CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

... the time has come for the non-aligned countries, in their own interest and in the interest of the community at large, to find effective ways of achieving a peaceful and democratic settlement of any conflicts that arise.

- President Josip Broz Tito (1978)

The object of this study has been to examine the non-aligned responses towards India's international conflicts and to consider what general explanations there may be of the results. In this direction, efforts were made in the preceding chapters first to analyse the general approach of the nonaligned towards regional conflicts and then to highlight the nonaligned behaviour vis-a-vis India's three major conflicts. In this concluding chapter, an attempt would be made to explain and identify the convergent and divergent patterns of nonaligned behaviour which have emerged out of the previous discussion and see whether these patterns relate to the general questions raised in the introductory chapter of this work.

It was the Sino-Indian conflict which for the first time brought out the theoretical and practical ramifications of
nonaligned behaviour towards a regional conflict involving one of their own ranks. The nonaligned by and large desisted from taking sides in this conflict and instead preferred to offer mediation. This posture was generally conceived by the nonaligned in consonance with their overall non-bloc attitude towards international problems.

However, a large segment of international opinion felt aggrieved at the nonaligned refusal to condemn the Chinese aggression. In particular, the western scholars and media exploited this opportunity to decry the bases of nonaligned solidarity and blamed the nonaligned for their lack of support towards one of their premier spokesman. An overwhelming impression was thus created that the nonaligned failed the test by not responding to India's appeal for moral and diplomatic support.

But the inability of the nonaligned to come to India's help had not been due to the failure of the nonaligned solidarity as such, it was rather indicative of India's declining influence vis-a-vis China in the larger Afro-Asian nonaligned arena and also the weakness of the individual nonaligned to resist the regional and international pulls.

To begin with, there was never any question of the nonaligned countries having any formal or informal commitment to help each other on local or regional issues. Such non-bloc temper of the nonaligned solidarity was enunciated by none other than Nehru himself who had even opposed at one time the formalization of the
nontaligned movement on this very ground. In fact, prior to the outbreak of the conflict, Nehru had never looked towards the nonaligned group for obtaining any diplomatic leverage against China. He had been quite reluctant to raise the dispute with China at the Afro-Asian and the nonaligned forums and depended primarily on India's equation with the Super Powers to cope with the Chinese threat. Thus, it was under unexpected circumstances that an unprepared Nehru was forced to fight India's diplomatic battle with China on the Afro-Asian nonaligned platforms.

Viewed in this context, the nonaligned responses were not much surprising. Most of the nonaligned countries preferred to view this conflict as between a nonaligned and a friendly Afro-Asian country. They were not convinced of the merit of India's case largely because of inadequate information and lack of clarity about the issues involved against a well projected Chinese version. Moreover they did not have enough national strength and international stature to annoy an emerging power like China. India, too, at that time was outgrowing Afro-Asianism and had yet to consolidate its position within the newly founded nonaligned movement. Nehru's initial reservations about the Belgrade Summit, his personality clash with Sukarno, Krishana Menon's condescending attitude towards the Belgrade participants—all these factors had contributed to India's diminishing leadership role within the nonaligned ranks. During this period, India
had also not paid adequate attention to its bilateral ties with the other nonaligned countries and there had been irritants in its relationship with many of these countries. Nepal, for instance, was a case in point. Thus contrary to the exaggerated expectations which many quarters in India held, the nonaligned countries did not have many incentives to take up India's side against a more formidable China. The global polarization in the wake of the Cuban crisis also restrained the nonaligned from passing value judgement on the merit of the Sino-Indian conflict. Their primary concern was to keep away from this conflict between the two Asian giants and to try to de-escalate regional tension.

Though, of course, there were nonaligned which broadly speaking fulfilled India's diplomatic expectations. As evidenced earlier, Nasser strove hard to obtain a favourable mandate in favour of India from the Afro-Asian nonaligned countries. His four-point formula, the proposed ten-nation conference and Ali Sabry's pro-Indian stance at the Colombo Conference clearly indicate this. Nehru who knew the crucial role being played by Nasser appreciated his positive approach towards India's case. However, the expectations of the Indian public were so misplaced that even Nasser was condemned for not taking an open stand in favour of India. A prominent opposition leader Ram Manohar Lohia wanted Nasser to be heckled. Also, not many in India were willing to appreciate the pro-Indian orientation of the clarified Colombo
proposals which sought to provide India an honourable basis to start negotiations with China.

However, the most remarkable feature of nonaligned diplomacy in this conflict was their mediatory intervention as a group to resolve the border dispute. The Colombo mediation Conference, though informal and agendaless, did mark a unique beginning of the nonaligned endeavour to defuse regional conflicts in their own arena. And surely if this mediation had succeeded in bringing the two disputants back on the negotiating table, the course of the nonaligned peace diplomacy would have been different. But this was not to be.

The high politicization of the Sino-Indian dispute, time and again defied the protracted mediation offered by the Colombo Powers around - a remarkably realistic formula (Colombo Proposals)-which sought to accommodate as nearly as possible the respective viewpoints of the two disputants. It was unfortunate that after the initial break-through these proposals got bogged down on the issue of their interpretation and the subsequent efforts of India and China to turn these proposals in their own favour.

Undeterred by these setbacks, Sirimavo Bandaranaike, in consultation with other Colombo Powers, persisted in her mediation for almost two years and tried constantly to provide communication channels to the two disputants and co-ordinate their mutual expectations. And at least for once in early 1964
Sirimavo Bandaranaike seemed to have almost persuaded both Zhou and Nehru to resume negotiation on the basis of a slightly modified version of the Colombo Proposals. But the sudden passing away of Nehru and the subsequent bickerings between India and China on the eve of the Cairo Summit sounded the death-knell of this unique nonaligned peace initiative.

The failure of the Colombo initiative and the acrimony it generated within the nonaligned ranks exposed the nonaligned to the hazards of intervening in bilateral disputes. Consequently the nonaligned participants at the Cairo Summit did not even refer to the Colombo mediation, and also pre-empted any possibility of evolving a conflict-resolving mechanism within the frame of the nonaligned conference diplomacy. India and Yugoslavia were particularly averse to a tentative Sri Lankan proposal of discussing the feasibility of such mechanism.

Thereafter, the Colombo mediation never found any mention in any of the nonaligned gatherings. The abrupt change of leadership in many of the Colombo Powers also saw the new regimes unwilling to highlight the contribution of their predecessors on this issue. India, too, was no more keen to recall the role of the Colombo Powers. All this led to a sudden losing of interest in this unique nonaligned group mediation and thus it failed to find any place in the annals of nonaligned history.

However, the protracted Colombo mediation did embody certain interesting dimensions viz., intense group activity,
commendable degree of impartiality and above all the skilful negotiations by Sirimavo Bandaranaike and others. All this deserves far more attention than what has been so far accorded to it. More so, when there has been a renewed interest among nonaligned circles to evolve some kind of informal/formal conflict-resolving mechanism and similar nonaligned initiatives are in progress (e.g. vis-a-vis the Iran-Iraq conflict).

The Indo-Pak conflict of 1965 evoked a quite different pattern of the nonaligned responses. There was almost no attempt on the part of the nonaligned countries to offer individual or group mediation. Also, unlike in the case of the Sino-Indian conflict, this time they openly took sides: e.g., Yugoslavia, the UAR and Indonesia became intensely involved in the diplomatic demarches of the two disputants.

Despite the fact that the Indo-Pak conflict did not come formally on the agenda of the General Assembly, yet a large number of the nonaligned participants passed their value judgement on the issues involved during the General Debate of September 1965. The most conspicuous feature of this debate was an explicit support by sixteen nonaligned countries to the Pakistani demand for a plebiscite in Kashmir and not to India's plea regarding the nonapplicability of self-determination there.

In fact, the Indian case on Kashmir suffered from an inherent contradiction on account of various assurances given
by its former leadership. Thus, despite Indian efforts to utilize the nonaligned forums to counter Pakistan's propaganda on Kashmir it did not succeed. At the Cairo Summit in 1964, Indian Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri had appealed to the non-aligned to delimit the scope of the right to self-determination. He had warned against granting of self-determination for different areas and regions within a sovereign and independent country, for this would lead only to fragmentation and disruption. However, the majority of Cairo participants did not pay heed to his appeal and self-determination was once again referred to in general terms in the final documents of the conference. Taking advantage of this, Z. A. Bhutto, the then Pakistani Foreign Minister, circulated the entire section on self-determination of the Cairo document to the participants at the UN General Debate to buttress the Pakistani demand for the exercise of self-determination in Kashmir. Thus, a large number of the nonaligned, not much familiar with the intricacies of the Kashmir question, preferred to go by their general commitment to the principle of self-determination and supported the Pakistani claims on Kashmir.

The nonaligned responses towards the 1965 conflict also reflected the growing polarization on religious and regional grounds. The appeal of Islamic solidarity evoked effectively
by Pakistan saw a good many Arab nonaligned from West Asia and North Africa openly siding with Pakistan. So intense was the appeal of Islamic solidarity that even a country like Iraq, having potentials of a secessionist movement in Kurdistan, indirectly supported the Pakistani demand for plebiscite in Kashmir. In fact, but for President Nasser who greatly neutralized the anti-Indian mobilization in Arab circles, the whole Islamic world would have lined up behind Pakistan against India. Nasser not only defeated the Pakistani attempt to obtain a favourable mandate at the Casablanca Islamic Summit but also pre-empted the concerted move by Somalia and Tunisia to raise the Kashmir issue at the African Summit. But as was the case in the Sind-Indian conflict, his role was once again not properly appreciated in Indian circles.

Yugoslavia, one of the chief architects of the nonaligned movement, did come out openly in support of India's position. Its unequivocal condemnation of China, Indonesia and some of the Arab countries for helping Pakistan provided tremendous diplomatic relief to India. It is noteworthy that during this period India had developed a quite fruitful relationship with both Yugoslavia and the UAR which eventually led to the formal triangular co-operation among these three nonaligned countries in 1966.

Apart from the UAR and Yugoslavia, the remaining non-
aligned countries did not distinguish between an 'Afro-Asian' Pakistan and a nonaligned India. Pakistan's alignment with Western military blocs did not come in its way to utilise the Islamic and the Afro-Asian forums. In fact, at the UN debate, most of the nonaligned referred to Afro-Asian solidarity and the nonaligned movement as the two sides of the same coin. Pakistan also exploited the emerging contradictions between Afro-Asianism and the nonaligned movement to get diplomatic support from those countries which were opposed to Indian perspective on this issue. Indonesia's diplomatic and military support to Pakistan made it evident.

The low-key role of the nonaligned in this conflict was, in a sense, symptomatic of the overall weakening of the common identity within the nonaligned movement. The en masse entry of a large number of African states into the movement at the Cairo Summit had to an extent diluted the hitherto bonds of the nonaligned countries. These new entrants were hardly interested in the global peace perspective of nonalignment and attached importance only to their local and regional issues. This was perhaps another factor (apart from the debacle of the Colombo Proposals) which dissuaded the nonaligned group from making even a casual attempt of peace-making in this conflict. Eventually, it was the Soviet Union which took the initiative in this regard.

It was indeed the Indo-Pak conflict of 1971 which fully
exposed the domestic and international constraints in which
the nonaligned have to operate in the present-day international
system. As seen earlier, almost all the nonaligned countries
maintained a low profile during the Bangladesh crisis and the
subsequent conflict in the subcontinent. They neither made
any significant effort to resolve the crisis that was inexorably
leading to the conflict nor did they involve themselves in the
ensuing diplomatic struggle between the two disputants, as some
of them had done in 1965. Even the active nonaligned such as
Yugoslavia and the UAR had been conspicuous by their evasive
attitude towards the conflict.

However, once the issue was taken up by the General
Assembly under the provisions of the 'Uniting for Peace' reso-
lution, India's isolation from the nonaligned world became
quite evident. An overwhelming majority of the nonaligned
preferred to take positions which were inimical to India's
stand and eventually voted for the 34-Power resolution which
indirectly censured India's action. This was described by the
Pakistani leaders as a proof of India's alienation from the
Third World. In turn, Indian leaders criticized the nonaligned
countries for ignoring the real issues of the case.

Clearly, the most crucial factor which constrained any
positive nonaligned response towards this crisis was the threat
it posed to their very state-structure. Added to this was an
intensive involvement of the big powers in this crisis which
further aggravated the nonaligned predicament. These constra-
ints were much evident during the nine-month crisis when
these countries refused to entertain India's plea to exert
international pressure against Pakistan's genocidal policies.
Though it is true that India did not pin much hope on UN
intervention, yet a positive and decisive mandate of the fifty-
five strong nonaligned group could have brought considerable
diplomatic pressure on Pakistan.

On the contrary, majority of the nonaligned belonging to
different regions and having diverse ideological orientations
had been exclusively concerned with the violation of Pakistan's
territorial integrity. In the September/October UN debate, as
many as ten nonaligned referred to the crisis as an internal
affair of Pakistan, while none cared to mention the violation
of human rights. This was in contrast to the views expressed
by a number of socialist countries and some of the western
countries earlier. Similarly at the 'Uniting for Peace' exercise,
a large number of nonaligned countries decried the Bengali quest
for nationhood and found India's role as interference in Pakis-
tan's domestic jurisdiction. Even Yugoslavia, which had come out
openly to support India in 1965, preferred to vote in favour of
the 34-Power resolution which was meant to forestall the liber-
atation of Bangladesh. In short, when it came to choosing between
the quintessence of a just liberation struggle and the territo-
rial concept of independence, the nonaligned by some inbuilt
consensus seemed to have opted for the latter.

Naturally, the ambivalent attitude of the nonaligned dis-appointed those who used to consider the nonaligned movement more in terms of its proclaimed commitment to the lofty principles of social justice, human rights and self-determination and would overlook the domestic and international constraints which impinge on policy-making in the nonaligned world.

In fact, it has always been problematic for the nonaligned to take a clear stand on the twin issues of human rights and self-determination. The reasons for this are rooted in the historical process that has exposed a fairly large number of these post-colonial states to domestic turmoil and fragmentation leading often to the violation of human rights and the emergence of secessionist demands in their societies. Many of these Afro-Asian states have inherited artificial boundaries carved out by the colonial powers by cutting across ethnic groups and factions and resulting in a plethora of societies in each state whose religion, language and cultural affinities do not often coincide. As a consequence, most of such nonaligned do not fulfil the criterion of being well-established, stable states. Moreover, in many such cases, the post-colonial regimes have failed in evolving effective political, economic and legal institutions which could alleviate the sectional and ethnic disaffection. The very process of modernization and development has also heightened such tensions and aggravated internal unrests and secessionist tendencies.

Obviously, the case of Bangladesh was seen by many of such
nonaligned states as a direct threat to their own legitimacy and hence their opposition to any UN resolution which might sanction the demand for self-determination in East Pakistan and India's role therein.

The 1971 conflict is often contrasted with the conflict over Kashmir in 1965 in terms of reversal of the respective positions of India and Pakistan over the issue of self-determination. India which opposed the application of the doctrine of self-determination on the issue of Kashmir came out openly to support East Pakistan's quest for self-determination. While Pakistan which fought the diplomatic battle over Kashmir on the issue of self-determination earlier was forced to oppose this doctrine in the case of Bangladesh. Thus, despite substantive differences in these two demands of self-determination, both the Indo-Pakistani conflicts, at one level, related to the extension of this right in its post-colonial context.

However, one is struck by the fact that whereas in 1965, nearly sixteen nonaligned (mostly Africans) openly supported Pakistan's demand for self-determination for Kashmir, in 1971 only Chile and Yugoslavia referred to this right in the case of Bangladesh and that too in rather general terms. There are two possible explanations for this change. First, the eruption of Biafra crisis in the late sixties had fully exposed the Africans to the dangerous implications of granting the right of self-determination in the post-colonial societies. In the Bangladesh crisis, they saw the spectre of Biafra and thus they opposed it
vehemently. Secondly, while Pakistan had effectively exploited India's contradictory stand on the issue of plebiscite in Kashmir, Indian diplomacy failed to highlight the unique character of East Pakistan's demand for self-determination and to set it apart from the apparently similar instance of Biafra and Katanga. In fact, for a long time India desisted from raising this issue due to its possible repercussion within its own national borders. It was just on the eve of the liberation of Bangladesh that India suddenly raised this issue at the United Nations when there was hardly any time for it to convince the nonaligned member about its justness.

Summing up, it seems imprudent to seek valid generalizations about an overall nonaligned approach towards regional conflict on the basis of just three historico-specific conflict studies. The constantly changing pattern of regional conflicts in the Third World obviously defy any such attempt. Moreover, there are no set nonaligned norms and parameters to assess the individual and collective performance of the nonaligned in this regard. However, keeping in view the tentative themes discussed in the introductory chapter, certain broad observations may be made on the basis of the findings of the present study.

The first observation relates to the much acclaimed nonaligned quest for independence of judgement in foreign policy matters or their capacity to decide each issue on its merits. In this respect, the responses of the nonaligned countries towards the three conflict situations do not present a positive picture. In
fact, they seemed to have been nearly as much constrained by their structural and environmental factors as were the remaining Third World countries. If the Sino-Indian conflict highlighted the vulnerability of the nonaligned to regional and global alignments, the Indo-Pak conflict of 1971 exposed their domestic constraints.

Thus, despite their non-participation in politico-military blocs, the nonaligned often found themselves in a dilemma because in some way or other they have been dependent either on one or both the power blocs. This is not to suggest that the independence of foreign policy action of the nonaligned in all cases is as limited, or even more limited, than that of the aligned states. But it would not be in order to exaggerate the independence of the nonaligned in the present-day international relations. More so, as a very large number of the nonaligned have in their societies serious social, cultural and ethnic problems, besides acute poverty due to subsistence economy, they are vulnerable to outside pressures rather easily.

Similarly, the actual behaviour of the nonaligned in the three conflict situations does not also show them as upholding the objectives of the movement, viz., social justice, freedom and human rights. Apart from the practical problem of distinguishing between a just or unjust liberation struggle or deciding what constitutes a threat to freedom in concrete situations, they have often shown disregard for the declarative principles of
the nonaligned movement. In 1962 they found it difficult to ascertain whether the Chinese aggression posed a threat to freedom. In 1965 they could not decide as who had started the aggression. And in 1971, despite the worst kind of genocide unleashed by the Pakistani military junta, they completely ignored the issue of human rights and the democratic quest of the people.

Indeed, nonalignment, as a norm of foreign policy behaviour and as a movement has stood for certain moral values in the conduct of international relations. In this respect it has undoubtedly made a contribution, howsoever limited it may be. Yet, in the present international strategic setting, it is becoming increasingly difficult for the nonaligned states which generally lack power and influence to take effective concerted action to uphold these international values. As they have made only limited efforts to convert their common viewpoints into viable political action. Unless this if fully done, the nonaligned countries would not be able to sublimate or redefine their national interest in accordance with any set of moral norms which could reflect in their foreign policy actions. Then their actual behaviour on concrete issues would not be different from that of any other nation whether it is any other Third World country or even an aligned country.

Yet another observation which may be adduced on the basis of the present study relates to the scope of the nonaligned solidarity in concrete situations involving one of their own
ranks. Or, in other words, whether the nonaligned group has been acting as a diplomatic bloc to safeguard the interests of its members in concrete situations and against local or regional adversaries. The overall nonaligned perspective, as it has transpired vis-a-vis India's international conflicts, indicates that the nonaligned have largely conformed to the non-bloc character of their solidarity. For instance, on the Sino-Indian conflict, many of the nonaligned did not simply react to the issues involved and some of them even opposed the Western arms supplies to India. Such an approach was considered by many to be in accordance with the nonaligned norm of being nonaligned vis-a-vis fellow nonaligned. Thus, if the UAR tried to mobilize the nonaligned opinion in favour of India, the Chinese claims were pressed by Kampuchea (then Cambodia) and Burma at the nonaligned forums. Similar conclusions can be derived from the two Indo-Pakistani conflicts on which the nonaligned were divided and many of them actively opposed India.

This is not to suggest that the nonaligned platform has never been used by any member to bolster its own diplomatic position against a regional or local adversary. At the Cairo Summit, Shastri's efforts to limit the scope of self-determination were meant to restrain the Pakistani claims on Kashmir. Similarly, India sponsored a resolution at the same Summit regarding the inviolability of traditional borders and subsequently used it at the UN to decry China's border claims. However, these efforts were made rather indirectly and as such they derived
only a marginal scope within the nonaligned conference diplomacy. This became evident once again when the nonaligned foreign ministers conference in New York in August 1971 preferred to mention the Bangladesh crisis casually and only in the context of the refugee problem. Despite India's efforts to highlight the real issues, there was no reference to the political crisis that had led to the problem nor to genocide.

Finally, it may be concluded that the nonaligned countries which evolved a distinctively positive approach towards the East-West struggle have generally evaded the question of regional conflicts in the Third World. But this is hardly surprising as nonalignment had essentially been a response to the problems of world order in general. In accordance with the global perspective which it has projected both in its normative and practical orientation, the nonaligned movement has from the beginning avoided to bring local and parochial issues at the conference level.

Especially after the abortive Colombo mediation, the nonaligned consensus became all the more wary of bringing bilateral or regional issues within the pale of nonaligned diplomacy. They realized that any attempt to meddle with the regional and local discords might disrupt the very fabric of nonaligned solidarity before it could be put to any use. This was perhaps the reason why most of the regional conflicts of the sixties and the seventies were simply not seen or discussed on the platform of the nonaligned movement. But in turn, such cautious approach has
undermined their credential as 'peace-makers' - an image which they had earned in the fifties by their remarkable role as mediators in some of the instances of East-West struggle.

It is only in the late seventies that the nonaligned countries have once again evinced interest in evolving some kind of formal or informal mechanism to defuse the fast growing number of disputes and conflicts in their own arena. Thus almost after the two decades of the Colombo mediation, a similar nonaligned initiative has been undertaken by the nonaligned vis-a-vis the Iran-Iraq conflict. However, the experience of the Colombo mediation as also the recent developments of the Iran-Iraq conflict reveal the complex problems involved in any such nonaligned initiative. Moreover, the nonaligned movement does not seem to have adequate resources and influence in the present strategic environment to accomplish this arduous task effectively. All the same, any such initiative on the part of the nonaligned must be welcomed as a move in the right direction.

1 Two significant resolutions in this regard were submitted at the Havana Summit of the nonaligned countries in 1979. See Appendix 9 in this work.