Chapter Six

INDO-SOVIEt POLITICAL RELATIONSHIP: INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT
Chapter Six

INDO-SOViet POLITICAL RELATIONSHIP: INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

The Indo-Soviet Treaty was an important international document. It committed both the Treaty partners to make constructive effort towards nuclear disarmament. The Treaty also recognised non-alignment as an important factor of peace in the world. The present chapter will try to make an assessment of Indo-Soviet interaction on important international issues like non-proliferation of nuclear weapons and Non-Aligned Movement (NAM).

**The Issue of Nuclear Non-proliferation and Nuclear Disarmament**

Despite India's commitment to the cause of nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, India found the Non-Proliferation Treaty of 1968 (NPT) seriously flawed and did not accede to the Treaty. In India's view the Treaty was discriminatory accentuating the differences between the nuclear weapon power and the non-nuclear weapon power states which went against the cause of nuclear disarmament. The USSR, on the other hand, strongly propagated universal adherence to the Treaty and fought for making the nuclear non-proliferation regime established by the Treaty more effective. NPT, therefore, was one of the few areas where Soviet Union and India differed. In fact, on this score India perceived no difference between
the USA and the USSR, noting latter’s consistent willingness to cooperate with the former in serving the cause of non-proliferation of nuclear weapons.¹

Naturally, the Indo-Soviet Treaty of 1971 raised speculation among certain quarters in India about its implication on the latter’s policy towards the NPT. It was apprehended that entering into a treaty with a power staunchly supporting the NPT regime might act as a constraint on her pursuit of an independent nuclear policy eventually leading to her decision to become a signatory to the NPT.² However, as it turned out, despite her rigid non-proliferation stance Moscow did not press India on the issue; rather on several aspects of NPT affecting India’s security Moscow was willing to show deference to India’s sensitivities which helped India in pursuing an independent nuclear policy. Important among these were Moscow’s attitude towards India’s perceived threat from nuclearised Pakistan -- (an important factor in India not signing the NPT so that she could retain her nuclear weapons option), India’s policy of peaceful nuclear research, including underground nuclear testing for developmental purposes which the peaceful nuclear explosion (PNE) at Pokharan in 1974 exemplified and her requirements of nuclear fuel for that purpose. Similarly, she showed some understanding of India’s opposition to a regional solution for nuclear proliferation, like the establishment of nuclear weapons free zone (NWFZ) in South Asia which Pakistan had been asking the General


²See for example, the statement by Shyam Nandan Mishra, cited in Government of India, Lok Sabha, *Debates* (New Delhi, Lok Sabha Secretariat), fifth series, vol.7, no.57, 10 August 1971, col.311.
Assembly of the United Nations to endorse year after year. These gestures in fact helped to prevent NPT issue from becoming an irritant in the Indo-Soviet relationship. With the start of eighties a virtual coincidence of views between the two countries was noted on the necessity of nuclear disarmament -- which became the vital concern in the projections of both countries. This was partly a function of their mutual interests in opposing the Strategic Defence Initiative (SDI) of the USA and partly of their commitment to the vision of a total and comprehensive nuclear disarmament moving closer to the ideal of non-violence.

**NPT and the Nuclear Weapon Option: Indo-Soviet Diplomacy**

During the pre-NPT deliberations, India's main objection to the NPT was that by preventing dissemination of weapons to states other than the five nuclear states (USA, UK, USSR, France and China) without a check on nuclear development of these nuclear weapon powers, the NPT did not serve the real cause of non-proliferation. Especially considered from India's security perspective, China's nuclear tests violating the will of the international community underlined the need for an acceptable and balanced non-proliferation to prevent the proliferation by all nuclear weapon power states, including the latter. The Soviet position was

---

that the NPT reinforced the "international basis for a wide, multilateral cooperation among nuclear and non-nuclear weapon states".\textsuperscript{4}

Indian and Soviet positions remained unchanged in the subsequent period after the Indo-Soviet Treaty. At the Conference of the Committee on Disarmament (CCD) held in 1974, India reiterated her resolve not to become a signatory to the NPT so long as it remained a "discriminatory instrument" preventing horizontal proliferation of nuclear weapons while promoting vertical proliferation. The USSR, on the other hand, sharing the posture adopted by the USA and UK, stressed on the importance of the Treaty and called for strengthening it through "universal adherence". In her opinion the main obstacle in establishing a non-proliferation regime was spreading of nuclear weapons to non-nuclear states (horizontal proliferation). This could only be removed through the establishment of a strict and effective regime under the NPT by including more states within it.\textsuperscript{5} As a result, the Soviet Union opposed the three protocols proposed by India along with other non-nuclear states at the First Review Conference (held in Geneva in 1975) to remove the "imbalances" in the commitments of the nuclear and non-nuclear states on the argument that such protocols instead of strengthening would undermine the improving international document (NPT) which required universal acceptance in the cause of non-proliferation of nuclear weapons.\textsuperscript{6}

\textsuperscript{4}The statement by the Soviet Ambassador at the 1,577th Meeting of the First Committee of the General Assembly on 31 May 1968, cited in ibid., p. 193.


\textsuperscript{6}Cited in A. Roshchin, "Nuclear Non-Proliferation : For Maintaining Peace", \textit{International (continued...)}
At the special UN session on "Disarmament" on 23 May 1978 at the General Assembly the Soviet Union, along with the USA and the UK, continued to express particular concern about horizontal proliferation and as an effective means for its prevention, urged adherence by all states to the non-proliferation treaty to which Indians raised the long-standing objection that NPT was inherently discriminatory and accentuated the inequality between non-nuclear and nuclear weapon states, since it did not require the elimination of vertical proliferation as a quid pro quo for the prevention of horizontal proliferation7 (which in subsequent periods remained India's official stand on the issue).8 Moscow's eagerness to arrive at some sort of modus vivendi with the United States in checking the spread of nuclear weapons to non-nuclear states became more prominent during the Third Review Conference on NPT which was held in 1985.9 In adopting the Final Declaration, the USSR joined hands with the USA in calling for more adherents to the NPT on the basis of satisfactory working of the Treaty -- a proposal on which India along with nine other countries abstained on the ground that the nuclear weapon

7(...continued)
Affairs (Moscow), vol.4, April 1940, pp.79, 81; all references to the International Affairs in this chapter are to the Moscow edition of that journal.


9Brett J. Lineham, for example, in his paper "The Non-Proliferation Obligation of the NPT" presented at the United Nations Regional Disarmament Workshop for Asia and the Pacific, reviewed the result of the Third NPT Review Conference as a "high point in US-Soviet cooperation in arms control measures"; see UN, Disarmament : United Nations Regional Disarmament Workshop for Asia and the Pacific (New York, 1991), p.89.
states had failed to comply with the commitment to halt and reverse vertical proliferation which was the main hurdle in the cause of non-proliferation of nuclear weapons.\textsuperscript{10} In brief, India's point of difference with the Soviet Union on the NPT was that in contrast to Soviet Union's anxiety to prevent horizontal proliferation, India consistently focused on the need to prevent vertical proliferation which in her opinion was key to the issue of nuclear disarmament -- a view which was shared by eminent strategic analysts in India.\textsuperscript{11}

Despite the foregoing differences over NPT, the Soviet Union showed sympathy for India's policy of keeping her nuclear weapon option open which was necessitated by Pakistan's ambitious nuclear programme. In fact, the Soviet policy towards India on this could be contrasted with the former's policy towards Pakistan. Both the sub-continental powers, despite their commitments to non-proliferation, did not sign the Treaty due to their dilemma of regional security preoccupation. While Pakistan's rationale was related to her fear of a nuclear India especially after latter's peaceful nuclear implosion of 1974; India's unwillingness to join the NPT arose not from her desire to acquire her own nuclear weapons but rather from the fear of the nascent nuclear weapon potential of Pakistan even as she faced a threat from China's nuclear capability. The Defence Ministry's report of 1985-86 for example observed,


\textsuperscript{11}Jasjit Singh (Director, IDSA, New Delhi) expressed the view that the NPT by shielding the real proliferation that had been taking place in the arsenals of the five nuclear powers had actually \textit{legitimised} nuclear weapons and in that process had obstructed the cause of nonproliferation. See his article "India's Nuclear Policy : A Perspective", \textit{Strategic Analysis} (New Delhi, IDSA), col.12, no.8, November 1989, pp.789-90.
...a problem which can not be ignored and have definite negative connotation is Pakistan's determined quest for nuclear status; whether it would explode a nuclear device after manufacturing it or retain as untested defiance so that further American support may not be prejudiced is a matter of conjecture. For our part we must be cognised of their acquiring the capability to make nuclear weapons which has an obvious bearing on our security.  

Interestingly, while the Soviet Union appeared to have sympathy for India's point of view, the same did not happen with regard to Pakistan whose nuclear programme followed from a parallel perception of fear of India. Although on account of being a co-author of the NPT as well as on ground of security, the Soviet interest would have been in de-nuclearisation of both the sub-continental powers which lay close to Soviet Union's sensitive southern border, the Soviet Union condemned Pakistan's nuclear programme while accepting India's contention that her nuclear programme and activities were motivated by "peaceful" intention. Several Soviet writings bore evidence to such contrasting Soviet approaches towards the nuclear policy of India and Pakistan. Some articles with an expressed sympathy for India, accused Pakistan for the "perilous consequences" of her reported acquisition of nuclear weapon capability on

---

12Government of India, Ministry of Defence, *Annual Report 1985-86* (New Delhi), p.3. Seminars held in New Delhi in 1982 came round to the similar view that although India had a nuclear threat from China and the Super Powers as well, the main thrust of India's nuclear strategy was directed at neutralising the consequences of Pakistan's nuclear programme. See the proceedings of the seminar organised jointly by JNU, India International Centre and the IDSA reproduced in U.S. Bajpai, ed., *India's Security: The Politico-Strategic Environment* (New Delhi, 1982), pp.133-6; also the proceedings of the seminar organised by the Centre for Policy Research (New Delhi) in Bhabhani Sen Gupta, *Nuclear Weapons: Policy Option for India* (New Delhi, 1982), pp.116-19.

India's security. They contrasted India's peaceful intention of her nuclear activities with Pakistan's clandestine effort to have free access to advanced nuclear technology directly linked with production of nuclear weapon.\textsuperscript{14} It needs to be noted, however, that Moscow's aim in criticising Pakistan's nuclear programme was related more to her global competition with the USA in nuclear arms race than to India's security. Whenever Moscow condemned Pakistan it was always in relation to USA's policy in this regard -- who in her opinion was motivated by a desire to outstep the Soviet Union, and was following a dangerous militaristic course and encouraging the nuclear ambition of states like Israel, South Africa and Pakistan.\textsuperscript{15} Gorbachev's \textit{démarche} to Pakistan's nuclear programme on the eve of the visit of Pakistan's Prime Minister Junejo in Washington was explained in the West as Moscow's effort to secure her larger goal of containing the USA than the goal of non-proliferation.\textsuperscript{16} For India, however, it was a further evidence of Indo-Soviet understanding on the nuclear issue since the Soviet \textit{démarche} helped to project Pakistan as being bullied by the Soviets.


Soviet Response to India’s Non-acceptance of the Proposal for Nuclear Weapons Free Zone (NWFZ) in South Asia

Similarly India gained diplomatically from the Soviet support to her non-acceptance of the UN General Assembly’s call for a nuclear weapon free zone in South Asia in line with her search for a global approach to nuclear disarmament than regional piecemeal solutions. After India’s peaceful nuclear explosion in Pokharan in May 1974 Pakistan began to see an urgent need for a NWFZ in South Asia.\textsuperscript{17} It was on the request of Pakistan that at its 29th session in 1974, the General Assembly included in its agenda an item on the declaration of South Asia as a nuclear weapons free zone. Two draft resolutions sponsored by India and Pakistan (3265A and 3265B) were subsequently presented for discussion. In the debate that followed, the Pakistani delegation in support of the proposal contended that his country’s prior concern at that juncture was to ensure the security of the non-nuclear states in the context of the spiralling nuclear power of both the nuclear power countries as well as the countries on the threshold of nuclear power. Pakistan’s concern at India’s PNE could be gleaned from the fact that her proposal avoided any mention of the PNE on the ground that PNE without appropriate measures to verify their peaceful nature was not viewed as compatible with the objective of preventing nuclear proliferation in South Asia.\textsuperscript{18} India opposed the Pakistani proposal on two grounds. Firstly, it was pointed out that while such a proposal should have come from all the countries of the region, Pakistan unilaterally brought the proposal to the General Assembly

\textsuperscript{17}Ross Masood Hussain, "Nuclear Weapons Free Zone in South Asia?", in United nations..., n.9, p.210.

\textsuperscript{18}For the views of Pakistani delegate see the Yearbook of United Nations, n.5, p.19.
without prior consultation with the countries of the region. Secondly, pointing out the non-
feasibility of such a proposal it was maintained that the existence of the nuclear weapon power
in the region and the presence of the foreign military bases in the Indian Ocean complicated
the security environment of the region making it an "inappropriate situation" for the
establishment of a nuclear weapon free zone in the area. 19 However, India's primary
opposition to the proposal, as was stated in the MEA Report, was that it was "politically
motivated" as a part of Pakistan's propaganda launched against India's PNE and had little to
do with "genuine disarmament consideration". 20

The Soviet Union in principle accepted the idea of creating NWFZ in several parts of
the world as an important non-proliferation stance. During the pre-NPT deliberations the
Soviet Ambassador expressed his country's readiness to actively promote the implementation
of practical measures for regional disarmament including the nuclear free zone in different
regions of the world. 21 Moscow's initial response to Pakistan's proposal was equivocal
creating dissatisfaction in India who related this to Moscow's shifting stand on Kashmir too,
on which she had been stated to be temporising for some time. 22 However, Moscow was
quick to get over this equivocation. The result of the Bhutto-Brezhnev summit in October 1974

---

19 For the views of Indian delegate see ibid., p.20.

20 India, MEA, Report 1974-75, p.80.

21 Soviet Ambassador Kuznetsov's statement on 26 April 1965 at the CCD Meeting in Further
Documents...n.3, p.157.

22 The Statesman (Delhi), 7 September 1974, editorial; all references to this newspaper in this
chapter will be of Delhi publication.
bore evidence to this. In response to Bhutto’s strenuous effort to convince the Soviet President about the necessity of NWFZ in South Asia in view of India’s PNE, Brezhnev cautiously remained silent on the issue while he spoke encouragingly for strengthening Soviet-Pakistan relations. The absence of any reference to this issue in the joint communiqué indicated that the Soviet President differed with Bhutto on this particular question.23 It was, therefore, nor surprising that when the Pakistan proposal for NWFZ in South Asia was put to vote in the UN General Assembly on 9 December 1974 the Soviet Union opposed the Pakistani draft and supported the Indian draft, with an argument similar to that of India that the countries of the region should consult among themselves on questions concerning the creation of a nuclear weapon free zone before seeking for endorsement by the General Assembly.24

With the passage of time, the reason for India’s opposition became more and more security-oriented. Worsening of the security environment in the region due to the escalation of external nuclear and other arms deployment in South Asia, presence of foreign military bases in the Indian Ocean -- Asia Pacific region made the idea of a peace zone in South Asia more inappropriate in India’s assessment.25 India’s Defence Ministry’s Report, in addition, referred to the existence of two nuclear weapon states in India’s northern border, the USSR


and China, and USA in the southern water to continue piling up nuclear arsenals which made the idea not feasible from the point of view of India's security.  

Viewed against this, the Soviet Union's consistent stand till 1986 (period under review) of abstaining in the vote on the issue in the world body could only comfort India. Although India had been making her opposition to the concept known to the world body, yet every year as a routine the item was included in the agenda of the General Assembly. Soviet abstention, under the circumstances, became diplomatically valuable to India to pursue her independent nuclear policy. It is pertinent to note here that the Soviet policy was maintained despite her support to the NWFZ concept in general in line with her acceptance of the right of the nations of the various regions to counter the threat of nuclear war. But in several statements in the General Assembly, the Soviet Union justified her veto on South Asia on the ground that there should be agreement among the states of the region before such a proposal could be placed for endorsement by the Assembly. The Soviet Union, could not

---

26 India, Defence, *Report 1985-86*, p.1; strategic analysts in India too, were not taken in by the concept. Jasjit Singh proposed a continental solution i.e., Asian zero option against regional concept like NWFZ; See Singh, n.11, pp.791-6; also see C. Raja Mohan, "Indian Ocean: Zone of Peace or Conflict?", *Strategic Analysis*, vol.10, no.3, June 1986, pp.271-2.


28 See the statement by the Soviet delegation in the *Yearbook of the United nations*, 1980 (New York, 1983), vol.34, p.44.
accept the responsibility for a zone which included a "loophole" as the Soviet delegate pointed out.\footnote{Soviet statements in the Yearbook of the United Nations of 1975, 1980 and 1985, pp.39, 44 and 62 respectively.}

\textbf{India's Peaceful Nuclear Explosion (PNE) and the Issue of the Supply of Nuclear Fuel -- Soviet Attitude}

A major objection to the NPT by India was related to the one-sided prohibition imposed by the NPT on the non-nuclear states in respect of peaceful nuclear activities. After recognising the "inalienable right of all parties to the Treaty to develop, research and produce the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes" in article 4, article 5 made non-nuclear powers dependent upon the benefits derived from PNEs conducted by the nuclear powers which by implication meant that the non-nuclear powers were deprived of indigenous experiment in PNE outside the framework of NPT. Questioning the utility of this "dispensation of benefits" bilaterally from PNE, Indian delegate Azim Hussain argued before the Eighteen Nation Disarmament Conference (ENDC) that for India the basic issue was not "distribution of benefits" at "economically attractive cost" but rather the question of the "right of mankind to acquire the knowledge of extracting such benefits by itself"; and it would be "invidious for a greater part of the world to become wholly dependent on a few nuclear weapon states for knowledge of this technique".\footnote{See the Statement by Azim Hussain on 27 February 1968 in the Plenary Session of the ENDC and at the 1,567 Meeting of the first Committee of the General Assembly on 14 May 1968, cited in Further Documents..., n.3, pp.104 and 216 respectively.} In March 1968 Indira Gandhi declared before the Indian
Parliament India's commitment to PNE for developmental purposes, while adhering to another statement made in November 1970 that the Government policy of developing nuclear energy for peaceful purposes did "include underground nuclear explosion". This was the prelude to India's first PNE which was made on 18 May 1974 at Pokharan in Rajasthan. The official announcement on the day of the explosion stated:

As part of the programme of study of peaceful uses of nuclear explosion, the Government of India had undertaken a programme to keep itself abreast of development in technology particularly with reference to its use in the field of mining and earth moving.\(^{32}\)

The Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) reiterated Government's peaceful intention of PNE revealing that there was little emission of radioactive gas which is generally associated with explosion accompanied by damaging effect. It was an explosion of nuclear "device" not nuclear "weapons", they said.\(^{33}\) Despite India's assurances, the international community became suspicious about her intention and refused to accept the government's distinction between "peaceful" and "military" intent of nuclear explosion. Concerned about this probable dualism in India's PNE, great anxiety was expressed by the international community at India's PNE apprehending its adverse effect on "the effectiveness of the NPT". In view of the difficulty in separating the explosion of a device for peaceful purposes and explosion for military purposes, they proposed "stronger application of IAEA safeguards" for countries

---

\(^{31}\)Cited in ibid., p.220, and Singh, n.11, p.797.


\(^{33}\)See interview with Dr. H.N. Sethna (Chairman, AEC) and R. Ramana, Director, Bhabha Atomic Research Centre over All India Radio on 18 May 1974, cited in ibid., pp.333-4.
receiving and transferring nuclear technology and a procedure for examining the "economic utility of peaceful nuclear explosion".  

Moscow conspicuously kept her position vague on India's PNE venture. her official statement reported the incident without any comment stating only that the Indian Government had pledged not to manufacture or acquire nuclear weapons. However, from authoritative Soviet statements and writings it appears that like the Western powers, the Soviet Union, too, was not convinced about the Indian distinction between a "weapon" test and a "peaceful" test. During the NPT deliberations, the Soviet reservation about the distinction between the technology for a nuclear "device" and a technology for "weapon" was demonstrated. In several statements, the Soviet delegate argued that though from the point of their aims, a nuclear blast carried out to improve a new warhead for an intercontinental rocket and a nuclear blast carried out to excavate a large irrigation canal were not one and the same thing; from the point of view of technology there existed no difference between explosion of a device for peaceful purposes and an explosion of a weapon technology. In such a situation, in the Soviet view the states carrying out nuclear explosion for peaceful purpose became at the same time nuclear weapon states. To prevent such a situation from arising, Article 5 of the NPT which provided for the distribution of benefits of PNE by the nuclear states to the non-nuclear states could be the only conceivable way of peaceful nuclear activities by the non-nuclear states. In short, the Soviet

---

34The views by UK, France and Canada in the *Yearbook of the United Nations*, n.5, pp.6-7.

delegate supported PNE only within the framework of NPT.\textsuperscript{36} Soviet writings in the wake of India's PNE expressed the same reservations about India's distinction between "peaceful" and "military" intent of nuclear explosion. While a noted Soviet analyst pointed out some technical and political problems to be overcome for such an explosion,\textsuperscript{37} an eminent Soviet defence analyst maintained that PNE could be put to wider use only in cases where nuclear explosion avoided emitting radioactive fission products -- a problem which had not yet been solved.\textsuperscript{38}

Whatever may be the perception of the Kremlin leadership about India's PNE, at the declaratory level Moscow avoided any critical remarks about PNE. Before the comity of nations she cautiously avoided joining the western powers like Canada and France in criticising India. At the session of the UN General Assembly the Soviet delegation opposed the contention that there was a failure to implement the provisions of NPT in relation to PNE and expressed reservations about the Swedish proposal for an ownership of International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) of all nuclear materials of the non-nuclear states as being going against the "sovereign rights of the states" in conducting peaceful nuclear research.\textsuperscript{39}

\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{36}]See Soviet Ambassador Kuznetsov's statement in the ENDC on 26 April 1965 and at the 1,577th Meeting of the First Committee of the General Assembly on 31 May 1968, cited in Further Document..., n.3, pp.158, 193.
\item[\textsuperscript{37}]V. Sheshtov, "For a Total End to Nuclear Weapon Test", International Affairs, no.1, January 1975, p.40.
\item[\textsuperscript{39}]Yearbook of the United Nations, n.5, p.6.
\end{itemize}
the CCD, the Soviet Union supported the supply of nuclear fuel for PNE only under IAEA safeguards but when Pakistan joined hands with Canada in proposing a moratorium on PNE until a satisfactory solution could be found, the Soviet Union argued in line with India that the question of regulating PNE could only be taken up when a comprehensive ban on the test of nuclear weapon was achieved.\textsuperscript{40} India’s MEA report in a brief referred to Soviet Union’s "positive assessment" of the peaceful nuclear implosion carried out by India on 18 May 1974.\textsuperscript{41} The statement made by the Soviet and Indian leaders during this period testified to the positive state of Indo-Soviet relations that existed at that time.\textsuperscript{42}

The viability of Soviet support, however, soon came to be tested when in the wake of the Pokharan explosion, Canada suspended all nuclear assistance to India provided earlier to the Rajasthan nuclear reactor and the Kota heavy water plant with the explanation that the use of the plutonium derived from Canadian supplied heavy water in the explosion, was in contravention of Indo-Canadian agreement which was meant for peaceful research activities.\textsuperscript{43} This left India with an acute crisis of heavy water. The Soviet Union stepped in to rescue India from the crisis by concluding an agreement with the Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) in India in September 1976 for supplying 200 tonnes of heavy water, of which 55 tones were received in that year and the remaining quantity was expected to reach India in

\textsuperscript{40}Ibid., p.6.

\textsuperscript{41}India, MEA, \textit{Report 1974-75}, p.61.

\textsuperscript{42}See Gromyko’s statement in Kremlin on 6 November 1974 and Swaran Singh’s statement in Rajya Sabha on 30 July 1974 in MEA, \textit{Report}, ibid.,pp.61 and 37 respectively.

\textsuperscript{43}The statement by the Canadian representative at the CCD, cited in Jain, n.32, pp.335-6.
April-May 1978. The significance of the 1976 heavy water deal was that the Soviet Union did not attach to it any bilateral or international safeguards. This was significant when viewed against the prevailing evidence of Soviet preference for export of nuclear fuel under IAEA safeguard system only. During the pre-NPT deliberations the Soviet delegate had expressed belief in the "control" provision of article 3 as crucial to the cause of non-proliferation. Several years later, this was reiterated by the USSR during the First Review Conference held in 1975 supporting PNE only under "effective IAEA safeguard system". As a key member of the Nuclear Supply Group (NSC) the Soviet Union was reported to have preferred, some times even more than the Western powers like France and Germany, the acceptance of "full scope safeguards" on all nuclear activities of a state as a condition for supply of nuclear materials. With this background Soviet concession in exporting heavy water to India unattached to any safeguard was generally noted as a mark of Indo-Soviet friendship.

This, however, could not be said unequivocally with regard to the supply of the remaining 145 tonnes of heavy water that the Soviet Union supplied to India in April-May 1978 under an agreement signed in November 1978. Although the details about the terms of delivery

---

44 See Prime Minister Morarji Desai’s statement on 26 April 1978 in India, Lok Sabha, Debates, vol.15, no.44, 26 April 1978, col.228.

45 See, Soviet Ambassador Kuznetsov’s statement in the General Assembly on 26 April 1965 in Further Documents...n.3, pp.154-5.


47 For a Soviet perspective on the NSG guidelines, see Reiss, n.1, pp.139, 151.
of the second lot of heavy water were not spelt out in the Prime Minister's statement in the Lok Sabha, according to an Western account, this supply was placed under International Atomic Energy having "pursuit" and "perpetuity" provisions requiring safeguards to be applied to Rajasthan reactor if plutonium produced there was later used in other Indian reactors with the help of Soviet heavy water. It was said that Moscow insisted on these safeguards because of the insistence from the IAEA and the NSG members who tightened conditions on export of nuclear material through the Nuclear Supplier guideline of 1978 after India's Pokharan explosion.\(^\text{48}\) There was truth in this statement since a hardening attitude of Moscow on the issue of supply of nuclear fuel was noted at the General Assembly session on disarmament in 1978 when Moscow, along with USA and UK, urged adherence by all states to the NPT and strengthening of IAEA's safeguard or bilateral arrangement between suppliers and the recipients of nuclear fuel for preventing horizontal proliferation.\(^\text{49}\) The Soviet policy of attaching international safeguards to the supply of the second lot of heavy water might have been a logical culmination of this evolving Soviet approach towards the "control" mechanism of the NPT. A noted analyst maintained that the issue proved Soviet inability to influence Indian behaviour in areas where India's national interest was at stake. Initially, Moscow sought to modify Indian position on safeguards, but she had to compromise at the end managing to

\(^{48}\)Cited in ibid., pp.135, 140, 151.

win India's consent only to safeguards that were limited in time and place where Soviet heavy water was used.\(^50\)

Within the country the Janata Government was criticised for the acceptance of heavy water from the Soviet Union under upgraded international safeguard system. India traditionally had opposed the acceptance of full-scope safeguards which would erode her nuclear autonomy and inhibit her further nuclear energy programme. From this point of view as a scholar pointed out, the Janata Government's decision might be construed as a reflection of the Government's doubt about the PNE policy of the predecessor government.\(^51\) This does not also seem to be likely as the Government itself, shifting its earlier stand on PNE, hardened its attitude when it faced the crisis of Low Enriched Uranium (LEU) for the Tarapore Atomic Power Station (TAPS) due to US Nuclear Regulatory Commission's (NRC) decision to ignore the manufacturing obligation to supply LEU for TAPs because of India's non-compliance with the US Nuclear Non-Proliferation Act (NNPA) of 1978. India found the NNPA discriminatory since it made the supply of LEU for TAPs (agreed upon by the 1963 Indo-American agreement) conditional upon the IAEA safeguards on all her peaceful nuclear activities.\(^52\) Before agitated parliamentarians Morarji Desai declared his country's

\(^{50}\)Robert C. Horn, *Soviet-Indian Relationship: Issues and Influences* (New York, 1982), pp.139-40; this view was not however, shared by another noted analyst of Indo-Soviet relations, Michell Reiss, who found it as an incident showing Moscow's willingness to chance losing favour with an influential Third World country; n.1, p.140.

\(^{51}\)B.M. Kaushik, "Nuclear Policy for India", *Strategic Analysis*, vol.1, no.1, April 1977, pp.17-18.

\(^{52}\)For details on India's note of protest to the US Government, see N. Ram, *India's Nuclear*
commitment to develop nuclear energy for peaceful purposes without being subject to any full-scope safeguards which proved to be discriminatory. India would not submit to any pressure from the US even if Tarapore plant had to be shut down, he said.\footnote{53}

Against this background, the Government’s decision to have entered into a deal with the Soviets requiring India to accept almost full scope safeguards on her peaceful nuclear activities was described by an analyst as indicating a gap between Janata’s public stand and action.\footnote{54} However, it is to be noted that the degree to which the Tarapur fuel case became an "important point of difference" between India and America,\footnote{55} the heavy water deal did not bring such a state of relationship between India and the Soviet Union. Had there been such a disagreement, the two sides would not have considered important not only to "maintain" but "further strengthen" the friendship when India’s Prime Minister visited Moscow in 1978; neither would there have been a new agreement between them on 22 January 1979 for scientific and technical cooperation in the field of peaceful utilisation of atomic energy.\footnote{56} It is clear

\footnote{\textit{Policy: A Case Study on the Flaws and Futility of Non-Proliferation}, a paper prepared for the 34th Annual Meeting of the Association of Asian Studies, Chicago, 2-4 April 1982, pp.34-38.}

\footnote{See Morarji Desai’s statement in Lok Sabha on 25 April 1978 in India, Lok Sabha, \textit{Debates}, sixth series, vol.15, no.43, 25 April 1978, cols.285-8; see also his speech in the special session of the General Assembly on "Disarmament" opposing discriminatory safeguards in ibid., vol.16, no.4, 20 July 1978, col.306.}

\footnote{Ashok Kapur, "India’s Nuclear Policy", in T. Polouse, ed., \textit{Perspective of India’s Nuclear Policy} (New Delhi, 1978), p.179.}

\footnote{See Morarji Desai’s statement in Lok Sabha on 20 July 1978 in India, Lok Sabha, \textit{Debates}, n.53, col.306.}

\footnote{See Soviet and Indian statements in India, MEA, \textit{Report 1977-78}, p.19.}
from the foregoing that the Indo-Soviet treaty did not deter India from developing her nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. However, it must be noted here that after reiterating India’s firm policy of developing nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, India’s Foreign Minister Swaran Singh stated in Lok Sabha, "At the same time there is nothing in this treaty to debar us from departing from that policy, if we want to do". It needs to be recalled that after 1974 Pokharan explosion the Indian Government did not make any venture into another PNE.

**Coincidence of Views on Nuclear Disarmament**

Since the early eighties there was greater coincidence of views on nuclear disarmament between India and the Soviet Union. The closeness resulted from their mutual interest in opposing the US militarisation programme especially, in the outer space (the US Star Wars Programme) and their commitment to a broader vision of a total nuclear disarmament. Brezhnev chose India as an important platform to launch his peace offensive. At the 26th CPSU Congress in 1981 the Soviet Union assigned India a crucial role in safeguarding "peace" on the international plane by welcoming "increased role played by India in international affairs". The Soviet stand was vindicated by the result of the Seventh Non-Aligned Summit held under India’s Chairmanship in New Delhi in March 1983. Calling NAM "History’s biggest peace movement", Indira Gandhi called upon the powers to give up the untenable

---


58 From the Report of the CPSU Central Committee, cited in Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS), *Daily Report, Soviet Union*, supplement 1, 24 February 1981, p.11; hereafter to be cited as FBIS.
theories like "nuclear deterrence" or "limited nuclear war" which in her view, created tension in the world. In appreciation of India's role, at a top level conference of CMEA, the Soviet Union and other East European socialist countries expressed "solidarity" with the message of the seventh summit viewing NAM as a "Powerful fact" in the struggle against imperialism, colonialism and the forces of war and aggression. It was no coincidence that Indira Gandhi's major peace initiative launched on 22 May 1984 along with the Heads of Government of Argentina, Greece, Mexico, Sweden and Tanzania calling for a constructive action towards halting and reversing nuclear arms race was viewed positively by the Soviet Union but failed to have any response from the USA.

However, Rajiv Gandhi-Mikhail Gorbachev era bore the evidence of a deeper understanding between the two countries. Gorbachev counted on India's support more visibly in his competition with the USA in arms race especially the dangerous US programme of SDI in the outer space in which entering into competition with USA proved economically crippling for the Soviet Union. As for India Gorbachev's idea of a global and total nuclear disarmament

---


61India, MEA, Report 1984-85, pp.iii-iv.
drafted under his new political thinking came closer to India's views which had been traditionally supporting total nuclear disarmament.

Gorbachev's new political thinking led him to two important conclusions on disarmament which suited India. In the first place in the context of the "harsh realities" of the nuclear age when development of sophisticated weapon system was capable of "sweeping the human race from the face of earth", he thought the only "option for survival" was "total nuclear disarmament". In negation of Soviet earlier preference for preventive measures primarily against horizontal proliferation of nuclear weapons, Gorbachev, therefore, suggested a comprehensive security system encompassing the idea of "universal peace" (including both horizontal and vertical Proliferation) in the Twenty Seventh CPSU Congress as the fundamental direction of Soviet foreign policy. In line with this he had declared on 15 January 1985 a three stages programme for eliminating nuclear weapons by the year 2000, including a proposal for the extension of Soviet moratorium on all nuclear explosions. These Soviet peace efforts were appreciated by India since they coincided with India's views on total nuclear disarmament. Rajiv Gandhi welcomed the Soviet President to India in November 1986 not only as a "tried and trusted friend of India" but as a "crusader of peace" who "listened to the

---

62To sum up his idea in his own words, "Our idea is world without weapons and violence, a world in which each people freely chooses its path of development..., This is an expression of humanism of communist ideology, of its moral value". Mikhail Gorbachev, Peace Has No Alternative : Speeches, Articles, Interviews (New Delhi, 1986), p.274.

anguished cry of humanity". The Soviet President, in similar vein, was gratified to note India's shared perception with the Soviet Union on the idea of a comprehensive international security through constructive proposal for the complete cessation of nuclear weapons.

Secondly, Gorbachev advocated a "global" approach based on the "efforts of all states" as the only conceivable way of creating a future world without weapons, which also attracted India's response. In order to prevent nuclear war it was essential, in his view to create a constructive interaction between the states and the people of the entire earth. Since nuclear disarmament involved the question of survival of the whole world it should not be the domain of only USA and the USSR, he maintained. Significantly, Gorbachev manifested more willingness than Brezhnev to rely on India's support in his proposal for joint effort to prevent nuclear catastrophe. This was evident in the several positive remarks he made on India's efforts in the area of preservation of peace in the world. In Soviet perception, as an analyst noted, despite difference in political and social systems, on the main issue of the problem of the peace

---

64 See Prime Minister's speech on arrival of Gorbachev to India on 25 November 1986 in Government of India, Ministry of External Affairs, Foreign Affairs Record (New Delhi), vol.32, no.11, November 1986, pp.351, 354; henceforth to be cited as Foreign Affairs Record.

65 See Gorbachev's address to Indian Parliament on 27 November 1986, in ibid., p.362.


67 See Gorbachev’s interview with the PTI on 18 May 1985 in Moscow and his speech at a dinner in honour of Rajiv Gandhi, on 21 May 1985 in Darshan Singh, ed., Soviet Foreign Policy Documents 1985 (New Delhi, 1986), pp.123, 134 respectively.
in the world, both USSR and India shared the view that it was "imperative" to keep the world safe from slipping to the brink of nuclear catastrophe. Gorbachev’s idea of joint efforts to eliminate nuclear catastrophe could be said to be an echo of Indira Gandhi’s initiation in May 1984 the Six Nation proposal which pointed out that the problem of nuclear disarmament was too "important to be left to these states alone".

India’s importance was enhanced further in Gorbachev’s assessment as a counter-weight to USA’s increasing militarisation programme, especially President Reagan’s declaration of the US programme of militarisation of outer space popularly known as Star War Programme. In Gorbachev’s assessment the notorious Star War programme which Washington was trying to pass off as "defensive programme" stimulating the development of non-military causes was nothing but USA’s search for the "chimera of military superiority". He, therefore, tried to mobilise the Third World countries against USA’s such "imperial ambition and adventurism" which "plunged the civilisation into Black Hole or cosmic void", as he said, by misutilising the resources that could be used for tackling their pressing problem of underdevelopment. He specifically called for India’s support to this cause and joint act on the "fundamental issue of the day".

---


90See Gorbachev’ speech on 21 May 1985 during Rajiv Gandhi’s visit to Moscow, in *Foreign Affairs Record*, vol.31, no.5, May 1985, p.134; Gorbachev’s address to the Members of Indian Parliament and at a dinner in honour of Rajiv Gandhi on 27 November 1986, in ibid., n.64, pp.365 and 369 respectively.
The American SDI had implication for India's security as well. Therefore, India shared Moscow's perception on the danger posed by this new type of nuclear arms race in the outer space. India's Defence Ministry's report expressed anxiety over the "unbridled arms race between the two powers which threatened to invade even the outer space".\(^71\) There was, as such, an implicit threat to involve India in a qualitatively new arms race -- which Rajiv Gandhi, with an implicit hint at India's support to Soviet perception expressed,  

...it did not matter to India whether Washington described SDI as defensive security. India was concerned because it dangerously jeopardised peace by creating yet another deadly weapon -- an extremely sophisticated weapon system -- the complexity and speed of which eliminated human intervention.\(^72\)

This shared perception resulted in a number of joint Soviet-Indian initiatives. In continuation of the 1984 Six Nation initiative, Rajiv Gandhi hosted the same six countries' conference in New Delhi in January 1985 which called for urgent steps to prevent arms race in outer space (the Soviet Union's main concern) leading to a comprehensive treaty prohibiting the test of nuclear weapons.\(^73\) The Soviet Union promptly and positively responded by declaring an unilateral moratorium on nuclear weapon tests. At Ixtapa in Mexico the same year, the same six countries in their Mexico Declaration reiterated the demand that an arms


\(^{72}\)See Rajiv Gandhi's speech at the banquet in honour of Gorbachev on 25 November 1986, in *Foreign Affairs Record*, n.64, p.354.

\(^{73}\)India, MEA, *Report 1984-85*, pp.iii-vi.
race in outer space be prevented on the ground that the "space belonged to humanity". Urging a halt to developing of anti-satellite weapons, they suggested that USA and USSR discuss implementation of the Six Nation proposal to facilitate test ban verification. The USSR General Secretary accepted the proposal and expressed his country’s readiness to work towards the ban of unarmed weapons from the outer space. With a note of appreciation for Soviet gesture, Rajiv Gandhi remarked in Indian Parliament "...What so far had been an unilear moratorium on nuclear tests by the Soviet Union should at least become a bilateral moratorium between the USA and the USSR". In such a context, it was not unlikely that Rajiv Gandhi’s statement at the eight-nation Non-Aligned summit at Harare in 1986 deploring USA's "Imperturbable defence system" which in his opinion was a "nuclear suicide" diverting the resources that could be put to human use (an argument Moscow used against SDI), received applause from the USSR who promptly declared the Harare Summit as proof of Soviet cooperation with the NAM in the "cause of peace".

All this, however, was crowned by the New Delhi Declaration of a Nuclear Weapon Free and Non-violent World jointly signed by the Soviet Union and India on 27 November

---

74For the Mexico Declaration issued on 7 August 1986, see Foreign Affairs Record, vol.32, no.8, August 1986, p.240.

75For details of Soviet response, see Yearbook of the United nations, n.27, pp.13-14.

76See Rajiv Gandhi’s statement on 14 August 1986, cited in Foreign Affairs Record, n.74, p.257.

77Rajiv Gandhi’s keynote address at the summit in Foreign Affairs Record, vol.33, no.9, 7 September 1986, pp.267-77; Soviet remarks cited from Pravda in the Patriot (Delhi), 20 September 1986.
This Declaration, as Gorbachev remarked was a "new step" in promoting the concept of a comprehensive system of security and achieved peace of a "new quality" and on an "assured and durable peace". From Moscow's points of view, point nine and ten of the Declaration which called for joint cooperation of all states in envisaging complete destruction of nuclear arsenal including banning of all nuclear weapons applicable in the outer space -- were important in carrying Soviet fight against the US SDI with Indian support. As an analyst observed, with these two provisions Gorbachev scored a success in his disarmament policy which he could not at the US-Soviet arms control talk at Reykjavik. At Reykjavik despite his concessions he could only make Reagan agree to replace more dangerous Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD) by a reduced offensive power of SDI; but through Indian backing at New Delhi he could mobilise the world public opinion against US Star Wars and agree in a principle of disarmament which would leave both the Super Powers without the SDI shield.

It was gratifying for India, too, that through the Delhi Declaration the Soviet Union committed itself for the first time to the Gandhian ideal of a non-violent world. The Soviet President pointed out that the "common spiritual culture" made both the peoples think not only in terms of their own interests or security but of universal security and well being of mankind on which the Delhi declaration was based. This was a "vitally important initiative" and was

---

78 See the Declaration in Foreign Affairs Record, n.64, pp.380-82.
79 Gorbachev's speech in Indian Parliament on 27 November 1986, ibid., p.362.
81 Refer to Gorbachev's address in India's Parliament, in Foreign Affairs Record, n.64, p.364.
good for the two countries and good for the world as well that the two peoples resolved to work unceasingly for nonviolence and peace, remarked the Indian Prime Minister.\(^{82}\) Several MPs in similar vein, were happy that the Soviet Union wedded to communism thought it fit to endorse "non-violence" as the best remedy to many international ills. From this point of view Delhi Declaration was "significant" in reinforcing the "bond of friendship" between the two countries, they observed.\(^{83}\)

**Non-Aligned Movement and Indo-Soviet Diplomacy: Some Issues**

Although article 4 of the Indo-Soviet Treaty provided that the USSR government would respect India's policy of non-alignment, the Treaty was criticised precisely from that angle and was said to have constituted a departure or deviation from this policy which had been a cardinal principle of India's foreign policy.\(^{84}\) Denying such speculations the Indian Foreign Minister said,

\(^{82}\)Prime Minister's statement on 2 December 1986 in India, Rajya Sabha, Debates, vol.CXL, no.21, 2 December 1986, cols.203-4; also see Prime Minister's statement on 27 November 1986, in Foreign Affairs Record, n.64, p.370.

\(^{83}\)View by Gurupadaswamy and Sukumol Sen in Rajya Sabha, Debates, ibid., cols.208, 213.

\(^{84}\)Sri Piloo Mody remarked, "Smt Gandhi has pushed us into the Soviet camp"; Shyamanandan Mishra's comment was "on ...the 9th August 1942 we asked the British imperialists to get out, today we are going to ask the Russians to come in"; S.L. Saksena recalling Nehru's sticking to this policy even in the darkest hour in 1962 lamented, "...his daughter has buried her father's philosophy of Non-Alignment". To Samar Guha the Treaty represented a "historic deviation" from the policy of Non-Alignment; the statements are in Lok Sabha, Debates, n.2, cols.310-11, 290, 326, 329 respectively.
It (non-alignment) is strengthened. We adhere to the policy of Non-Alignment which has been accepted by the USSR in the treaty in so many words.... We will follow our own independent policy, take decisions which are in our best interest, in our own national interest and in the interest of peace of the world. This is the essence of Non-Alignment and we are steadfastly adhering to it.  

These views could not be tested till the time of the Sixth Non-Aligned summit (held in Havana in 1979) with Cuba's President Fidel Castro launching the theory of "natural alliance" between the NAM and the socialist bloc countries, arguing that any attempt to bring the Non-Aligned countries into conflict with the socialist bloc was counter-revolutionary and served the interest of the imperialists' bloc, especially the USA. Cuba along with some left oriented countries, tried to move the NAM closer to the Soviet bloc countries as against western bloc on some critical issues having Soviet connection like the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, Vietnamese intervention in Kampuchea and the resultant issue of Kampuchean credential and the Super Power rivalry in the Indian Ocean.

It is pertinent to see how India responded to these issues being a recognised leader of the Movement. The justification of this exercise is necessitated also because the Treaty raised speculation regarding the future of non-alignment. In Soviet view, as an eminent political analyst in the USSR wrote, India warranted a special position the NAM since it "opposed Beijing's hegemony and US political pressure and pursued a stable relationship with Moscow". The Soviet Union, thus, appeared to seek close cooperation with India with the

---

85 Swaran Singh's statement in ibid., col.343.

86 Cited from an article by I. Zorina in Russian published in Mirovaya Ekamika I Mezduuna (continued...)
expectation that as an influential non-aligned country she could help the Soviet Union to mobilise the non-aligned countries for waging a struggle against the USA -- an idea that would not have gone unopposed in India which all along stressed that non-alignment to India meant independence of judgement and that the Soviet Union had accepted India's non-alignment in that form. This was the public expectation, too. In fact, when the Seventh Summit was held in New Delhi in 1983 under India's chairmanship high hope was placed on India that Indian diplomacy would undo the harm done by Cuba to NAM by tilting it towards the Soviet bloc.

The Sixth Non-Aligned Summit: A Watershed

Fidel Castro had already set the keynote for the sixth summit one year earlier at the Belgrade non-aligned Foreign Ministers' Conference (held in June 1978) by distributing a draft which without using the "natural ally" called upon the member states to conclude agreement with "peace and progress loving forces" meaning the Soviet bloc countries. India's dissatisfaction over the Cuban draft was made implicit in the Foreign Minister's assertion in the conference that "genuine non-alignment" meant "independence of judgement" and rejection

86 (...continued)

87 See for example the statement by Balram Jakhar during Gorbachev's visit to India in *Foreign Affairs Record*, n.64, p.367.

88 For details, see M.S. Rajan, "The Seventh Non-Aligned Summit", in Satish Kumar, ed., *Yearbook on India's Foreign Policy*, 1983-84 (New Delhi, 1986), pp.54-55, fn.6-10.
of "borrowed counsels and ideological uniformity". India's reaction ran on similar line when Castro distributed a revised watered down draft when the sixth summit began in Havana (2-7 September 1979). This revised draft too, could not avoid criticism for being biased towards the Soviet Union since it merely sought to rephrase the controversial phrases on "natural ally" without abandoning her call for a closer alliance with the socialist bloc. This was opposed by majority of members in the conference and were led by Yugoslavian President Marshall Tito who stressed on the need to preserve the essential character of Non-Alignment by keeping the movement equidistant from both the Super Powers.

India, wanted the movement to remain free from bloc politics and ideology. But unlike Yugoslavia, India was not exactly propounding the policy of equidistance between the two Super Powers which to her was passive notion of non-alignment. As India's representative, S.N. Mishra said,

Non-Alignment has never been a policy of equidistance as neutrality for us. It was something inestimably more positive, vital and vibrant. It enabled us to support decolonisation and liberation movement and take principled stand on issues which confronted us.

Therefore, instead of joining the pro-western countries in condemning Cuba for diluting the fundamental objectives of the NAM movement, he praised Castro for his "wisdom, dynamism and patience", holding his chairmanship as a "tribute to his leadership and the

89 See the Statement by Atal Behari Vajpayee in Foreign Affairs Record, vol.24, no.6, June 1978, pp.259, 260.

importance which Cuba commanded in international affairs". He also shared Castro's view of
Soviet contribution to non-aligned movement. But he was unwilling to allow the Cuban
President to exploit the anti-colonial thrust of the movement for moving it closer to the Soviet
c bloc. As S.N. Mishra stated further,

We cannot have one foot in Non-Alignment and another in alignment. Tragedy
occurs in life when there is a hiatus between the law of one's action and
behaviour of the other.

He then spelt out Five Principles as code of conduct which were to be observed by the
non-aligned countries which in essence emphasised the right of a non-aligned country to pursue
independent foreign policy without any interference from any bloc.\footnote{Foreign Minister's speech at the summit on 6 September 1979 in \textit{Foreign Affairs Record},
vol.25, no.9, September 1979, pp.173-5.} India, thus, preferred
to follow a middle of the line policy; while she was not prepared to allow Cuba to bring
erosion in NAM's cherished non-bloc character by moving it towards a particular bloc, she was
also not prepared to embrace the theory of "equidistance" advocated by the moderates. Such
a stand was indicated in India's initiative in bringing amendment to Cuban draft, especially on
the question of Kampuchean credentials and Indian Ocean.

The Summit was vertically divided into two groups on the Kampuchean credential issue
which revolved round the question as to which of the two Governments -- the pro-Chinese
Democratic Kampuchea (DK regime) led by Pol Pot or the overtly pro-Soviet Democratic
Republic of Kampuchea (DRK) led by Heng Samrin was to occupy the seat allotted to
Kampuchea in the NAM forum. Cuba who had given formal recognition to the Heng Samrin
regime took the lead along with other left-leaning states in the NAM, like Vietnam, Kampuchea, Afghanistan and some others in spearheading the campaign to get the Government of Heng Samrin seated at the summit. The ASEAN led countries, on the other hand (at the behest of China aided by USA who tried to isolate the newly formed government in Vietnam by keeping it outside the international organisation), tried to obstruct the seating of the Heng Samrin regime in the summit. They accused Cuba of arrogating to herself the right to include the Pol Pot regime from the seat in the conference when there was no decision to unseat the representative of the Pol Pot Government at the United Nations.

In the midst of these claims and counter-claims Indian stand reflected her unwillingness to get itself involved in this rivalry which partly emanated from the Janata Government's policy at the national level of non-recognition of either regime with genuine non-alignment as a platform. It sought avoidance of identification with any bloc by falling back on a centrist stand in favour of "vacant seat" formula. Earlier at the meeting of the Coordinating Bureau of Non-Aligned countries in Colombo on 8 June 1979, the Indian representative maintained this middle of the line policy by calling for cooperation among the countries of Indo-China and ASEAN to eliminate the "pulls and pressures to establish influence" by the great powers. Following this strategy at the pre-summit meeting of India's Cabinet Committee for Political Affairs, a decision that the Indian delegation at the Sixth Summit would go in line with the policy of

---

92See Castro's speech in Willets, n.90, pp.221-2.

93Ceylon Diary News (Colombo), 1 September 1979.

94Atal Behari Vajpayee's speech on 6 June 1979 in Foreign Affairs Record, n.89; also see press comment in Indian Express (Delhi), 28 August 1979.
keeping the seat vacant if no decision could be reached on the credential question.\textsuperscript{95} Therefore, when the pre-Summit Foreign Ministers' Conference met amidst sharp exchange of opinions between Singapore and Cuba, the former representing those who wanted the seating of the Pol Pot and the latter arguing for either letting the Heng Samrin Government participate or keep the seat vacant, the Indian representative S.N. Mishra fell back on the second option proposed by the Heng Samrin group to keep the seat vacant. His justification for such a stand needs extensive quoting to have an impression about the Government's attitude towards the pro-Soviet trend in the NAM on this issue. He said,

\begin{quote}
My delegation has no intention to get involved in the current controversy about the representation of Kampuchea particularly as it has taken an undesirable turn....What is now at stake is not the representation of Kampuchea but the unity and solidarity of the movement itself...
\end{quote}

After recalling lack of disagreement over the issue in non-aligned forums preceding the Summit he concluded,

\begin{quote}
It is our delegation's view that our immediate and primary concern should be the need for maintaining our unity...Guided by this consideration we think that the most practical way out of the present impasse would be to keep the Kampuchean seat vacant.\textsuperscript{96}
\end{quote}

India also exhibited an independent attitude while dealing with Cuba's proposal with regard to the Indian Ocean which had indication of sympathy to the Soviet concern about the USA's base-building policy in the Indian Ocean at the island of Diego Garcia, which was perceived to be most dangerous for Soviet security. India regarded the draft as an unbalanced

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{95}Indian Express, ibid.
\end{flushright}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{96}See S.N. Mishra's speech in Foreign Affairs Record, vol.25, no.7, August 1979, p.163.
\end{flushright}
one since it referred to the US bases only instead of big powers militarisation programme going on in the Ocean (implying Soviet Union, too) which posed the threat to the security of the littoral states. India suggested a modified draft which contained reference to US naval base activities in the Ocean but would also make condemnation of the increases in the naval build-up of the Great Powers against the wishes of the states of the Indian Ocean.97

Considering Soviet shifting stand on India and other non-aligned countries' demand for implementing the UN General Assembly Resolution of 16 December 1971, declaring Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace (IOPZ), this appeared to be a justified posture. It was not until the middle of seventies when the US decided to develop the communication facility at Diego Garcia to multipurpose logistic base that Soviet Union came round to support the non-aligned countries' demand for implementation of IOPZ proposal. It may be recalled that after successive abstention in 1972 and 1973 on this issue at the General Assembly, the Soviet Union shared position with the USA in a crucial voting on 9 December 1974 on a report that was prepared by a study team including India's representative Dr. K. Subrahmanyam (the then Director of the IDSA) submitted by the UN Secretary General to the UN Ad Hoc Committee on the Indian Ocean. The reason presumably was that the report contained a factual statement of the Great Power military presence in the Indian Ocean and expressed the view that these were a "threat to the littoral and hinterland states". India's dissatisfaction was not made public and the MEA report of the year only reported on Super Power abstention without making any

But India's discomfort at Soviet stand was understandable. However, the Soviet Union in the period ahead came to support the IOPZ proposal. But the Soviet policy was directed primarily to keep the area free from US presence who by creating a chain of bases along the entire perimeter of Asia, Africa and the Pacific region, created concern in Moscow. Arguing that the Soviet Union had only peaceful intention in the Indian Ocean (for trade and oceanographic researches) without any intention of building up military bases there, the Soviet President tried to enlist India's support in Soviet claim of dismantling US military bases in the Ocean as a condition for Soviet support to IOPZ proposal. Indira Gandhi's Government apprehending similar threat from the US military bases (especially the Diego Garcia one) endorsed the Soviet idea of getting the area free from military bases. The Janata Government, however, cautiously avoided the specific mention of US bases at Diego Garcia in Defence Ministry's report and called instead for removal of all "foreign military bases" from the area which by implication meant both the USA and the Soviet Union.

The Sixth Summit, thus, was not only a watershed in the Movement's history but a significant phase in Indo-Soviet diplomacy at the non-aligned forum. In his message to Fidel

---

98 India, MEA, Report 1974-75, p.77; for details on this voting, see Yearbook of the United Nations, n.5, p.27.


100 See Joint Communiqué issued on 13 June 1976 in Foreign Affairs Record, n.99, p.191; also see India, Defence Ministry's Report 1975-76, p.2.

101 Ibid., also Report 1977-78, p.2.
Castro Brezhnev was cautious to emphasise Soviet interest in NAM as a "viable instrument for bringing socio-economic development" in those countries, ¹⁰² but Moscow’s interest in using the forum through Cuba’s chairmanship in the perspective of US-USSR relations could be seen in her appreciation of the summit for "condemning the action of the imperialist states specially the USA". ¹⁰³ India, however, took concerted efforts with other moderates to prevent this and initiated amendments to Cuban draft proposals on several issues which could restore the balance in NAM’s approach as between USA and the USSR. This was appreciated in Indian press as maintaining NAM’s unity by checkmating any attempt to push the movement to either bloc which was essential for retaining NAM’s original non-bloc character. ¹⁰⁴

From New Delhi Ministerial Conference to the Seventh Nonaligned Summit: Balanced Posture

The New Delhi ministerial conference on NAM in 1981 started amidst indications from the Soviet Union that she counted on India’s support to pursue her position on international issues at the NAM forum. This was evident in President Brezhnev’s message to India on the

¹⁰² Cited in Zafar Imam, "The Soviet Views of Non-Alignment", in K.P. Misra, ed., Frontier and Dynamics of Non-Alignment (New Delhi, 1982), p.463; In view of Zafar Imam, Soviet friendship treaties with the nonaligned countries in the seventies might have been motivated by her desire to use the NAM forum against the capitalist imperialist western bloc (mainly, USA), ibid., p.465.


¹⁰⁴ See in this context India’s press review in N. Ravi, The Times of India (New Delhi), 2 September 1979 and V.N. Nair, "Indian Formula Saved Havana", The Statesman, 3 September 1979; all references to Times of India in this chapter are of Delhi publication.
occasion of the 20th anniversary of the Non-Aligned movement where he referred to the "unity of the socialist bloc and Non-Aligned countries" for checking "the aggressive forces in the imperialist bloc". India, though initially wavering, taking an anti-western posture at the conference, ultimately exercised prudence to go along the consensus line helping the conference finally "end in a spirit of harmony" as the Government statement indicated.

On Kampuchea, initially, Indian stand did not go unopposed. India's decision to stick to decision reached at Havana to keep the Kampuchean seat vacant was not received happily by the ASEAN countries who viewed the decision being reached at Havana through manoeuvre. More important was lack of any reference to Vietnam's military intervention in the Indian draft. The phrase "outside interference" used instead by India appeared to many as a gesture to condemn China and condone Vietnam. Through such a policy India seemed to overlook the "central issue" facing the NAM.

Viewing opposition, India, through extensive consultation prepared a second revised draft calling for de-escalation of tension through "comprehensive political solution" based on "withdrawal of forces" and the "right of the Kampuchean people to determine their own destiny free from foreign interferences". This met the requirements of both the contending groups.

---


This was a gesture which demonstrated India's willingness to go along the consensus line in the interest of maintaining the movement's unity.

On more controversial issue of Afghanistan which came to be considered for the first time at the New Delhi ministerial conference, India's position ran on similar line. India's initial stand was pro-Soviet. Indian draft avoided implicating the Soviet Union for intervention by using the phrase outside interference and making a reference to cessation of all forms of interference in Afghanistan while calling for withdrawal of foreign troops, -which was in line with India's declared policy at the national level which opposed both "intervention and interference in Afghan affairs". India was opposed to the presence of foreign troops in any country but she had the conviction that withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan required cessation of all forms of interference by outside powers.109 This made India avoid specific mention of Soviet Union in the original draft. But several countries in the conference, especially Pakistan were sensitive about the Soviet military presence in a non-aligned country and submitted a proposal containing a call for immediate withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan as a condition for political settlement. India found it prudent to follow the consensus line and revised the original draft accordingly into a compromising formula. This stressed the need for political settlement on the basis of withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan which was close to Pakistani proposal for withdrawal of Soviet troops although the Soviet Union was not named. The mention of strict observance of the principles of non-intervention, on the other hand, remained close to what India and also Soviet Union wanted. Indian

---
willingness to accommodate contending views made her draft got incorporated into the Final Declaration.\textsuperscript{110}

In a parallel effort India revised her original draft on Indian Ocean containing a specific reference to the American military base at Diego Garcia due to opposition made particularly by Sri Lanka that USSR should be named along with USA for building up naval power in the Ocean, if the area was to be kept as a zone of peace.\textsuperscript{111} This India did despite her continuing alarming perception about the offensive capability of the US base -- which could not be compared with other naval powers in the region, like France and USSR who were, too, increasing their military build-up in the Ocean.\textsuperscript{112} Eminent strategic analysts in India, also, came to the conclusion that because of size, vulnerability and lack of logistic support in the vast expanse of the Indian Ocean, Soviet military presence was far less formidable than those of the USA and could not be considered a "threat" or aggressive force in the region -- which the USA, taking the pretext of Soviet military presence in Afghanistan was trying to spread. In contrast to USA's increasing military build-up (which went beyond reasonable dimension), their reports on Soviet bases in the area were nothing but network of anchorage or berthing station used for replenishment and repair.\textsuperscript{113} At least on Diego Garcia an amount of similarity

\textsuperscript{110}Remark in \textit{The Statesman}, 9 February 1981.

\textsuperscript{111}\textit{The Hindustan Times}, 9 February 1981.


of perception developed. It may be noted that Indira Gandhi had agreed to name Diego Garcia in a joint call with Brezhnev for removal of bases in the Indian Ocean area, in the course of a joint declaration signed during his visit to India in December 1980.¹¹⁴

Notwithstanding this, in order to avoid division on the issue India agreed to allow compromise her draft by incorporating Sri Lanka's proposal. The revised draft without making mention of any particular power voiced concern at all the existing all foreign bases, installations and supply facilities which implied both the Soviet Union and the USA. The reference to the Soviet Union was also made clear by changing the word "navy" to "military" which could include Soviet Union as well. On the whole India's willingness to accommodate the contending views received appreciative remark in the Indian press.¹¹⁵

Whatever misapprehension was created initially by India's stand at the New Delhi ministerial conference was cleared in the Seventh Non-Aligned Summit held in Delhi in 1983. On Kampuchean issue, Narasimha Rao's decision in favour of vacant seat formula instead of creating dissatisfaction as it did in the 1981 Delhi Conference aroused appreciation from the ASEAN critics as a "positive contribution to non-alignment".¹¹⁶ On Afghanistan, too, India's difficulties had eased since by that time India had publicly pronounced her policy of urging


¹¹⁵ For a review see G.K. Reddy, "Non-Aligned Meet Ends with Consensus on Contentious Issues", The Hindu (Madras), 14 February 1981; also The Statesman, 12 February 1981.

¹¹⁶ Remark by the Foreign Minister of Singapore Dhanabalan in an interview with the press, cited in Indian Express (Delhi), 10 March 1983.
early withdrawal of Soviet troops which ran on the consensus line. In her keynote address at the summit, Indira Gandhi expressed India's opposition to "different types of interferences and interventions covert or overt" that were taking place and urged states to abide by the principle of "political independence of another state".\(^\text{117}\) She did single out the Diego Garcia in the militarisation and nuclearisation of the Indican Ocean as did India's draft declaration also, but India had been demanding that the entire Indian Ocean should be free from Great Power presence which included both the USA and the USSR.\(^\text{118}\) India, therefore, found no difficulty in revising the draft on Sri Lanka's request which without naming USA mentioned great power military presence, foreign bases, military installations which constitute violation of the UN declaration of IOPZ.\(^\text{119}\)

India's stand in the NAM forum fulfilled the hope placed on her to prevent the NAM's tilt towards the Soviet bloc and bring back the balance between the two powers. The handsome compliments paid to India after the Seventh Summit demonstrated that.\(^\text{120}\) It was evident that India refused to side with Moscow when NAM's solidarity was at stake. As an Indian analyst remarked candidly, "If the theory of socialist states being the natural ally of the NAM was buried at the New Delhi Conference its grave might be said to have been sealed by the seventh

\(^{117}\)From Indira Gandhi's keynote address cited in n.59, pp.46-47.

\(^{118}\)The MEA, *Report 1983-84*, p.iv, did not refer to Diego Garcia but "increasing naval and military presence of big powers".


\(^{120}\)Press reviews cited in Rajan, n.88, 54-55, fn.6-10.
India's tribute to Fidel Castro, her consistent policy of not referring to Soviet Union and Vietnam by name, occasional references to Diego Garcia were however, instances which proved that India remained sensitive of the Soviet Union. But, as Mrs. Gandhi said in an interview India supported the Soviet position not because she was perceived as the "natural ally" of the NAM or that USA was thought to be a "natural enemy" but because India found Soviet Union responsive to the causes of the non-aligned. Some dissatisfaction was reported from the Soviet Union that despite extensive lobbying India had yielded so easily to the attacks on the original draft. It was not surprising that the Soviet analysis of the NAM published in 1986 described India as one of the countries in the political centre of the NAM rather than on the left -- having progressive policies but unwilling to openly confront the imperialists. However, it must be noted that this could not disturb the inherent stability in the relationship. Soviet Union regarded India's non-alignment as an "important factor of peace" while India acknowledged that Soviet Union had accepted India's non-alignment as independence of action which in India's view was the essence of the policy. This made for abiding stakes in the mutuality of interests between the two countries without compromising on the national sensitivities of either.

121Rajan, ibid., p.71.

122Indira Gandhi's interview cited in Times of India, 13 March 1983.

123Translation from article by Kushpel and Fialkovsky, cited in Duncan, n.13, pp.62, 65.