard its normal development and eliminate the threat of further aggravation of Pakistani-Indian relations. Such an approach, we are convinced, would accord with the interests of the Pakistani people and the cause of peace in the region. At this crucial movement we address an appeal to President Yahya Khan to take the most effective steps for the liquidation of the hot bed of tension that has emerged. (119)

Mrs. Gandhi in her reply at the luncheon tried to convince the Soviet leaders about India's displeasure at the attitude of big

118. Horn, n.10, p.67.
powers especially the United States. She said:

The international response has fallen short of the scale which a grim tragedy of this magnitude demands.... The growing agony of the people of East Pakistan does not seem to have moved many governments...our restraint has been appreciated only in words. The basic issue involved and the real threat to the stability in Asia is being largely ignored. (120)

While complimenting the Soviet leaders for their efforts, Mrs. Gandhi added: "we are glad that the leaders of Soviet Union have counselled Pakistan to reach a political solution which will satisfy the aspirations of the people of East Bengal. We hope these efforts will bear fruit". 121

The joint statement issued after the conclusion of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's visit on 29 September 1971 called for a political solution to the problem of Bangladesh that would pay "regard to the wishes, the inalienable rights and the lawful interests of the people of the East Bengal". 122 Both sides also agreed that the interests of the preservation of peace demanded that "urgent measures should be taken to reach a political solution". Besides, the two countries also expressed their concern about the grave situation that had arisen in the Indian subcontinent". 123

Thus the visit of Mrs. Indira Gandhi to Soviet Union succeeded in procuring Soviet concern over the magnitude of the

121. Ibid.
123. Ibid.
problem of Bangladesh crisis. At this stage, Moscow was reluctant to run the risks of direct Indian intervention and to suffer deterioration in Soviet-Pakistani relations for ever.

Moscow which had attained detente with the United States was also in touch with the latter about the developments in the Indian subcontinent. On 20 September 1971, the Soviet Foreign Minister, A.A. Gromyko met the US Secretary of State, William Rogers at New York and reportedly discussed the South Asian situation. 124 Soviet Union told the United States that the former had been urging the concerned parties to exercise restraint. 125 However as Robert Jackson has pointed out, this US-Soviet joint management of the "subcontinental balance was a failure mainly because the Americans were unwilling or unable to persuade President Yahya Khan to accept the revised position which India was to concede under Russian influence in early October 1971". 126

The Soviet attempts at persuading Pakistan for a political solution reflected Moscow's belief that the Yahya regime would be amenable to pressure. Though between August and October 1971 many Soviet leaders and officials visited India, but their main emphasis was on urging restraint to both India and Pakistan. In early October 1971, Soviet President Podgorny visited India in order to hold discussions with Indian leaders on the grave political situation prevailing in the Indian subcontinent. The Soviet

President referred to the legitimate rights and interests of the people in that region and offered "full Soviet cooperation for any such solution within the existing Indo-Soviet relations". However the Soviet leader hesitated to endorse the views of Indian President, V.V. Giri who expressed the view that a political settlement meant a "solution arrived at the accordance with the wishes of the people who were given a massiv mandate in the December 1970 elections". President Padgorny rather reiterated that any further sliding towards a military conflict should be avoided.

The Soviet objective was to prevent any escalation of tension between India and Pakistan and accordingly it laid emphasis on peaceful solution of Bangladesh crisis. The Soviet Union was trying to help India as far as possible without sacrificing its interests in Pakistan and looked upon the freedom struggle in Bangladesh as more than a conventional war between the two separate wings of Pakistan although she was not prepared to accept it as a fulfledged liberation movement capable of achieving independence by force of arms.

During the last week of October and early November 1971, many Soviet leaders and Soviet officials visited India. The Deputy Foreign Minister of Soviet Union, Nikolai Firyubin during his breif visit to India in the end of October 1971 expressed his full

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agreement with India's assessment of a threat of attack from Pakistan's side. On 30 October 1971, Marshal P.S. Kutakov, Chief of the Soviet Air Force visited India and held important discussions with the Indian officials. In early November 1971, V. Kudryavtsev, General Secretary of the International Relations Committee of the USSR Supreme Soviet, visited India and reportedly observed that the crisis in "East Pakistan" was a liberation struggle with elements of a civil war.

Until the end of October 1971, the Soviet leadership and media maintained the line that Bangladesh crisis needed a political solution and both India and Pakistan were urged to exercise restraint not to allow the situation to escalate into a war. But by November 1971, situation had taken more serious turn and there was no let up in Yahya regime's attitude. On 23 November 1971, a national emergency was declared throughout Pakistan and two days later Yahya Khan told an Associated Correspondent, "the ten days I might not be here in Rawalpindi, I will be fighting a war". And in early December 1971, war between India and Pakistan broke out. Such a situation was bound to envisage a change in Soviet policy towards Bangladesh crisis.

**Soviet Union's attitude towards Indo-Pak War of 1971.**

Pakistan's armed attack on India on 3 December 1971

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133. *Times of India*, n.52, 10 November 1971.
changed the situation in the subcontinent. India apprised Moscow about the new turn in the crisis. The same day, Soviet Premier Kosygin in a statement said that peace could be restored to the subcontinent only if Pakistan's armed forces were withdrawn from the borders of India in both the eastern and western sectors. 135

On 5 December 1971, Moscow with a view to ensure non-intervention by outside powers in the Indo-Pakistan conflict, issued a stern warning asking the outside powers to keep their hands off the Indian subcontinent and to refrain from adhering to any measure that might exacerbate the situation "in the Hindustan Peninsula". 136 Holding Pakistan responsible for escalating tension in the region, the Soviet Union asked for the "speediest ending of the bloodshed and for a political settlement in East Pakistan on the basis of respect for the lawful rights and interests of the people". 137

With the escalation of the hostilities, Britain, United States and seven non-permanent members of the Security Council requested for a special emergency meeting of the Security Council. Accordingly on 4 December 1971, the Security Council was convened to assess the situation and "to consider the deteriorating situation which had led to armed clashes between India and Pakistan". 138

While participating in the deliberations, the Soviet Union

138. SCOR, n.103, 26 Year, Supplement no. s/10411, January-December 1971, p.86.
insisted that the representative of Bangladesh should be invited
and given a hearing. The Soviet representative, Jacob Malik told
the Security Council that the people of Bangladesh fighting for
the liberation of their country represented liberation forces and
were not "mutineers" or "rebels". 139 While pleasing for an
objective consideration of the situation, Malik drew attention of
the Security Council to the economic burden that the sudden influx
of ten million refugees had imposed on India. 140 Denying the
allegations levelled by United States and China that Soviet Union
had aggressive designs on the subcontinent, the Soviet
representative said that his country was interested in "peace and
tranquility throughout the world including the Indian
subcontinent". 141 Moscow accused other countries of closing their
eyes to reality and virtually adopting an attitude which could
be considered a "policy of closing one's eyes to reality, a policy
of hiding one's head in the sand". 142 The Soviet representative
urged the Security Council to take action and not to equate the
aggressor with the victim of aggression and called for a speedy
attainment of a political settlement" of Bangladesh crisis. 143

When Security Council met on 5 December 1971 it had four
draft resolutions before it for its consideration. The draft
resolution moved by the United States reflected an anti-India
stance and again equated the aggressor with the victim of the

139. SCOR, n.103, S/PV. 1606/22, 4 December 1971, p.73.
140. SCOR, n.103, S/PV. 1606/27, 4 December 1971, p.85.
141. SCOR, n.103, S/PV. 1606/117-120, 4 December 1971, p.68.
142. SCOR, n.103, S/PV. 1606/121, 4 December 1971.
143. SCOR, n.103, S/PV. 1606/125, 4 December 1971. p.88.
aggression. Moscow vetoed the American resolution and instead proposed another resolution calling for a "political settlement in East Pakistan which would inevitably result in the cessation of hostilities." The Soviet resolution was subsequently vetoed by China while US abstained from participation in the vote.

It had become evident that United States and China were siding with Pakistan and had adopted an anti-India stance. Even Soviet intentions were being doubted. Hence under the changed scenario, Moscow was left with no option but to support India even at the risk of losing Pakistan. The Soviet Union refuted the allegation that India had inspired the struggle in East Pakistan as absolutely groundless. It further held that Pakistan alone was to be blamed for the deteriorating situation. On 5 December 1971, the Soviet Union circulated a statement in the Security Council as official document which interalia mentioned that the military operations undertaking by Pakistan posed a threat to the Soviet Union as well and that the Soviet Union should not, therefore, be expected to remain indifferent to them. It urged all the world powers to refrain from taking any step which might in one way or another bring on their involvement in the situation in the subcontinent. This statement implied a clear warning to the United States and China to keep aloof from the subcontinental politics.

144. US draft resolution S/10416, in SCOR, 26 year, Supplemented January-December 1971, p.95
148. Ibid.
India accorded recognition to Bangladesh on 6 December 1971, while the war with Pakistan was still going on.\textsuperscript{149} Beijing and Washington expressed displeasure over India's action. On 6 December 1971 when Security Council met, it had two draft resolutions before it.\textsuperscript{150} One was introduced by China and the second was moved by five countries jointly which called upon all the governments concerned to agree to an immediate ceasefire.\textsuperscript{151} The Soviet Union while introducing amendments to the 5 power draft resolution, urged the Government of Pakistan to take effective measures towards a political settlement of the Bangladesh crisis. Another amendment suggested that the words "calls upon the governments concerned" should be dropped and replaced by "all parties concerned" and "cessation of all hostilities" to be added.\textsuperscript{152} However the 5 power draft resolution was later withdrawn.

Owing to lack of unanimity among the permanent members of the Security Council, the issue of Indo-Pakistan conflict was referred to General Assembly under the "uniting for peace" resolution. On 7 December 1971, General Assembly adopted by a vote of 104 to 11 with 10 abstentions a resolution which expressed concern over the continued hostilities between India and Pakistan, called for an immediate ceasefire and withdrawal of forces from each other's territories.\textsuperscript{153} The Soviet


\textsuperscript{150} UN Doc, S/10421, 5 December 1971.

\textsuperscript{151} These five countries were Belgium, Italy, Japan, Nicaragua and Sierre Leone, UN Doc, S/10425, 5 December 1971.

\textsuperscript{152} SCOR, 26 Year, Supplement for January-December 1971, S/10426/Rev. 11, 6 December 1971, pp..94-95.

\textsuperscript{153} General Assembly Resolution 2793 (XXVI), 7 December 1971.
representative, Jacob Malik while addressing the General Assembly said: "There can be no doubt that without the decisive, rapid and effective elimination of the main causes of the conflict in the Indian sub-continent neither the Council nor the Assembly will be able to arrive at a proper solution". 154

India did not accept the General Assembly's resolution on the ground that it did not provide for a political settlement of the crisis in Bangladesh and the withdrawal of Pakistani troops from there, where as on 9 December 1971 Pakistan accepted it. Pakistan was supported by China and the United States while the Indian stand was endorsed by Moscow. As war between India and Pakistan was heading towards a decisive state during the second week of December 1971, the Security Council continued its efforts to find a solution of the problem. The US policy of intimidating India and thus helping Pakistan during the Bangladesh crisis has been analysed in the preceding second chapter. The Chinese support for Pakistan during this period has been analysed in the preceding third chapter.

In the wake of the despatch by United States of its naval task force in the Bay of Bengal, hectic consultations began between New Delhi and Moscow. On 12 December 1971, a Soviet delegation under the leadership of Kuzenstov, Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister arrived in New Delhi and held detailed discussions with Indian officials. 155 According to Jack Anderson, the Soviet Ambassador to India, Nikolai M. Pegov, assured India

on 13 December 1971 that the Soviet fleet was in the Indian Ocean and that it will not allow the US Seventh Fleet to intervene.\textsuperscript{156}

On 14th December 1971, D.P. Dhar, Chairman of the policy planning Committee of India's Foreign Office met Soviet leaders in Moscow and the talks reportedly took into account the movement of the Seventh Fleet in the Indian Ocean.\textsuperscript{157} With a view to counter the Pressure tactics of the United States, the naval task force of the Soviet Union shadowed the American Seventh Fleet in the Bay of Bengal. Naval Vessels of the Soviet Pacific Fleet were already on their way through the straits of Malacca towards the Indian Ocean.\textsuperscript{158} According to Jack Anderson on 7 December 1971 a secret message received in Washington D.C. warned that "three Soviet naval ships, a sea going minesweeper and a tanker had begun to move northeastward into the Bay of Bengal.\textsuperscript{159}

The movement of Soviet naval task force in and around the Bay of Bengal during the Indo-Pak war served as a warning to the United States whose manoeuvres to build up tactical pressure on India were thwarted by the Soviet Union.

**TOWARD A MORE CREDIBLE AND COHERENT RELATIONSHIP**

The open Soviet support to India during the Indo-Pakistan war of December 1971 proved instrumental in bringing New Delhi and Moscow still closer to each other. While further strengthening

\textsuperscript{156} Jack Anderson in the *Daily Telegraph*, n.93, 10 January 1972.

\textsuperscript{157} *Hindustan Times*, n.29, 15 December 1971.

\textsuperscript{158} K.D. Kapur, *Soviet Strategy in South Asia* (Delhi, 1983) p.212.

\textsuperscript{159} Anderson, n.156.
its relations with India, Moscow also made efforts to normalize its relations with Bangladesh as well as Pakistan. The Soviet Union recognized Bangladesh on 25 January 1972. Soviet leaders played key role in securing the normalization of relations between India and Pakistan on one hand and between Pakistan and Bangladesh on the other. Z.A. Bhutto, President of Pakistan, visited Moscow in the middle of March 1972 and Soviet leaders impressed upon him the need for restoring normalcy in the Indian sub-continent. Bhutto himself admitted in the interview to Guardian that he got the feeler for initiating talks with India through the Soviet Embassy in Islamabad.160

In early April 1972, India's Foreign Minister, Sardar Swaran Singh visited Moscow where he had talks with Soviet top leaders Brezhnev and Kosygin on wide ranging issues. The joint statement issued after Swaran Singh's Moscow visit laid emphasis on peaceful settlement "through direct negotiations between the governments of India, Bangladesh and Pakistan".161 The Soviet Union also welcomed the Shimla agreement between India and Pakistan signed in July 1972 as a triumph of great statesmanship which would make it possible for the countries of the subcontinent to develop their relations in conditions of peace and cooperation.162

The Indo-Soviet ties received a further boost during the last week of November 1973 when Soviet leader L.I. Brezhnev

161. Times of India, n.52, 8 April 1972.
visited India. On his arrival in India, Brezhnev was given a warm welcome. The visiting Soviet leader held discussions with Indian leaders on matters of mutual concern and the contemporary global issues. While addressing a public meeting at the Red Fort on 27 November 1973, Brezhnev asserted that Moscow would stand by India through thick and thin. The Soviet leader revived the idea of collective security in Asia. While asking for the resumption of the principles of Bandung and the policy of Panchashheel, Brezhnev observed that a broad, active, constructive and comprehensive discussion on the proposal would definitely help evolve a common approach acceptable to all states concerned. He insisted that his plan was not directed against any country. India did not endorse the views of Brezhnev on the proposed collective security system in India. Mrs. Indira Gandhi in her welcome address said: "Our friendship is not aimed at any other country. There is no reason for our friendship with the USSR to exclude friendship with other countries. We too wish to expand the area of our friendships".

During Brezhnev's visit, three agreements were signed between India and Soviet Union. These included agreement on further development of economic cooperation between India and the Soviet Union for a period of 15 years cooperation between the planning bodies of India and the Soviet Union and a consular convention between the two countries. The joint Declaration

issued at the end of Brezhnev's Indian visit envisaged reference to the strengthening of peace and security in Asia in broad terms and it also referred to "renunciation of force, respect for Sovereignty, and the rights of the people to be masters of their own destinies".167

Brezhnev's visit to India was viewed with suspicion and doubt by the US media. According to New York Times the visit characterized a new foreign policy offensive in order to press India for giving to the project of Asian Security necessary momentum with a view to "outflanking China".168 A similar reference was reiterated by Newsweek which interpreted the visit as a Soviet attempt to seek port facilities in the Indian facilities.169 While adopting a similar view, the International Herald Tribune viewed Brezhnev's visit as a means of accelerating Soviet influence in Asia against Japan, United States, China and alleged that it would lead to an influx of Soviet advisers to India.170

There was no official comment by Beijing. However the official New China News Agency while assailing in Indo-Soviet Treaty, remarked that Moscow was working for the further dismemberment of Pakistan in order to achieve the age old Russian objective of gaining access to the warm waters of the Persian

Gulf through Afghanistan and Baluchistan. 171

Such criticism by the American and Chinese media in the aftermath of Brezhnev's visit to India could be expected because of the growing success of India and Soviet Union, forestalling challenges to their common interests.

Following the conclusion of the Tripartite Agreement on 9 April 1974 between India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, the official Soviet paper Pravda hailed it as an important step in maintaining peace and stability in the region. 172

Despite the criticism by United States, China and Pakistan of India's peaceful nuclear-explosion of 18 May 1974, the Soviet media hailed India's scientific achievement. In a leading article in Pravda a Soviet commentator noted that Pakistan's arguments for deferring talks with India on the issue of nuclear test were not appreciated by the Soviet Union on the ground that New Delhi had categorically declared that the experiment was aimed at peaceful purposes. 173

JANATA GOVERNMENT AND INDO-SOVIET RELATIONS:

The assumption of power in New Delhi in March 1977 by Janata Party had given rise to doubts that the Indo-Soviet relations might suffer a setback because of some constituents of the Janata Party like erstwhile Jana Sangh, Swantantra Party and

172. Pravda, n.8, 10 April 1974, as cited in S.P. Singh, n.58, pp.51 ff.
and Socialists had been staunch critics of Moscow. Even during the election campaigns in February and early March 1977, some Janata leaders had criticized Indo-Soviet Treaty of 1971. On 10 February 1977, Morarji Desai declared that in case his party (Janata Party) came to power, the Indo-Soviet treaty would automatically go. 174 A similar view was expressed by Atal Behari Vajpayee on 4 March 1977. 175 In the wake of such statements, when the Janata Party emerged victorious in the elections, the entire gamut of Indo-Soviet relations was placed in a very delicate situation.

Though the Soviet Union had been in the past critical of some of the constituents of the "Janata Party but when the latter assumed power in New Delhi, Moscow Radio in a broadcast observed that "time will show how the new leadership... will respond to the mood and needs of the Indian masses and to the developments in India." 176 This showed that Moscow had adopted a restrained attitude.

However American and Chinese media speculated about a cooling off stage in Indo-Soviet relations while improvement in India's relations with Washington and Beijing might follow in the assumption of power by Janata Party in New Delhi. News week expected Desai's tilt towards the US and the West. 177

Post hoped that it was "a golden opportunity for US and China to improve relations with New Delhi." On the other hand, Peking Review wrote that the advent of new developments in India was a pointer towards a serious set-back in Indo-Soviet relations.

All apprehensions about the possible shift in Indo-Soviet relations were soon dispelled when the Janata regime adopted a pragmatic approach in conducting its foreign policy. On 27 March 1977, the Soviet Premier Kosygin in a congratulatory telegram to Prime Minister Morarji Desai hoped that "the traditional relations of friendship and all round cooperation between the Soviet Union and India would further strengthen and develop in the interests of the peoples of both these countries including the cause of strengthening peace and international security". In his reply to Premier Kosygin's congratulatory message, Desai wrote: "I share your conviction that the relations of traditional friendship and cooperation between our two countries will continue to flourish in the interests of our people, international peace and understanding."

Indo-Soviet relations under Janata regime received further impetus when in late April 1977, Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko visited India. While referring to Indo-Soviet Treaty and friendship the visiting Soviet Foreign Minister said that "relations between these two countries met the fundamental interests of the Soviet and Indian people".

181. Ibid, p.3. Also Hindustan Times, n.29, 26 April 1977.
Vajpayee while speaking on the occasion said: "Though a lot of water had flown down the Volga and the Ganga since Gromyko came last...but Indo-Soviet friendship had been a stable factor". 183

During the last week of October 1977, Prime Minister Desai and Foreign Minister Vajpayee paid a week long official visit to Moscow from 21-27 October 1977. Soviet President Brezhnev in a banquet given in honour of the visiting Indian dignitaries, spoke high of Indo-Soviet "mutually advantageous cooperation". 184 Prime Minister Desai while alluding to the traditionally friendly relations said that "the development of our relations with other countries will not be at the expense of established friendships". 185

Desai Government's policy of normalization of relations with China led to Vajpayee's visit to Beijing in early February 1979 which had to be cut short following the Chinese attack on Vietnam. 186 The news of Vajpayee's hasty departure from Beijing was received with some relief in Moscow where fears had again been aroused that the normalization of relations between New Delhi and Beijing might push India towards a more neutral stance in the event of a Sino-Soviet dispute. 187

During the second week of March 1979, Soviet Premier

Kosygin paid a week long visit on 9-15 March 1979 to India. In his address to the Indian Parliament, the Soviet Premier laid stress on the need for further consolidating the efforts of peace loving forces like India to overcome the threat to peace in Asia. In his banquet speech, the Soviet Premier called for "full and unconditional withdrawal of Chinese troops from the territory of Vietnam". India's Prime Minister, Morarji Desai in his speech expressed India's serious concern over the conflict between Vietnam and China. Without naming country, Desai reiterated India's opposition to "violation of frontiers wherever it has occurred... and urged "resort to peaceful negotiations and immediate cessation of conflict". During this period, a long term agreement for Indo-Soviet cooperation in economic, trade, cultural and technical fields was signed.

Kosygin's visit to India was succeeded by a visit by Morarji Desai to Soviet Union on 10-14 June 1979. While welcoming the Indian Prime Minister, Soviet President Brezhnev criticized the Chinese military adventurism in Vietnam and at the same time offered to normalize his country's relations with Beijing on the basis of peaceful coexistence. In his brief reply, Desai welcomed Soviet desire to normalize relations with the People's Republic of China. During this period, Moscow agreed to supply

189. Ibid, p.20.
190. Ibid, p.29.
about 3 million tonnes of crude oil to India annually and heavy water for the nuclear energy programmes. 192

However domestic political developments in India led to the fall of the Desai Government in July 1979 and Charan Singh became India's new Prime Minister. The Soviet Premier sent a congratulatory message to Charan Singh which the later reciprocated by assuring his Soviet counterpart that New Delhi would try to strengthen all round friendly relations with the USSR. 193

Charan Singh's inability to command majority in the Lok Sabha led to the dismissal of his Government and the fresh elections held in early January 1980 brought Congress (I) into power with Mrs. Indira Gandhi as Prime Minister. During the closing days of December 1979 Soviet forces marched into Afghanistan.

**Soviet Union Arms Assistance to India:**

India's defence requirements had augmented in the wake of Indo-Pakistan war of December 1971. The US embargo on arms sales to India and Pakistan but continued clandestine supply of weapons to Islamabad despite India's repeated protests, had enhanced India's concern for acquiring weapons to have parity with Pakistan. Both United States and China had emerged as largest suppliers of sophisticated weapons to Pakistan.

India had not only to recoup its defence losses suffered during the war but to match Pakistan's growing arsenal. "A sharpened sense of regional security led to a great willingness to allocate funds for that purpose".194

In view of the growing friendly relations with the Soviet Union, India approached the former to procure arms necessary for its defence preparedness. During the Moscow visit of Indian Defence Minister Jagjivan Ram in July 1973, Soviet Union agreed to provide India one "petya" class frigate. He also discussed with Soviet leaders the question of acquisition of arms by Pakistan from United States and China and its impact on India's security.195

In 1970, India acquired one F. Class submarine from Soviet Union, the order for which had been placed in 1965. During 1970-71, Moscow also provided "Osa" class torpedo boats to India. In 1970, India acquired an unspecified number of SA-2 type missiles. By 1971, India had acquired 50 SU-7 Sukhov Fighter Planes from the Soviet Union. The arms acquisition by India from Soviet Union during the decade of 1970s are shown in the table:

194. Mansingh, n.9, p.162.

## TABLE - 4.1
SOVIET ARMS ASSISTANCE TO INDIA 1970–1979

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Order</th>
<th>Delivery and Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(A)</td>
<td>AIRCRAFT</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>Sukhov SU-7</td>
<td>Fighter/Bomber</td>
<td>September 1969</td>
<td>1971</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Ka-25 Hormone</td>
<td>Helicopter</td>
<td>1976</td>
<td>1978:5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mi-8, HIP</td>
<td>Helicopter</td>
<td>1979</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mig-25R</td>
<td>Recce</td>
<td>1979</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(B)</td>
<td>MISSILES</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SA-2 Guidline</td>
<td>SA Missile</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>1970</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SS-N-9</td>
<td>Sh-Sh-M</td>
<td>1975</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SS-N-2 Styx</td>
<td>Sh-Sh-M</td>
<td>1975</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>92</td>
<td>SSN-11</td>
<td>Sh.Sh.M</td>
<td>1976</td>
<td>1978</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>Item</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Order</td>
<td>Delivery and Number</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>144</td>
<td>SSN-9</td>
<td>Sh.Sh.M</td>
<td>1974</td>
<td>1977:54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(C)</td>
<td>ARMOURDED VEHICLES</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>150</td>
<td>PT-76</td>
<td>Amphibious Tanks</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1971</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BMP-76</td>
<td>APC</td>
<td>1975</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70</td>
<td>T-72</td>
<td>MBT</td>
<td>1978</td>
<td>1979</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(D)</td>
<td>NAVAL VESSELS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Submarine F. Class</td>
<td></td>
<td>1965</td>
<td>1970</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Frigate &quot;Petya&quot; Class</td>
<td></td>
<td>1968</td>
<td>1971</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Torpedo boat &quot;Osa&quot; Class</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1970-71</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Illyushin II-38 &quot;May&quot; Maritime Recce/Bomber</td>
<td>1975</td>
<td>1977</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Nanutchka Class Fast Missile boat</td>
<td>1975</td>
<td>1975:1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Osa class Missile Boat</td>
<td>1975</td>
<td>1978:1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;T Class&quot; Submarine</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1973-75</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Polnocny Class Landing ship</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1975</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>&quot;Kashin&quot; ASW destroyer</td>
<td>1976</td>
<td>1978</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>&quot;Osa 65&quot; Missile Patrol Boat</td>
<td>1975</td>
<td>1977:2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&quot;Krivak&quot; Frigate</td>
<td>1979</td>
<td>--</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Sipri Year books of World Armaments and Disarmament 1970-80 (Stockholm)
The table shows that Soviet Union provided sufficient arms supplies to India during the decade of 1970s. In 1972, India had asked for 150 MIG-21 Bis and 100 MiG-21M fighter planes. In 1973 Moscow supplied 5 MiG-21Bis planes and by 1978 India had acquired 59 such planes. The Soviet Union allowed the licensed production of MiG-21M fighter planes in India at Hindustan Aeronautic Ltd. at Nasik (Bombay). By 1979 India had acquired 55 MiG-21M fighter planes from Moscow.

During 1972 Moscow agreed to provide 600 K-13A class Atoll missiles to India. By 1979 India had acquired all these missiles. During 1976 Moscow also agreed to provide India SSN-11, SSN-2 and SSN-9 type of missiles. India has also acquired PT-76 and T-72 type of tanks from Moscow. In 1977 Soviet Union provided India 7 IL II-38 bomber planes for maritime reconnaissance. Between 1973-75, India acquired 4F class submarines, one Polnocny class landsahip, from Soviet Union. Between 1976-1979, India signed agreements with Soviet Union for the supply of 2 "Kashin" Asw destroyers, 8 "Osa 65" missile patrol boats, Krivak Frigate, etc.

Thus it is evident from the foregoing analysis that in the aftermath of Indo-Pakistan war of December 1971, India's relations with the Soviet Union not only improved appreciably but Moscow rendered diplomatic, and political support necessary for India during the Bangladesh crisis. The Indo-Soviet treaty helped India to thwart the US-China axis in collusion with Pakistan against India. Soviet economic and technical assistance enabled India to streamline its overall development. Soviet willingness to allow
licensed production of strategic weapons enabled India to attain self-sufficiency in defence. Soviet moral, diplomatic, political, economic and defence assistance enabling India not only to attain defence parity with Pakistan but also helped India to emerge as a force to reckon with in the region.

Objectives of Soviet Union: Interaction Patterns with South Asia

The weakening of Pakistani ties with the west and the people's Republic of China, has been a persistent Soviet goal. As in the case of Iran, the Soviets in the past used a variety of measures both positive and negative to persuade Pakistan to leave the western alliance. The Soviet interest in Pakistan was, of course, not entirely new, but in terms of geopolitics, Pakistan being closer was of greater importance to the Soviet Union than even India, and the Soviet leaders were certainly conscious of it. They were also conscious of the fact that their interests would be best served by a pax-Sovietica on the Indian subcontinent whose spin-off effects would make the subcontinent immune to the intrigues of powers hostile to the Soviet Union and thereby ensure enhanced security on its southern flanks.

The 1970s began with what were interpreted as a series of triumphs for Moscow in South Asia that seemingly made the Soviet Union the dominant external power in the region. As mentioned earlier that the high point of the new relationship came in August 1971 with the signing of the Indo-Soviet treaty of peace, friendship, and cooperation. This treaty was a great boost to Indian morale at a time when the country needed definite assurance
of support against possible hostile move by China in the event that Indian initiatives on behalf of the "freedom fighters" in East Pakistan developed into a full-fledged war. It was also useful to Moscow in its campaign to checkmate China and to obtain at least verbal responses in favour of the Brezhnev proposal for a system of collective security in Asia. Thus it seemed at once to promote Indian interests and objectives in South Asia and Soviet interests and network of power in Asia generally. "They picked up India as an autonomous actor in Asia, as a reluctant comrade but in the struggle against imperialism an actual and potential counterweight to China."  

Russia's involvement in the Bangladesh crisis paid rich dividends to it in the form of ideological as well as political advantages. By helping India diplomatically as well as materially in its efforts to liberate Bangladesh, the Soviet Union gained goodwill, help and cooperation of the largest country of the subcontinent and gratitude of Bangladesh people. To the extent Pakistan had been cut to size, the Chinese influence diminished and Russians had a balance of power favourable to them. Secondly, strategically it had also won a great deal. Its involvement in the crisis strengthened Russia's presence in India and Bangladesh and enabled Moscow to reach the Indian Ocean with the powerful Russian navy at a time when the US was withdrawing its power from the South-East Asian region. Britain had already withdrawn its interests from this region and China still has a very insignificant navy.  

196. Probodh K. Lala, n.1, pp.95-96.  
197. Ibid, p.103.
The war in Bangladesh was called by critics of India as a war by proxy, a shadow-boxing of the big powers whereas the fact was that it was a war between two regional powers in which the Soviets, were compelled to stand guard against the intervention of others due to their own interests. Bhutto said, "it was not the victory of India but that of the Soviet Union on behalf of India". 198

But it is clear that the Soviet Union took no initiative of its own. It came to India's help only when it became convinced that the emergence of Bangladesh was inevitable and its appearance on the world scene as an independent State would serve its geo-political interests in this region. "According to the Soviet reading, Pakistan's reliance upon China was largely to protect East Pakistan from India. And once the East Bengalis set up their own state, the very basis of Pakistani reliance on China would disappear". 199

The main object of Moscow after joining this crisis was to strengthen its self-image vis-a-vis China. It wanted to show to Beijing that the latter would not be able to help its client to the extent Moscow would help New Delhi. So Beijing's help would not in future be taken by small Asian Nations as guarantee of protection. Moreover, Beijing had already lost the war on the ideological front when it decided to support a military regime in preference to a popular movement.

The importance of Bangladesh to the USSR lies mainly in its impact on the balance of political and military power in the subcontinent. Since the 1971 war, the objectives of Soviet diplomacy in the subcontinent have been (a) to restore stability in context of a balance of power based on Indian primacy; (b) to promote normalization of relations forward this end, with India and Bangladesh coordinating their negotiating positions with regard to Pakistan; and (c) to deny China and the United States any role, negative or positive in the process of normalization. These objectives imposed on Moscow the quite formidable task of helping the new republic of Bangladesh to its feet, while simultaneously promoting the primacy of India and endeavouring to mend fences with Pakistan. 200

Accordingly to Anwar H. Syed, "The Communist party (Pro-Moscow faction) has surfaced and opened offices all over the land. In May 1972, pro-Moscow leftists won sweeping victories in Student Union elections at the University of Dacca and two other Bangladesh universities. India, not the Soviet Union, has made a twenty-year treaty with Bangladesh including mutual-defence assistance clauses similar to those in the Indo-Soviet treaty of August 1971 -- thus linking the new state with the Soviet Union in defence matters, albeit indirectly". 201
