Chapter Two

THE TREATY AT WORK: THE 1971 WAR
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The first crucial test of the Indo-Soviet Treaty came during the gathering crisis in East Pakistan. It was generally felt that the crucial test of the Treaty would be how it enabled India backed up by Soviet support to solve the East Pakistan crisis in a reasonable way, and within a specified time-frame.\(^1\) However, there was a lingering suspicion among a few members of Parliament that the Treaty being the manifestation of astute Soviet diplomacy of trying to restrain India in their own way, might restrict India's sovereignty to act independently on the East Pakistan crisis.\(^2\) In justification an analyst argued that the Soviet Union signed the Treaty in self-defence for prevention of any fresh war in the subcontinent involving China, but created the impression that she signed it to help India.\(^3\) In fact, the Soviet attitude towards India's policy on the crisis in the immediate post-Treaty period up to October substantiated such a suggestion. The Soviet behaviour seemed to convey the message that the Treaty could not be perceived as an automatic Soviet support to India for her policy towards East Pakistan. They were cautious to maintain some sort of status quo as between both of them so that a war

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\(^{1}\) Government of India, Lok Sabha, *Debates* (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat), vol.7, no.57, 10 August 1971, col.293.

\(^{2}\) Samar Guha stated, "Without entering into this Treaty, perhaps India had greater freedom to recognise Bangladesh ...certain clauses in this Treaty may stand in our way to act independently to give recognition to Bangladesh"; cited in ibid., col.325.

between India and Pakistan could be avoided. This led Kremlin leadership to take an ambiguous posture as to the type of political solution that was needed in East Pakistan to relieve India of burden of refugee influx caused by Yahya Khan's repressive policy. It was, however, due to India's firm determination to proceed with her chosen policy that Soviet Union gradually came to support India.

The situation changed visibly when Pakistan started the third Indo-Pak war on 3 December 1971 by an preemptive strike on India's important air fields in northern India and on India's ground position in the West. The Soviet Union was committed to support India in terms of article 9 of the Indo-Soviet Treaty. The mutual obligation implied in this article to come in support of the other contracting party in case it was attacked by a third party made Moscow committed to support India against Pakistan through "mutual consultations" and "effective measures", which could remove the threat to peace of the aggrieved party. It was true, about which there was speculation among some sections in India, that not being a defence pact like NATO or Warsaw (which implied automatic drawal of one Party in such a situation), technically speaking article 9 could not bind the Soviet Union to such a course of action, especially when nothing clearly was spelt out about the type of action that was to be taken under "effective measures". In reply the Foreign Minister maintained,

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4 The views by Samar Guha and S.L. Saksena in Lok Sabha, Debates, n.1, cols.326 & 329, respectively.
Defence pacts or military alliances are couched in such words and they have such connotation that there is atomic (sic) drawal of one party if there is action by the other party....Any body who has studied three articles, namely articles VIII, IX and X (of the Indo-Soviet Treaty) would agree that there is no such connotation ...But I want to make it absolutely clear that these articles no doubt do provide a framework ...within which steps can be taken by us to safeguard our security...which is important to us.3

Against this background this chapter will make an assessment of Soviet response to India's policy towards the East Pakistan crisis. The Soviet support to India during the Indo-Pakistan war will cover three such areas like, the Soviet role at the United Nations, Soviet role as a deterrent to China and the USA, and the Soviet military support to India during the war; among which the first bore the evidence of tangible Soviet support to India. While Soviet role will be discussed, there will be an attempt to show India's own initiative in these regards which went a long way in determining the Soviet policy and the result of the war.

**Indo-Soviet Diplomacy on the Crisis in East Pakistan**

Although the joint communiqué signed on 11 August 1971 immediately after the signing of the Treaty noted an identity of positions between the Treaty partners on the crisis, there was a double-edged assertion that there could be no "military solution of the crisis" and that the political settlement should be for the benefit of the "entire people of Pakistan".6 The communiqué was more in line with Moscow's preference indicating Moscow's inclination to

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3See Foreign Minister Swaran Singh's statement on August 10, during the debate over the Treaty in ibid., cols. 334-5.

6The Joint statement cited in Government of India, Ministry of External Affairs, *Foreign Affairs Record* (New Delhi), vol.17, no.8, August 1971, p.164; henceforth to be cited as *Foreign Affairs Record*. 
avoid a military conflict on this issue and a preference for a political solution within the framework of united Pakistan, both of which differed from India's perception. India's declared policy on the issue was that Sheikh Mujibur Rahman should be released without delay and negotiations should be started with him by the Pakistani authorities.7

It was only Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's strenuous efforts to persuade the Kremlin leaders to view the problem from India's perspective during her visit to Moscow in the last week of September that led Moscow to review her attitude to India's policy on East Pakistan. Kosygin's initial remark was far from satisfactory from the Indian point of view. His stress on the elimination of the threat of "further aggravation of Pakistani-Indian relations" in the cause of peace in the region, his idea of a political settlement "which would take into account the legitimate interests of her population"8 reflected Kremlin's greater interest in preservation of peace in the region and a political solution without undermining the unity of Pakistan. It was left to Mrs. Indira Gandhi to stress in her reply that the situation in East Pakistan was not an Indo-Pakistan dispute as was suggested by the Soviet leader but an international one which deserved to be solved by international community at large, which disappointedly had "fallen short" of the scale which such a grim tragedy demanded. Hoping that the Soviet effort to counsel Pakistan to reach a political settlement would be fruitful, she reminded the Soviet President that "peace calls for determined effort (and)...cannot be attained by waiting and


8Kosygin's speech of 28 September in Soviet Review (New Delhi, Information Department of USSR Embassy), supplement vol.9, no.3, 18 January 1972, p.16.
hoping but through action and perseverance”, indicating India's determination to take every possible step that was necessary in the interest of peace and stability in the subcontinent. She also hinted at the Soviet commitment to India under the Treaty in this context by noting that the Treaty had "important prospects of further cooperation between the two countries".9

Such a categorical and clear exposition of dimension of the crisis as was seen by India led to a shift in the Soviet attitude towards India's policy on East Pakistan crisis. The joint statement released on 29 September, in a separate paragraph took note of India's "determination" to take all necessary measures to stop the influx of the refugees into India and to ensure their return to homeland without delay. Her call for a political solution that would pay "due regard to the wishes and inalienable rights and lawful interests of the people of East Bengal" was also a clear advance from her earlier position of working for a political solution taking into account the "interest of the entire people of Pakistan".10 That they still hoped that a war on the subcontinent would be avoided was discernible when President Podgorny, during his visit to new Delhi immediately after Mrs. Gandhi's visit to Moscow, cautioned India against further sliding towards military conflict. He also showed hesitation in endorsing the views of President V.V. Giri that a political solution meant a solution arrived at in accordance with the wishes of the chosen representatives of the people of East Pakistan who were given a massive mandate in the December election. In reply to V.V. Giri's remark that the treaty

9See Prime Minister's speech on 28 September 1971 in Foreign Affairs Record, vol.17, no.9, September 1971, pp.190-93.

provided a firm legal and political basis for further strengthening the relations, Podgorny's remark was cautious when he said that the "Treaty was not directed against any country" and further strengthening of Indo-Soviet relations should not be "at the expense of deteriorating relations with a third country". 11

Indian analysts read in the Soviet attitude an unwillingness to undermine the political entity of Pakistan or foreclosing her option by taking a more decisive stand in favour of an independent Bangladesh. 12 It was, therefore, natural that Kosygin's anxiety for the "national unity and territorial integrity of Pakistan" expressed in a joint communiqué he signed with the Algerian President on 8 October 1971 would be criticised in Indian press as an instance of "Soviet diplomatic duplicity" of conveying different messages to India and the Arab countries. 13 An Indian analyst, after a content analysis of the statements of Soviet leaders and the articles published in the Soviet press during this period, came to the conclusion that the Treaty was perceived in Moscow as deterrent against aggression, a step towards preserving peace in the subcontinent buttressing their Tashkent achievement. 14 Therefore, there was

11 V.V.Giri's speech and Podgorny's reply cited in Foreign Affairs Record, vol.17, no.10, October 1971, pp.247, 248 respectively.


13 Indian Express (New Delhi), 15 October 1971; henceforth all references to Indian Express in this Chapter are to the Delhi edition of that newspaper.

some gap between the perceptions of the Soviet Union and India regarding the objective of the Treaty *vis-a-vis* the Bangladesh crisis.

It was from late October that a sign of change was noted in the Soviet position. Indira Gandhi's decision to make an extensive tour of the western countries seeking their support might be construed as the primary reason. In her broadcast to the nation on 23 October 1971, she stated that the tour was meant to apprise the western countries of the gravity of the situation and pleaded with them to exercise their influence upon Yahya Khan to see reason. Her appeal to the Indian citizens to be on alert and "meet the challenge in the spirit of courage, dignity and self-restraint", however, was a clear indication of India's determination to go ahead with her policy even if it involved India in a war.\(^{15}\) One can speculate that the hasty visit of the Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister, Nikolai Firyubin on 22 October 1971 just on the eve of Mrs. Gandhi's departure from Delhi was related to Moscow's reaction to Mrs. Gandhi's firm attitude. In the West Firyubin's visit was interpreted differently as an instance of Soviet attempt to urge restraint on Indira Gandhi and persuade the Awami League leader to accept autonomy for Bangladesh within a single Pakistan.\(^{16}\) There was no such indication in India's official comments. Firyubin's visit was stated to be a part of annual bilateral discussion but it was mentioned that the consultation was held "in the context of Article 9 of the Indo-Soviet Treaty", in which both sides were found to be in "full agreement in their assessment of the

\(^{15}\)Prime Minister's broadcast on 23 October 1971, cited in *Bangladesh Document*, n.7, p.251.

situation". That the operative clause of the Treaty (Article 9) had started working was clear.

The result of Mrs. Gandhi's tour was a further vindication of India's determination which the Kremlin leaders had to reckon with. Her statement in London on 31 October 1971 gave a glimpse of how India viewed the gravity of the problem in relation to the USSR. She said that India "had reached the limits of her patience... as if she were sitting on the top of a volcano". India had not turned to anybody, particularly the Soviet Union as it was supposed, although India was ready to accept any help that was offered in India's national interest. While she was in the USA she was more categorical in asserting India's determination of fighting for her interests even if she were alone. In her speech at the Columbia University on 6 November 1971, as also in her dialogue with the American President she indicated that India would not be found wanting in a generous response if the international community attempted to remove the root cause of the problem. In the meantime, India could not avoid the responsibility or the duty to safeguard the future of Indian population. Seeking to remove the misunderstanding created by the Treaty, she observed that by entering into a treaty of friendship India had not abandoned non-alignment at behest of the Soviets. There was a provision for "mutual consultation" in the Treaty, but it was "essentially a matter of India

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19 From Prime Minister's speech at the Columbia University on 4 November 1971, at the White House on 4 November 1971 and her interview in the NBC Television programme in the USA on 7 November 1971 cited in ibid., pp.263, 276-7.
to decide by herself" as to what decision India took in a particular situation. It was clear that India was not very much dependent on Moscow and was determined to follow the course of action she found necessary even if it did not suit Moscow's policy of maintaining a Tashkent posture of neutrality as between India and Pakistan.

Mrs. Gandhi's statement in Indian Parliament on 30 November 1971 after her tour of western countries convinced Moscow further in that direction. In a statement on 30 November in the Rajya Sabha she said,

We cannot depend on the international community or even countries which I visited to solve our problem for us. We appreciate their sympathy and moral and political support but the brunt of the burden has to be borne by us....So far the threat to security is concerned we must be prepared to safeguard our sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Noting that the people of Bangladesh would not settle for less than liberation she added,

We cannot allow the annihilation of the people next door to us. It is not in our national interest....We shall meet any threat to our freedom. The present threat is not merely a threat to our security but a threat to the very foundation on which India is built...  

There could not be any clearer statement on India's firm determination to resolve the East Pakistan crisis. She also indicated India's independence from Moscow in this pursuit. In reply to M. Ruthaswamy's remark that the Treaty was a "handicap" in India's baggage by placing her in the "midst of Russian sphere of influence" she meaningfully remarked that she did not

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21 See Prime Minister's statement in Rajya Sabha in Government of India, Rajya Sabha, Debates (New Delhi : Rajya Sabha Secretariat), vol.78, nos.1-12, 30 November 1971, cols.216, 234-5.
know who was handicapped. At least India was not and she was not going to change her policy due to the Treaty.22

From November a distinct change was noted in the tones of the articles published in the Soviet press where responsibility was clearly fixed on Pakistan for bringing the two subcontinental powers to the brink of war whereas references were made to India's support to liberation forces and the firm determination of the Indian Government to solve the refugee problem which posed a threat to her economic and political viability. Indian press reported on the Soviet reference for the first time to the resistance movement as a "national liberation movement with element of a civil war".23 The Soviet Union had started showing conviction in India's belief that a political solution of an independent Bangladesh could solve the refugee problem and this should be achieved even if it was through a military conflict with Pakistan which almost became a certainty. The earlier Soviet policy of maintaining a posture of a broker of peace in the subcontinent by avoiding Indo-Pakistan conflict was now abandoned in favour of a position closer to India.

22See Ruthaswamy's remark and Prime Minister's reply in ibid., cols.193 and 231-2 respectively.

Soviet Diplomacy at the United Nations

When the war broke out on 3 December 1971 the diplomatic war at the United Nations followed the perceptions of the respective countries involved in the crisis. Although, the United States admitted that Yahya Khan's repressive policies had caused immense hardship to India and that a fundamental political accommodation had not been achieved in East Pakistan to relieve India from that hardship, she maintained that this could not be a sufficient reason for "India's repeated violation of the frontiers" in support of the guerrillas which escalated the tension between India and Pakistan resulting in the eruption of war. A humanitarian problem could not be solved by war. George Bush, speaking before the Security Council on 4 December brought an indirect charge of aggression against India and urged the Council to put an end to hostilities by a call of ceasefire. USA's real purpose in involving the UN, as could be inferred from the discussion at the meeting of the Washington Special Action Group (WSAG) on December 3 and 4, was to "prevent military action" by India rather than bringing about autonomy of East Pakistan. It was, therefore, decided that the US policy in the Security Council would be to stress on "immediate ceasefire and cessation of hostility", while with regard to political solution of the crisis it would go along "general terms without implying any specifics about the release of Mujib". George Bush, therefore, submitted a resolution calling

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26 Report of the proceedings of the meeting of the Washington Special Action Group (WSAG) (continued...
for ceasefire and cessation of hostilities and withdrawal of armed personnel from the territory of the other to own side of the India-Pakistan border to be monitored by an UN observer. In response to US resolution the Chinese delegate proposed that the Council should not only call for immediate ceasefire and withdrawal of forces by each party but should also "condemn" the Indian aggression and demand unconditional withdrawal of Indian troops from Pakistan territory.

US-Chinese position on the war in the subcontinent and their proposal for immediate ceasefire and cessation of hostilities provided Pakistan with a diplomatic umbrella at the United Nations. Pakistan’s major concern was to maintain her integrity by retaining East Pakistan through UN intervention -- a line which it was pursuing since July. The Pakistani Ambassador Agha Shahi openly charged India for her avowed goal of bringing about Pakistan’s disintegration. He said that by making refugee repatriation conditional upon political settlement with a group who wanted dismemberment of Pakistan, India was appearing to demand from Pakistan her own dismemberment. Moreover, he maintained that by coordinating activity with the Mukti Bahini India had launched an aggression on Pakistan. The fact that they were organised, financed, given arms and equipment and furnished bases in India meant that they

26 (...continued) in Marta Nicholas, Philip Oldenburg, Bangladesh: The Birth of a Nation (Madras, 1972), Appendix 10, pp.116, 119, 120.

27 UN Doc/S/10416 cited in Bangladesh Document, n.7, pp.334-5; A Similar Eight Nation Draft Resolution sponsored by western initiative, mainly Argentina (UN Doc/S/110423) was also tabled along with the US draft resolution, see ibid., pp.226-7.

28 Speech of the Chinese Ambassador in Nicholas and Oldenburg, n.26, p.74.
were nothing but "irregular Indian forces", and their continuing sabotage accompanied by the Indian forces constituted an "aggression by India".²⁹ Both US and China, thus, supported Pakistan in pressurising India to terminate the war through a UN call for ceasefire.

This was precisely what India sought to prevent with the help of Soviet diplomatic support at the United Nations. Samar Sen, the Indian delegate to the United Nations maintained that the war for which the ceasefire was called upon was a war which was neither started by India nor provoked by it. India had to retaliate in self-defence since she was the victim, first of a civil aggression in the east and then of an unprovoked military aggression by Pakistan in the West. To make the situation worse Pakistan was trying to internationalise the issue through various moves in the United Nations which had no relation, whatsoever, with the basic issue of political settlement with Mujib which was the only way left for a lasting solution of the problem. The continued rush of refugees to India despite Yahya Khan’s announcement of some farcical measures for civilian rule and declaration of amnesty bore evidence of that. Ultimately West Pakistan had escalated and enlarged the aggression against Bangladesh into "full scale war against India" on December 3, 1971, India being the victim of four aggressions earlier could not allow its security to be jeopardised by further aggression and had to retaliate through proper counter-military measures for defending her sovereignty and integrity. Sen expressed disagreement with the US resolution stating that India could not be involved in a "dishonest agreement" knowing fully well that with this kind of ceasefire Pakistan’s soldiers would be

released to carry on their rampage and India had no desire to oppress the people who had already been oppressed.  

Samar Sen's statement at the United Nations was backed by the statement made by India's defence Minister Jagjivan Ram in Indian Parliament. He justified India's military operation by noting "we have stood for peace, but peace has to be defended. Today, we are fighting to safeguard our territorial integrity and national honour. Above all we are fighting for ...the cause of freedom". The Government decision was supported by all the Members of Opposition. They expressed hope that through military operation India would help in the emergence of a new independent sovereign Bangladesh and would defend the Indian soil from Pakistani aggression. Some members even maintained with indirect reference to Moscow that the war should be decisive and there should not be "another Tashkent" through any pressure or any persuasion brought on India by any outside power. As a nation India had to

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30 Samar Sen's statement at the Security Council on December 4 and 5 cited in Bangladesh Document, n.7, pp.428-29 and SCOR, ibid., p.17, para 171 respectively.

31 Jagjivan Ram's statement in Lok Sabha on 4 December 1971 in India, Lok Sabha, Debates, vol.78, nos.13-31, 4 December 1971, col.3.

32 S. Gurupadaswamy said, "through its action India will establish permanent peace and stability in this subcontinent"; Bhupesh Gupta said, the act of aggression on the part of the Pakistan rulers will "only strengthen India's determination to render more assistance to the Bangladesh liberation struggle"; K.P. Subramani Menon noted that if in presence of the desire expressed by Indian people to help the people of Bangladesh India had to face a war with Pakistan, people will unitedly support India's action; cited in ibid., cols.,5, 9 and 12 respectively.
win the war. It was clear that India had no intention to bow down even to any Soviet effort to urge restraint on India as it had been doing in the period preceding the war.

The Soviet stand at the United Nations helped India defuse the US-China-Pakistani charge of aggression on Pakistan by India. The Soviet Ambassador Jacob Malik supported implicitly India’s military operation. Referring to India’s military incursion across the border on 21 November about which great hue and cry was raised by international community, Malik remarked,

What self-respecting state which cares for her security is not going to deploy part of her armed forces to the territory where there was this onrush of 10 million refugees?

The Soviet Ambassador also viewed the refugee problem and the problem of political solution in East Pakistan from Indian perspective. He apprised the Council that the unprecedented flow of 10 million refugees—number bigger than the population of any of 88 small Member States of the United Nations was a calamity which no state would be willing to face. India’s resolve to take all necessary measures to stop the flow of refugees into India and ensure their speedy return to their homeland was justified in that situation. Since the root cause of the crisis was ruthless suppression of the democratic aspiration of the people of East Pakistan, India rightly called for a political solution which would take into “account the will and the inalienable rights and lawful interests of its population”. But the international

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33 Statement by Kalyanasundaram and Gurupadaswamy cited in ibid., cols.14 and 15 respectively.

34 See The speech by Jacob Malik cited in Bangladesh Document, n.7, p.440.
community refused to deal with the root cause apprehending that it would be an interference in Pakistan's internal affairs. Under these circumstances the US resolution and the Eight Nation Resolution sponsored by it along with Argentina, which recognised one aspect of the need for ceasefire at the expense of the vital aspect of the need for political solution, ignored the "reality" of the situation, which demanded "linking the question of ceasefire with the question of need for political settlement". The Soviet Ambassador vetoed the US resolution S/10416 as well as the Eight Nation Resolution moved by Argentina calling for ceasefire, and subsequently tabled a Soviet draft proposal S/10457 calling for ceasefire and cessation of hostilities on eastern and western fronts, along with a call on Pakistani Government to take measures to cease all acts of violence and achieve political settlement on the crisis according to the will of the people as expressed in 1970 election.

Soviet proposal gave indication of its anxiety, too, to end the conflict so that peace could be maintained in the subcontinent. In his speech, the Soviet Ambassador consistently referred to Soviet objective of maintaining peace in the subcontinent in the "spirit of Tashkent". It is to be noted that on 3 and 4 December Tass home service and broadcasts in foreign language carried brief reports on war without making any comment. In a statement on December 4 the Soviet Premier Kosygin remarked that peace could return to the subcontinent only if Pakistani armed forces withdrew from the borders of India in both eastern and western

35 See Jacob Malik's speech on 4 and 5 December 1971 cited in Bangladesh Document, p.440 and SCOR, n.29, pp.11 and 12, paras 120 and 129 respectively.


37 SWB, series 2, 6 December 1971, SU/387/1.
sectors. In view of Soviet anxiety for peace in the subcontinent one can only speculate whether the USSR, too, made return to normalcy a condition for political settlement in East Pakistan which India had been opposing. But the Soviet decision to link the question of ceasefire with the need for a political settlement according to the will of the people as expressed in 1970 election gave substance to India's call for a political settlement with Mujib although the Soviet delegate did not expressly come out in support of Mujib. The Soviet veto on two western sponsored resolutions calling for ceasefire also benefited India and fulfilled its objective of blocking the passage of any such resolution till the liberation of Bangladesh was achieved.

The two consecutive Soviet vetoes in the Security Council, in fact, put an end to the latter's efforts to adopt any measure to stop the war. USA now promptly moved the issue to the General Assembly under the General Assembly "Uniting for Peace Resolution" (377A of November 3, 1950), stating that while in the Security Council any such initiative towards ceasefire was going to be a failure due to Soviet support to India, the General Assembly which represented 136 countries could exert pressure on India for ceasefire.38

The meeting of the General Assembly started on 7 December 1971, with Ambassador Bush placing on India the "major responsibility" for broadening the crisis by spurning the efforts of the UN and those of the US which could have begun the process of dialogue leading towards a political settlement of the crisis in East Pakistan. He took the initiative in getting a resolution submitted by Argentina later revised into a 14-Nation Draft Resolution A/1647 Rev.

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38From the proceedings of the WSAG meeting on December 6, 1971, cited in Nicholas and Oldenburg, n.26, pp.122-5.
I. The resolution was merely a ceasefire resolution containing no concrete proposal for political settlement except expressing "conviction" of its necessity, with an added provision calling full cooperation with the Secretary General for assistance to the refugees.\textsuperscript{39} It is evident that USA still continued to see the problem as a humanitarian one and made political solution conditional upon cessation of military conflict, a view which India opposed. Notwithstanding this, when placed for the voting the resolution won substantial victory being adopted by an overwhelming 104 votes in its favour with only 11 votes against (including India and the Soviet Union), and 114 abstentions.\textsuperscript{40}

Both for diplomatic and military reasons India was unable to accept the US resolution. Diplomatically India's announcement of formal recognition of the Democratic Republic of Bangladesh on 6 December 1971 had committed her irrevocably to the complete independence of Bangladesh from West Pakistan which was reflected in Indira Gandhi's statement that "The People of Bangladesh battling for their very existence and the people of India fighting to defeat aggression now found themselves parties in the same cause".\textsuperscript{41} Militarily the speedy advance of Indian forces throughout East Pakistan had made Indian occupation of East Pakistan almost a fait accompli as was evident from the Defence Minister's information to Parliament about elimination of Pakistani Air Force by IAF and successful operation of the Indian Eastern Fleet

\textsuperscript{39}DOC A/L 647 in \textit{Bangladesh Document}, n.7, p.340.

\textsuperscript{40}UN, General Assembly Official Record (New York), session 26, plenary meetings, 1971, p.3; henceforth to be cited as \textit{GAOR}.

\textsuperscript{41}From Mrs. Gandhi's statement in Lok Sabha on recognition of Bangladesh on 6 December 1971, in Lok Sabha, \textit{Debates}, n.31 December 6, 1971, cols.24-25.
off the Pakistani occupied coast of Bangladesh—the fall of Dacca remaining to be matter of days only.\(^4\) On the basis of these developments Samar Sen expressed India's disapproval of the US resolution and placed India's condition of ceasefire dependent upon the recognition of reality of the day i.e., Bangladesh. Carrying his government's justification of recognition he apprised the members of the legality of the claim of Bangladesh emanating not only from the fact that it represented what Jefferson said, "will of the people substantially expressed", but in the prevailing international norm if the mother state became the minority state and was unable to bring the people under control who were in a majority then the latter will have the right to rule -- a fact that had precisely happened in Bangladesh. Despite recognition of this fact India had hesitated in according formal recognition to Bangladesh under the apprehension that this might precipitate the crisis. Pakistan's declaration of war on India removed such hesitation on India's part to recognise Bangladesh which was the "reality of the situation". In this situation there could not be any ceasefire unless it took into account the Mukti Bahini; and no withdrawal of forces unless the Pakistani forces withdrew from Bangladesh and started negotiation with Mujib for a peaceful political settlement, he said.\(^4\) It was clear that India was firm in its decision to continue its military co-operation with the Liberation Forces until independent Bangladesh was born.

\(^4\)See Jagjivan Ram's statement in Lok Sabha on 7 December 1971, in *ibid.*, cols. 80-82.

Moscow could not take a similar stand because till then she had not accorded formal recognition to Bangladesh. But despite this Moscow's decision to oppose the US resolution on ceasefire helped India to continue its diplomatic fight in the United Nations in favour of Bangladesh, although Moscow's concern at the prolongation of war was also visible. Jacob Malik's review of the US resolution was on parallel line with that of India-that it was "one sided" stressing on one side of the problem of ceasefire -- crucial though indeed, but completely overlooking the other side, rather the crux of the problem, namely political settlement in East Pakistan. Without political settlement which alone could eradicate the "root cause" of the problem no lasting peace could be achieved in the subcontinent, it was contended. By consistently linking political solution with ceasefire Moscow could bring before the international community the vital problem related to East Pakistan crisis and could give public support to India's principled stand that political settlement through dialogue with Mujib was the condition for ceasefire. Moscow's stand was appreciated in India as "preventing escalation of the Indo-Pakistan war into a world war".

From Soviet stand at the Security Council and the General Assembly it can inferred that though Jacob Malik consistently opposed the US ceasefire resolution taking the Indian line of argument, her concern at the internationalisation of the war through its prolongation could be visible in the same breath. It should be remembered that USSR draft resolution on S/10418

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44 See Jacob Malik's speech on 7 December 1971 in the General Assembly in GAOR, ibid, p.36, paras 394-6.

proposed on 4 December called upon the Government of Pakistan to take measures to cease all acts of violence by Pakistani forces in East Pakistan which had led to the deterioration of the situation, although it linked it with the call for a political settlement in East Pakistan which would inevitably result in cessation of conflicts.\textsuperscript{46} It appears, therefore, that the Soviet emphasis on early political settlement was made with the hope that it would lead to cessation of the conflict in which Soviet Union, too, was interested. It was, therefore, no surprise that Brezhnev would stress "for an end to the bloodshed on the subcontinent" while he talked for a political settlement of the problem on the basis of lawful rights of the people "without outside interference" -- indicating Moscow's continuing concern at the possibility of involvement of other great powers in the conflict.\textsuperscript{47} Several articles published by Soviet authors at that time expressed these dual threads in Moscow's perception, i.e., ceasefire and political settlement. While pointing out the hypocrisy in western proposal for ceasefire they stressed that Soviet interest in ceasefire and simultaneous political settlement emanated from Moscow's concern for peace in the subcontinent which apart from the interest of India and Pakistan was necessary for Soviet security as well.\textsuperscript{48}

\textsuperscript{46}For S/10418 USSR draft resolution of 4 December 1971 see \textit{SCOR}, supplement, year 26, January-December 1981, p.91.

\textsuperscript{47}From Brezhnev's speech on December 7 in Warsaw at the 6th Congress of the Polish United Workers Party cited in \textit{Soviet Review}, n.8, p.53.

\textsuperscript{48}See I. Physhevsky's article, Remove the Source of Crisis in the Subcontinent" \textit{Tass}, December 8, 1971, cited in ibid., pp.43-44; Mikhail Krylov, "Stop Bloodshed and Ensure Non-Involvement of Outside Forces", Ibid., pp.52-53; Spartok Beglov, "Indian Subcontinent: Third Act of Tragedy", ibid., p.42.
Second Phase of UN Deliberations: A Crucial Phase in Indo-Soviet Diplomacy

During the second phase of UN deliberation which started with an emergency session of the Security Council on December 12, 1971, Soviet support to India deserved appreciation considering the intense pressure that Washington put on Moscow to restrain India. America's assessment of India's intention became more ominous by this time. It was apprehended that India before heading for a United Nations call for ceasefire was contemplating the seizure of the Pakistani held portion of Kashmir and the destruction of Pakistan's armour and air force capabilities in the West.\(^4\) This suspicion was strengthened with India expressing its inability to abide by the General Assembly resolution for ceasefire\(^5\) and L.K. Jha's (Indian Ambassador to the US) noncommittal stand regarding India's territorial claims to Kashmir on the argument that Kashmir belonged to India and that Pakistani part of it (POK) was illegally held by Pakistan.\(^6\) In the US view Moscow was probably reconciled to such a stand since Brezhnev's letter to Nixon of December 9 and 10 discharged India's territorial ambition in West Pakistan but remained silent on the key issue of Kashmir.\(^7\) Dismemberment of West Pakistan by joint Indo-Soviet effort had been perceived by the US Government to have international implications of grave importance. The key issue before USA, therefore, was not

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\(^4\)Richard Helm's view in the WSAG meeting on December 8, 1971; cited in Nicholas and Oldenburg, n.26, p.128.

\(^5\)India's letter to the UN Secretary General on 12 December 1971 cited in Bangladesh Document, n.7, pp.347-50.


\(^7\)Ibid., pp.903, 908-9.
the autonomy of East Pakistan which was almost certain, but to prevent the disintegration of West Pakistan which India allegedly aimed at, encouraged by the Soviet Union. All that USA required was an assurance from both India and the Soviet Union that there would be no attack on West Pakistan and no amputation of Kashmir. For this USA decided to put pressure on the Soviet Union so that it could restrain India. Threat of cancellation of US-USSR summit was sought to be used since Moscow’s greater interest was involved here. A letter on December 10 from Nixon to Brezhnev contained USA’s treaty obligation towards Pakistan to assist her in case of India’s attack on her. This was followed by a sterner one sent on hot line on 12 December, which after stressing on the urgent necessity of an "immediate standstill ceasefire" seemed to hold the possibility of cancellation of the summit in case the conflict continued. President Nixon also informed President Brezhnev that the US Seventeenth Fleet with its more powerful nuclear armada Enterprise was being sent to the Bay of Bengal on December 10, 1971.53

This was the background of the second session of the Security Council. In his opening speech on 12 December, 1971 the US Ambassador directly accused India of its "persistent preference for the use of force to peaceful means" and thwarting the emergence of a solution. With East Pakistan virtually occupied by Indian troops the continuation of war in his view "would take increasingly the character of armed attack on the very existence of the Member State of the United Nation". India, should in that context, give clarification of her "further intentions", whether it intended to annex territories in West Pakistan, destroy Pakistani army

53 Ibid., pp.903-4, 909-10.
in the West or to take a position on the Pak-occupied Kashmir territory contrary to Security Council resolutions of 1948, 49 and 1950. Urging upon the Council the immediate need to halt the military operation by India he tabled a resolution calling upon the Government of India to accept forthwith a "standstill ceasefire and withdrawal of force as required by the General Assembly resolution", which in US view would virtually amount to autonomy for East Pakistan.\footnote{See George Bush's Statement on 12 December 1971 in \textit{SCOR}, year 26, meeting 1611, 12 December 1611, 12 December 1971, p.3, paras 26-28.}

India wanted to be sure that the proposed autonomy should lead to the establishment of an independent Bangladesh. India could not accept any ceasefire agreement unless the representative of Bangladesh (Abu Syed Chowdhury) was given a hearing and was made a party to the ceasefire agreement. The Foreign Minister indicated in an interview to \textit{New York Times} on the same day that in the prevailing situation it was "futile" to consider the possibility of normal and peaceful conditions without the people of Bangladesh. An atmosphere must be created for the smooth withdrawal of West Pakistani forces from Bangladesh so that the people in that county could take their future in their own hands. The international community failed to take note of this essential point and placed the charge against India that she sought to delay action in the Security Council in order to achieve military victory in East Pakistan. India, he said had no territorial designs against the territories of Bangladesh an did not go there as an occupation army.\footnote{Interview on December 12, 1971, cited in \textit{Bangladesh Document}, n.7, pp.300, 301-2.} But India could not agree to a ceasefire and wanted continuation of the war in East Pakistan because, as can be inferred from Defence Minister Jagjivan Ram's
statement in Parliament that till then the Mukti Bahini and the Indian forces acting under unified command could not free the whole area of East Pakistan from the occupying force. Although Pakistan's air force had been virtually eliminated and India's Eastern Fleet was in complete command on the approaches to all parts of Bangladesh fall of Dacca was still awaiting.\textsuperscript{56} Since India's primary objective in the war was to assist the people of Bangladesh and their Mukti Bahini to liberate their country from a reign of terror, India could not agree to a ceasefire without completing the task.\textsuperscript{57}

Swaran Singh, therefore, categorically pointed out at the session that no resolution could be of any "practical value" if it did not recognise the existence of Bangladesh. From this point of view, the US sponsored resolution was unacceptable to India for being one-sided stressing on ceasefire without any reference to the fundamental point of political settlement.\textsuperscript{58} Swaran Singh emphasised the right of the people of Bangladesh to be heard in any discussion of the problem, the right of the people of Bangladesh to be made a party to any ceasefire agreement, and a political solution to the situation in Bangladesh as already declared by 1970 election. If

\textsuperscript{56}Statement by Jagjivan Ram in Lok Sabha on 9 and 14 December 1971 cited in Lok Sabha, \textit{ Debates}, n.31, 9 December and 14 December, cols.39, 88-89 respectively.

\textsuperscript{57}From Defence Minister's statement on "Unconditional Surrender by the West Pakistan force in Bangladesh" cited in ibid., col.124.

\textsuperscript{58}See Swaran Singh's speech on 12 December in \textit{SCOR}, n.54, pp.13&14, paras 125, 135 respectively.
these were accepted India was willing to bring a ceasefire without delay, said the Foreign Minister. India's commitment to the emergence of Bangladesh was thus categorical.

The Soviet Union was faced with a dilemma. Writings by the Soviet analysts at that time underlined Soviet anxiety to avoid involvement of outside powers (meaning China and USA) in the conflict. President Nixon's diplomatic and military pressure on Moscow to restrain India added another dimension to this. On the other hand Moscow became convinced that India was determined to continue operation until independent Bangladesh emerged. In Indian Parliament eminent members expressed the view that there was no question of ceasefire on India's part till the military attack had been completely defeated. Moscow, therefore, believed that the sooner a political settlement was achieved in Pakistan, India would agree to a ceasefire which was urgently required to bring peace in the subcontinent and avoid involvement by USA or China.

The Soviet delegate, therefore, chose to support India's policy of sponsoring Bangladesh at the UN forum by linking the liberation movement with Lenin's theory of "self-determination". His observation was that "who can cite a similar situation when 10 million people figuratively speaking voted with their feet as a sign of protest against the intolerable

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61 See the views by Bhupesh Gupta and Niranjan Verma in Lok Sabha on 13 December, 1971 in Lok Sabha, Debates, n.31, 13 December 1971, cols.78 and 83-84 respectively.
condition created for them in their own homeland and move to another country". This substantiated India's position that no one could deny the lawful right of the Awami League who represented the will of the 75 million people East Pakistan, to decide whether to stay in a federation or to turn into a separate state. He did not find unjustified on this ground India's proposal for inviting the representative of Bangladesh to make a statement before the Council and make him a party to the ceasefire agreement-since he recognised them to be a "definite and real third force", extremely useful for coming to a decision. In a parallel effort towards the establishment of Bangladesh the Soviet Union took the unusual step of vetoing on the third successive occasion the US draft proposal for standstill ceasefire. Justifying the veto Jacob Malik used almost identical argument as of India that ceasefire in complete isolation from the aspect of political settlement on the basis of the lawful rights of the people of East Pakistan as expressed in 1970 December election, in effect, meant only a "freezing of the conflict" in the Indian subcontinent without creating conditions under which the refugees could go back to their countries. After nine months of repression the Pakistani authorities could not be expected to ensure that guarantee which could only be done by the lawful representatives of the people of Bangladesh. By vetoing the US resolution, the Soviet delegate gave substance to the Indian claim that Indian army entered Bangladesh along with the Mukti Bahini to assist them in liberating the country and not as an occupation army, and that there could not be an end to

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[64] Ibid., p.16, paras 164, 166, 177.
conflict unless this objective was served. That Soviet Union believed that India had no territorial ambition in East Pakistan was also made apparent in Soviet statements.

Soviet stand with respect to the allegation against India of having territorial ambition in the West also comforted India. Indian leaders had insisted on several occasions that India had no such ambition in the West. Mrs. Gandhi's letter to President Nixon of 15 December 1971 clearly said,

We are asked what we want. We seek nothing for ourselves. We do not want any territory of what was East Pakistan and now constitute Bangladesh. We do not want any territory of West Pakistan...\(^65\)

While this was true, India certainly had some military objectives in the West, especially on the ceasefire line area of Kashmir—which could not be equated with a desire of conquest. India's Defence Ministry outlined the "defensive-offensive" objective of India's war in West Pakistan with a view to "disrupt the aggression on India's soil".\(^66\) In fact one month earlier India's Minister of State for Defence Production, Vidya Charan Shukla expressed such an idea by remarking that India was determined to defeat any attack on her territory and carry the war "to the soil of the aggressor" if it so demanded.\(^67\) All these indicated that by capturing some important outposts held by Pakistan in Azad Kashmir India intended to secure a more durable

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\(^{65}\)From the letter of Indira Gandhi to President Nixon on 15 December cited in Bangladesh Document, n.7, p.304.


frontier in Kashmir which would make the border more defendable and would ensure a better bargaining position for India in settlement of the Kashmir dispute with Pakistan. In fact, Defence Minister's elaboration of India's strong defence position in Kargill, Tithwal, Chhamb and Kutch sectors indicated that India succeeded in occupying important posts and if the war was continued India's position in Azad Kashmir would have been strong.

But India did not continue the war. On 17 December, 1971 she unilaterally declared ceasefire on the western front bringing an end to the conflict without UN intervention. Announcing it in Indian Parliament Mrs. Gandhi stated the India's commitment to uphold and defend human right demanded "immediate cessation of the use of force and of the massacre of the defenceless people of Bangladesh". But the west interpreted it differently. The Nixon Administration described the Indian decision of ceasefire in the West as a "reluctant" one resulting from "Soviet pressure which in turn grew out of America's insistence, including fleet movement, and the willingness to risk the summit". The presence of the Soviet First Deputy Foreign Minister, V.V. Kuznetsov in Delhi and his continuing stay till 16 December was interpreted by them as Soviet effort in pressurising India to accept territorial status quo in the

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69Jagjivan Ram's statement in Lok Sabha on 9 and 14 December 1971, in Lok Sabha, Debates, n.31, cols. 87-88 and 139-40 respectively.
70Announcement of Indian Prime Minister in Lok Sabha in ibid., col.78.
West including Kashmir. Indian leaders categorically denied these allegations. In an interview for a renowned American magazine on 3 January 1972 Indira Gandhi stated firmly,

The decision was made right here, at the moment of the surrender in Dacca. We were able to inform the Soviet Union right away only because Mr. Kuznetsov happened to be here. I am not a person to be pressurised by anybody or any nation."

Indian Foreign Secretary's remark was sterner. Appreciating Kuznetsov for not putting any pressure on India on this score he meaningfully remarked, "So far as West Pakistan was concerned he did not need to and so far Kashmir was concerned he would not dare". As a reputed journalist stated, the Prime Minister wanted to declare ceasefire in the West on 16 December itself when she announced unconditional surrender by the West Pakistan Force in Bangladesh and the resultant ceasefire in the East. Since the draft was not ready she could not. That the decision was purely Indira Gandhi's was evident from the fact that it was not

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71 Cited from Kissinger, n.51, p.913; in an interview on 26 December President Nixon commented that USA's misunderstanding about the Soviets was removed by this instance of Soviet Union exerting restraint on India which had helped in bringing about ceasefire, putting an end to a war that inevitably would have led to dismemberment of West Pakistan, cited in Robert Jackson, *South Asian Crisis : India, Pakistan and Bangladesh* (London, IISS, 1975), p.161.


74 Quoting from Prime Minister's short discussion with Sharada Prasad while she was on way to making the announcement in Parliament on 16 December in Inder Malhotra, *Indira Gandhi* (London, 1989), p.141.
even discussed in Parliament arousing reservation among some; but there was unanimity among
the members on the desirability of such a decision. 75

The Russians did not appear to have differed with this Indian objective. The Soviet
appreciation right up to the end continued to be that India did not aim at the conquest of
Pakistan. This became Jacob Malik's draft proposal calling on Pakistan to end conflict by a
political settlement on the basis of the lawful rights of the people of East Pakistan as expressed
in 1970 elections. 76 Soviet writings during that time referred to Government of India's
reiteration that India had no territorial claims to Pakistan, and referred to the "hypocritical"
stand of US and its allies who while standing for peace on the Indian subcontinent neglected
this basic issue while moving resolutions for ceasefire only. 77 The statement by Soviet
Foreign Ministry "welcomed" the Indian initiative confirming her peaceful intention by
unilateral ceasefire in the West along with the cessation of military operation in the East and
its reiteration of having no territorial claims to Pakistan and described it as a "constructive
step". 78

75 Pitambar Das expressed reservation in Lok Sabha Debates, n.31, cols.81-82; but,
Gurupadaswamy said that there should be no controversy, ibid., col.85.

76 Jacob Malik's statement on December 15, SCOR, year 26, meeting 1615, 15 December

77 See articles in Soviet Press, V. Kudryavtsev (Izvestia political analyst), "Flames over South
Asia", 15 December 1971, Soviet Review, n.8, p.55; Shurvein, "For Peace on the Indian
Subcontinent", ibid., p.60. A military analyst even appreciated India's restraint in not realising
her advantage despite military superiority over Pakistan. Syavteslav Kozlov, "Lesson of Indo-
Pakistan Military Conflict", cited in ibid., p.76.

On the whole Soviet stand at the United Nations was simply outstanding. India could use article 9 of the Indo-Soviet Treaty to its advantage. Moscow was committed to veto all western initiatives to pressurise India to halt military operation through a UN call for ceasefire. This was what Indian policy aimed at. Soviet veto foiled the American policy which was crucial for India to achieve its objective of liberation of Bangladesh. It should also be remembered that Soviet Union was opposing ceasefire and withdrawal of forces which she was herself encouraging in the Arab-Israel war. Western analysts like Robert Jackson exaggerated Soviet role at the United Nation as "adding a new chapter to the history of post-war relations between a Super Power and a client state". However, the Indian government did appreciate the Soviet Union's "consistent principled stand" at the United Nations in stressing the need of political settlement when most of the nations missed this essential fact by stressing on the unknown danger of dismemberment of a country. But the telling point that emerges from a review of Indian and Soviet diplomacy at the United Nations is that it was India's determination and consistent stand on the need for a political solution even at the cost of prolongation of the war that persuaded Soviet Union to adopt this principled attitude.


Soviet Deterrent Strategy

An Indian analyst brought to notice the consistent pattern of involvement by the outside powers as "actors" and "managers" in the conflicts in South Asia. In the case of the Indo-Pakistan war of 1971 reports of involvement of US, China and USSR were carried mainly in Pakistani and western sources and that, too, during the post-war period. The generally cited western source was that of Jack Anderson, a famous American columnist, who in a post-war disclosure cited some CIA and US Defence Intelligence reports substantiating the possibility of triangular involvement of US, China and the Soviet Union in the last phase of war. As evidence of US-Chinese involvement he referred to the reports of the White House decision on 10 December to assemble in Malacca Straits an US Task Force spearheaded by the Navy's most powerful nuclear battleship Enterprise and to reports of the Chinese passing weather data for location in Tibet and along the Sino-Indian border since 8 December, indicating some form of alert posture by China. As for Soviet counteraction to these he referred to the assurance given by the Soviet Ambassador Pegov to India that the Soviet Union would take "diversionary" action in the Sinkiang if the Chinese happened to come down to intervene in Ladakh and also that Soviet Union had sent its Pacific fleet to chase the US fleet with the assurance that it would not allow the Indian Ocean become an "American lake". The post-war revelation by Henry Kissinger (the National Security Adviser to President Nixon) bore a

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direct evidence of US collaboration with the Chinese during the December war. Though he himself regarded it as an "extraordinary affair", he said, in the US global interest of not straining its precarious relation with China, Nixon took the decision on 12 December 1971 "to risk war, for the first time, in the triangular Soviet-Chinese-American relations to maintain global balance of power" for saving Pakistan. The US Seventh Fleet, according to his information, was sent for the dual purposes of scaring off an attack on West Pakistan and to assist China if the Soviet Union retaliated in response to Chinese intervention. Pakistani sources, too, gave indication that Yahya Khan was assured of last minute rescue operation by USA and China which was confirmed in the exchange of dialogue that took place between Dacca and Islamabad on 12 December 1971. Such indications were not available in Indian official records. Paradoxically instead of the probability of the Chinese meddling in war indications were available about the willingness on part of both China and India to develop relationship on a friendly basis. Concrete gesture to that effect like China's invitation to the Indian Table Tennis team to visit China to participate in the Afro-Asian Table tennis tournament, India's announcement to send unilaterally ambassador to China and withdrawing police posts outside Chinese Embassy were referred to. Military planners, too thought of a low probability of Chinese intervention. Apart from the logistical difficulty of conducting war when the Himalayan passes would be covered with snow Chinese were unlikely to take the risk

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83Kissinger, n.51, pp.886, 905-6, 909-10.
of a war with India for Pakistan unless they were assured of sufficient guarantee of success, they argued. This was also the line of thinking of Mrs. Indira Gandhi when in a press conference on 19 October 1971, while responding to a query regarding China's possible involvement in war she said, "I do not think there is any great concentration although there are some Chinese troops along the border".

She mentioned on the contrary the possibility of exchange of full-fledged Ambassadors. When the war started due to inadequate snowfall on most of the passes of the UP-Tibet border New Delhi might have been anxious about the possibility of the Chinese indulging in marginal intervention as was speculated in certain quarters. But Swaran Singh stated in an interview that "there is no reason why the PRC should intervene in a matter which in origin and by history was a matter between the people of East and West Pakistan". This led one to believe that the Government was not apprehending a serious "China threat".

From this perspective, the stepped up movement of the Chinese troops on the Tibetan side of the border from September onwards was not viewed with much concern in India. Indian military planners also declared intention to stick to their plan of withdrawal of forces from the

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86 Chopra, n.84, pp.133-4.
87 From the interview cited in Government of India, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, The Years of Endeavour: Selected Speeches of Indira Gandhi, August 1969-72 (New Delhi, 1974), pp.126, 133.
88 Chopra, n.84, pp.195-6.
north for carrying of operation in the East even at the risk of local level intrusion by China involving loss of territory. Because they considered that scaling down withdrawal of forces from fear of China was more dangerous since it would prolong the war in the East and could also delay the forward return of troops which had been borrowed from there.\textsuperscript{90} India's policy proved to be a success. Despite speculation about the threat of military intervention by China it was not until the ceasefire on the east on 16 December that the Chinese Government intervened directly in a note to India alleging that Indian armed personnel had crossed the Sikkim border on 10 December. All these were, however, India's own initiative to meet the Chinese threat and was remotely related to the Indo-Soviet Treaty. Ostensibly India kept the Indo-Soviet Treaty in reserve for a national level collision with China; for local level intrusion India depended on its own resources to deal with the threat.

This is not to say that the Soviet Union had no role to play in deterring China. The existence of India's treaty with the Soviet Union had itself a deterrent impact conveying the message that in situation of conflict with China, India would not be alone and would be supported by a Super Power. The Soviet Union also took a very important step on 5 December 1971 for ensuring non-intervention by outside powers in the Indo-Pakistan conflict. It issued a declaration through Tass asking world powers to keep their "hands off" the sub-continent and refrain from taking any measure that might entail their eventual involvement in the conflict. The world powers were also warned that since the conflict was taking place in the direct proximity of the USSR borders involving the security of the Soviet Union, it would not remain

\textsuperscript{90}See for details of Indian policy in this regard, Chopra, n.84, pp.195-7.
"indifferent if there was an aggravation of the situation". Soviet writings published during the period criticised China for aggravating the situation by sending ultimatum to India as they did during the 1965 war and also conveyed the message that instead of China's rumour about the Treaty as the wherewithal for India unleashing aggression on Pakistan or as a tool for Moscow to expand influence over India and the Indian Ocean, -- the Treaty was intended to strengthen friendship between the two countries. These must have deterred China from its intention of intervening militarily. The Western press also reported on Pegov's assurance to India that Moscow would have taken diversionary action in Sinkiang to counter China's military intervention in Ladakh. However, the veracity of this report could not be tested since the intervention itself did not materialise. Even if it occurred, considering Moscow's fear throughout the war of possible internationalisation of the conflict, it is doubtful that Moscow would have ventured into this. It may be noticed that despite the temptation to induce caution to the Chinese through the Tass statement of December 5, not once during the war did Moscow so much as mention its August Treaty with India -- a reticence in accord with its fear of internationalisation of the conflict. Against this to what extent Moscow would have provided India strategic deterrence against China remains unanswered.

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This was not exactly the same with regard to Soviet deterrent strategy against the US deployment of Task Force 74 in the Bay of Bengal during the war. Unlike the Soviet pledge to come in India’s support militarily against China which remained on the plane of speculation there was tangible evidence of Soviet naval deterrence in reaction to the US Enterprise. In Anderson’s report the Soviet Pacific Fleet was supposed to have been despatched to follow the US Task Force with a message to the Americans that "Indian Ocean was not an American lake" and that the "USSR would not allow USA to intervene in the crisis". In fact, as an analyst had noted the Indo-Pakistan war was an occasion where there was a "record level" force deployment by both the Super Powers in the Indian Ocean.

Opinion in the West was divided on the extent of Soviet naval deployment in the Indian Ocean during the war. While several observers noted it to be increasing since November 1971, analysts of the Centre for Naval Analyses, Virginia, did not consider the Soviet deployment formidable when the war broke out on 3 December 1971. They even raised

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93 For details on Task Force 74 see the Testimony before the Subcommittee on the Department of Defence of the Committee on Appropriation, House of Representatives, 92nd Congress Session (Washington, D.C.), p.110.


question about the intentions of the two task forces that the Soviet Union had sent during the War from Vladivostok towards the Bay of Bengal. In their opinion, in all probability, the Soviet objective in sending them was motivated by the Soviet need of peaceful naval diplomacy than by providing strategic deterrence to India against American naval intervention in the war. This was more so with regard to the first task group that the Soviets sent from Vladivostok on 6-7 December and was sighted by the Japanese in the Straits of Tushima on 9 December 1971. It was unlikely that the USSR was deploying it in anticipation of the American deployment which actually took place on 10 December. It was even more unlikely that the USSR was deploying against the Pakistanis to assist India, because by the time the task group left Vladivostok on 7 December, New Delhi had already demonstrated superiority over ground, air and sea and Soviet help to India would only be superfluous in that context, they argued. They speculated that the Soviet deployment could have been in reaction to the British naval presence in the Mediterranean, which was perceived to be equally "imperialistic" as that of USA in Soviet eyes. In their opinion uncertainties also revolved around the objectives of the second anti-carrier task group that was sent from Vladivostok several days after the departure of the US Enterprise and was sighted by the Japanese in the Straits of Tushima on 15 December. They did not doubt that this augmentation was surely in response to the movement of the Enterprise away from Yankee station on 10 December. But they questioned its real intention. More than strategic defence the Soviet interest in sending that force was dictated by need for "coercive diplomacy", they viewed. It was argued that the Soviets knew, the USA was not going to intervene in the war. By providing a credible deterrence to US Enterprise it could

97Ibid., pp.289, 291.
counter-demonstrate against the US provocation restricting the scope of US intervention and at the same time generating confidence in New Delhi by appearing to defend her ally without taking an unacceptable risk of Super Power confrontation. The validity of this proposition could not be denied because this peaceful political use of Soviet Navy was later incorporated into a new naval doctrine of the USSR by the Soviet Fleet Admiral S. Gorshkov which was later published in a series of articles titled "Navies in War and Peace". Opposing gunboat diplomacy he stressed on the role of Soviet navy as an "instrument of international political influence", ordering of "great powers relationship", promoting "peaceful coexistence" and "restricting great power intervention in the Third World countries."  

It is not known how the leadership in India interpreted the Soviet deterrence strategy vis-a-vis the US Enterprise since there was no public pronouncement by the Government in this regard. Pegov's assurance cited in Anderson papers that the Soviet Union had ordered the unit of its Pacific Fleet to move into Bay of Bengal to follow the American fleet found corroboration in secondary sources in India which reported a discussion between D.P. Dhar and Kosygin in Moscow on 14 December about USA's fleet movement. The discussion was

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98 Ibid., pp.292-3.

described to have been held under article 9 of the Indo-Soviet. In all probability, here also, as with regard to the "China threat", Indian policy was to keep the Indo-Soviet Treaty in reserve in case of a bigger collision with the Seventh Fleet; but to deal with the Seventh Fleet's less ominous intention on India it was decided to be dealt with through India's naval leadership's own planning and decision.

Although the real purpose of Seventh Fleet was shrouded in mystery, New Delhi knew that it was far from friendly, showing beyond doubt the US intention of standing solidly behind the barbarous regime of Yahya Khan and against the people of Bangladesh, as well as India. India did not believe that the USA intended evacuation of a few stranded American nationals by the world's strongest nuclear powered battleship Enterprise -- as the USA made it to appear. Neither did India believe that the US Navy would launch an all out assault on India in support of Pakistan on an issue in which President Nixon had a smaller portion of domestic support than he had on Vietnam. At best, it was believed, the purpose of the US fleet was (as the Soviets argued) to put psychological pressure on India by showing American military muscles. Therefore, India's initial response was to show a calculated display of defiance. This restrained reaction which led the government not to make any statement on the issue till 15 December in the Parliament led to expression of disquiet among some members

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100 Ram Sharma, *India's Foreign Policy: Annual Survey 1971*, (New Delhi, 1974), p.272; also see Kapoor, n.12, p.211.

101 For information on details of Indian strategy to deal with the US Seventh Fleet see Chopra, n.84, pp.197-202.

102 See India's Defence Ministry's *Report 1971-72*, p.9; also the MEA Report of the same year, p.76.
who claimed that the Government should clarify its position on this demonstration of "gunboat diplomacy" by the USA which should be answered in a fitting manner. However, with T.N. Kaul's information from Washington that apart from psychological pressure the Seventh Fleet intended to establish a beach head on the Bangladesh coast allowing Niazi's army to link up with it, India began to take Seventh Fleet's intention more seriously. But without depending on Soviet assistance India decided to deal with her own resources and planning. For this the strategy which the IAF took jointly with the Indian Navy proved so successful that within three days General Niazi was made to surrender to India on terms demanded by her. In all these, any form of joint Indo-Soviet naval strategy to counter the US Seventh Fleet had not been suggested.

However, all these are said not to discount Soviet contribution to India in this regard. The Soviet Union also sent her naval fleet to trace the US fleet and whatever doubt revolved around her real intention, this Soviet gesture served as a psychological support for India which the latter must have valued. One has also to count the Soviet verbal assault on USA on this score which demonstrated Soviet policy of siding with India. Soviet Union was more critical than India on the US fleet's intentions. The criticisms no doubt revolved more around Moscow's anxiety at the profounder US motive of establishing presence in the region as they did in Indo-China than the US motive of putting pressure on India through gun-boat

\[103\] See the views of Bhupesh Gupta, Chitta Basu, D.P. Singh and Arjun Arora on 15 December in Lok Sabha, Debates, n.31, cols.70-86.
diplomacy.\textsuperscript{104} It served, no doubt, India's purpose to demonstrate to the USA the Soviet support to India. The expression like the Soviet Union would not allow the "Indian Ocean to be an American lake" substantiated this. But here again, as in case of China threat, one can question, if India proceeded towards West Pakistan and the Seventh Fleet chased India, would the Soviet Union have taken the course of direct collision with the Seventh Fleet for fighting the Indian cause? Probably not. The record of Soviet caution against taking action where there was a chance of US-Soviet confrontation did not make it a probable. From that point of view the Soviet deterrent strategy against the US naval threat similarly remained a speculation.

The foregoing analysis will suggest a mixed result of Soviet deterrent strategy during the December war. Moscow, however, took pride in declaring after the war that the Soviet Union took a firm and principled stand during the Indo-Pakistani conflict and prevented the interference of reactionary outside forces in the affairs of the countries of South Asia.\textsuperscript{105} From one perspective this was an exaggeration since neither China nor USA intervened militarily. USA's intervention was made dependent on China's coming down to link up with the US Seventh Fleet, which proved to be a wrong expectation by USA since China was shrewd enough not to take the risk of military intervention for a lost case like Pakistan, whose victory could hardly be ensured in face of Indian superiority in air, sea, and ground. Actually US strategy was strategically defensive to support its ally without going into the risk

\textsuperscript{104}See citation from writing by Soviet authors in Kapoor, n.12, pp.212-14; also Soviet Review, n.8, pp.26, 71.

\textsuperscript{105}From Moscow Radio News Broadcast in English to South Asia on 11 January 1973 cited in Mcconnell and Kelley, n.96, p.295, fn.27.
of war with the Soviet Union. The Soviet policy was equally strategically defensive-supporting an ally without taking the risk of confrontation either with USA and China. Soviet assurance to India should be viewed from this perspective. India, too, was aware that all the Big Powers were guided by this "rules of the game" strategy of defending allies by involving minimum risk to their respective global strategies. Therefore, the threat of minimum intervention that India perceived from China and USA was dealt with by her on the basis of her own judgement and planning which had little to do with Indo-Soviet Treaty.

This is not to say that the Treaty had absolutely no deterrent effect on China and USA. Certainly, it had China sharply reacted to the Tass statement of December 5, which held out the Soviet threat of retaliation if the Big Powers did not keep their hands off from the war which posed a threat to Soviet security as well. Noting the Soviet talk about its security as absurd, it remarked that the statement was encouraging the hope of expanding its influence in the subcontinent.106 Similarly Tass warning and Soviet naval deployment in the Ocean made Nixon think twice of Seventh Fleet's purposes. This, added to his miscalculation regarding China's intention to militarily intervene, made the US fleet remain discreetly in the background. So the public euphoria in India on Treaty's impact on deterring China and USA was not altogether unfounded. The Treaty, indeed, became a stabilising factor of "peace and stability in the region". The deterrent aspect of article 9 of the Treaty should be understood

from this point of view as the MEA report during the year rightly pointed out while reviewing the relevance of article 9 in the Indo-Pakistan war.¹⁰⁷

**Soviet Military Assistance during the War**

As for Soviet Military assistance during the war the difficulty which the researcher has to face is the lack of authoritative evidence from either side. While the Soviet archives are not accessible, Indian documents made mention of Indian equipments, Indian personnel and their contribution in the war without any reference to Soviet Union. After the war Jagjivan Ram expressed a high praise for Indian defence forces whose magnificent demonstration of quality and capability in his view brought victory to India.¹⁰⁸ Defence Ministry’s report in similar vein remarked, "Arms and equipment produced in the country contributed to our decisive victory in the 1971 war..." making specific reference to Indian weapon system instead of those supplied by the Soviet Union to India.¹⁰⁹

In Pakistani and western perceptions, however, India’s arms procurement from outside (specially the Soviet Union) helped India decisively to win the war and her treaty with the Soviet Union was thought to have led to new arms agreement and mutual military


¹⁰⁹India’s Defence Ministry’s *Report 1972-73*, p.36.
consultation. Press reports from these countries, too, extensively reported on arms agreement between India and the Soviet Union following the Treaty. The data released by Stockholm International Peace Research Institute recorded India as the second largest buyer of Soviet arms in 1971 after Egypt, receiving eighty per cent of total Soviet arms supplied to the Third World.

The validity of these reports can not be corroborated from Indian documents. The only way left for having an idea of Soviet military contribution to India during the war is to examine the information given in SIPRI and Military Balance Yearbooks which can be regarded as authentic sources. A review of these sources does not indicate any new arms agreement having being concluded between India and the USSR during the war, excepting that most of the arms delivery from the USSR were follow up of the then existing arms agreement arrived earlier or that the arms were supplied at short notice, thus showing the Soviet willingness to help India by accelerating the pace of arms delivery. For example, while the delivery of SU-7 and MiG fighters in 1971 was regarded as a follow-up of the agreement arrived as early as in

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100 Pakistani authors Ansar and Kaldar in "Military Technology and Conflict Dynamics : The Bangladesh Crisis of 1971" in their (ed.), *The World Military Impact of Military Technology on the Third World* (Macmillan, 1979), p.250 viewed that India's extraordinary arms procurement decisively directed the course of the war; President Nixon in his *Report to the Congress* on February 9, 1972, n.24, p.51 viewed that the "August Treaty together with new arms deliveries and military consultation gave India additional assurances of Soviet support."


1968,\textsuperscript{113} in case of armoured vehicles both SIPRI and Military Balance indicated increased supply, the former recording an increase to 225 M-55 tanks in 1971 period, while the latter recorded more from the supply of 150 PT 76 tanks to 450/T/54/55 battle tanks in 1971.\textsuperscript{114} Similarly in case of SU-7 and MiG-21 interceptors the Military Balance noted an increase of one squadron each in 1971 over the figure in the previous year 1970-71 although no increase was noted in the case of naval vessels.\textsuperscript{115} While these were instances of increase in the supply of Soviet weapons to India during the war, example of supply at short notice was found in SIPRI Yearbook which made a reference to the delivery of 7 MiG-21 MF in 1972 under an order placed in 1971.\textsuperscript{116} From these data, however, a correlation of Soviet arms with the armed conflict cannot be proved. But it would point to the fact that the armed conflict had expedited the delivery of Soviet military supplies to India, although there was no evidence of any secret arms agreement between the Soviet Union and India as was speculated in the West and in Pakistan. This was clearly expressed by K.B. Lall, the then Defence Secretary of India during an interview with the author.\textsuperscript{117} Both Moscow and India was sensitive on this score. A report in western press that Soviet Union had transferred some 15 MiG-21 to India from Soviet-Egyptian arms agreement to enable IAF to replace the losses during the war was

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{113}Ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{115}\textit{Military Balance}, ibid., pp.62-63.
  \item \textsuperscript{117}Interview taken by the author at India International Centre, New Delhi in October 1988.
\end{itemize}
denied vehemently by Soviet Union as being motivated by a design to create a "wedge between the Soviet Union and Arab countries"; a report equally denied strongly by the Indian defence officials.\textsuperscript{118}

Apart from weapons the western and Pakistani reports mentioned about active participation of Soviet military personnel during the war, especially in aerial and naval operations. Pakistan's Air Force Chief reported on a despatch of medium range reconnaissance aircraft MiG-23 along with military planes carrying Soviet personnel to train Indian pilots arguing that the sophisticated electronic radar equipments in the planes could not be manned by Indian pilots so easily.\textsuperscript{119} Similar reports were flashed in the western press that radio directions in Russia were monitoring the "Styx" missile attack by the Indian naval patrol boats from Okha near Bombay which resulted in the sinking of Pakistan's destroyers, one frigate and two merchant ships; and another that India used a Russian manned Tupolev T.V. 126 "Mars" airborne warning and centred aircrafts to direct their night strikers against targets in West Pakistan.\textsuperscript{120}

Both India and the Soviet Union denied such reports. The Soviet Ambassador at the United nations expressed his Government's alarm at such attempt to "fan military conflagration in the region" through such "nonsensical fables" and referred to the Tass statement released

\textsuperscript{118}The Hindu, April 1972, quoting The Washington News (Washington); and Moscow Radio News on 5 April 1972, quoted in USSR and the Third World (London), 13 March-17 April, 1972, p.194.

\textsuperscript{119}Reported in Daily Telegraph, 29 October 1971.

\textsuperscript{120}Report by John Fricks, The Times, 8 February 1972.
on 10 December describing such reports as entirely unfounded, being only "provocative suggestions".\textsuperscript{121} As we have seen the Defence Minister took pride in the efficiency and skill that the Indian defence forces displayed in operating sophisticated weapons. Specially India's naval operation during the war deserved commendation -- a fact strongly maintained by Indian naval chief and was equally taken cognisance of by the Soviet counterpart, Admiral Gorshkov in the appreciative remarks that he made during his visit to India on the efficient handling of Soviet-built ships by Indian Navy.\textsuperscript{122}

It is clear, therefore, that there was no significant military link with Moscow during the war but at the same time Soviet willingness to help India in winning the war through acceleration of military supplies and often increasing their quantities is quite apparent. This might be construed as a giving content to the clause of "effective measures" of article 9 of the Treaty. Moreover, the Soviet posture represented a complete reversal of Soviet Union's post-Tashkent policy in the subcontinent in as much it resulted in an end to Soviet military supplies to Pakistan which had become a source of friction between India and the Soviet Union in the late sixties. This again was in conformity with article 10 of the Treaty which called a contracting party not to give any form of support -- diplomatic or military, to a third country involved in a conflict with the other contracting party.

\textsuperscript{121}Jacob Malik's statement in the Security Council on 13 December 1971 in \textit{SCOR}, n.59, p.18, para 182.

\textsuperscript{122}\textit{The Tribune} (Chandigarh), 10 April 1972.
Conclusion

Two telling points emerge from our foregoing discussion. Firstly, the first test of the Treaty on the Indo-Pakistan crisis proved beneficial to India. It was true that at the initial phase Moscow's continuing equivocation towards India's policy on the crisis due to its anxiety to maintain peace in the subcontinent had created occasional strains in the relationship. But Moscow reassessed this policy due to India's firm assertion of its determination to solve the refugee problem in a way that suited her national interest. The commitment to abide by the Treaty's article 9 became obvious with Pakistan starting the war; Moscow did give content to its obligation of taking "effective measures" under article 9 by coming along with its diplomatic and military support along three lines. Its vetoing of three resolutions on ceasefire at the United Nations and countering the orchestrated charge of aggression on India by USA, Pakistan and China, warning them on the other hand against militarily intervening in or on behalf of Pakistan, added with its acceleration of the pace of military supplies to India during the war provided India all the possible diplomatic and military help which were required to win the war and to bring about the emergence of Bangladesh, which was the stated objective of India in the war. Particularly, Soviet support to India in the cause of Bangladesh itself was a momentous decision of Soviet foreign policy thinkers since it made herself a party to the dismemberment of a sovereign member of the United Nations.\[^{123}\]

\[^{123}\]Pakistan viewed that the *quid pro-quo* of the Treaty was dismemberment of Pakistan; SCOR, 5 December 1971, p.15, para 152; China denounced the Soviet Union for the shameful role it played as a "back stage manager of the Indian expansionist", ibid., 16 December 1971, p.24, para 218; President Nixon, regretted that the Indo-Soviet Treaty was designed to strengthen Moscow's "influence for peace", but in retrospect it appeared that by it Moscow encouraged India to attack Pakistan, *Report to the Congress*, n.24, p.51.
might not be the primary cause as was argued by an analyst; the Soviet concern in restoring
stability based on "Indian primacy" against the "new balance of power" in the region that was
emerging through US-China rapprochement might have been an important calculation behind
such a support for the sake of Soviet security.\textsuperscript{124} In fact, the vitriolic attack against each
other (China and USSR) at the United Nations, regarding their respective expansionist designs
in the region revealed that the stakes that these two powers had in the conflict were remotely
related to what was happening in the subcontinent.\textsuperscript{123} Moscow interpreted it differently giving
it the picture of Soviet consistent effort to bring peace and stability in the subcontinent in which
the Indo-Soviet Treaty played an important role;\textsuperscript{125} but its stakes \textit{vis-a-vis} China were
apparent. Whatever might be the Soviet intention, India benefitted from the Soviet policy and
she did not fail to recognise the Soviet help. The Prime Minister in an interview with \textit{Tass}
acknowledged that the Treaty was a "source of great moral support" to India when she was
passing through a most difficult phase of nation's life.\textsuperscript{127} India, by remarking that the Soviet
Union was the "only country" which understood the objective realities of the situation and

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{124}Bhabani Sengupta, "Moscow and Bangladesh", \textit{Problems of Communism} (Washington, D.C.),
\item \textsuperscript{123}China accused Moscow and its Treaty with India being motivated by Moscow's desire to
control India and the whole of the Indian subcontinent; \textit{SCOR}, 5 December 1971, p.23; para
229 and \textit{GAOR} 7 December 1971, p.29, para 319; Moscow in reply charged China for setting
the "Asians against Asians" as "accomplice of US imperialism" with the purpose of getting US
consent to their presence in the region; \textit{SCOR}; 13 December 1971, p.17, para 178.
\item \textsuperscript{126}Spartok Beglov, "A Strategy for Peace in Asia", \textit{Soviet Review}, n.8, p.27.
\item \textsuperscript{127}Prime Minister's interview to \textit{TASS} correspondent in New Delhi cited in ibid., p.6.
\end{itemize}
consistently stood by her during the years of isolation which reflected her conviction in Soviet support during the war.  

Secondly, when all this is said, it bears reiteration that it was India which took the lead in all these developments. The Soviet Union acted in a way that served India's interest. This could be substantiated from India's continuing determination to go ahead with a policy which she thought to be in her own interest, even without Soviet support. This, in fact, led Moscow to abandon her equivocal policy towards India in the initial period. The same could be said of Indo-Soviet diplomacy during the war, though in a lesser degree, when India's unequivocal commitment to Bangladesh left Moscow with no other alternative but to come in support of India; although she too had shown her anxiety for "ceasefire". But Moscow was prudent enough to link it with political solution knowing well that without this India was not going for a ceasefire. One should not also forget India's own planning and skill in countering the threat from China and USA and the efficiency of the Indian Armed forces and their conviction in the objective of independent Bangladesh for which they were fighting. All these were inextricably mixed to make it an "Indian act" with little to do with the Indo-Soviet Treaty. India had all along negated the idea of her being dependent on the Treaty for the

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129 Robert C. Horn came to a similar conclusion while studying Indo-Soviet relationship on the East Pakistan crisis, see his Soviet-Indian Relations: Issues and Influences (New York, 1982), p.73.
solution of the Bangladesh crisis as was speculated in the West. The Indian Foreign Minister stated clearly,

I want to say categorically...that there is no question of India being dependent on the USSR. India, ever since independence has established the Indian identity and the Indian personality... (and) has always refused and will always refuse to be a tool of any power whatsoever. We have our own policy. We have our own ways of working and our own objectives.\textsuperscript{130}

\textsuperscript{130}Foreign Minister's interview to \textit{New York Times}, cited in \textit{Bangladesh Document}, n.8, p.301.