CHAPTER-V

GLOBAL AND REGIONAL IMPERATIVES AND POLICY ADJUSTMENT

The world geopolitical system is complex. It is characterized by a flexible hierarchical, specialized and integrated spatial structure. Global imbalance is a function of changes among and between geostrategic realms and their geopolitical regions. As power becomes more diffused across the evolving world system, the system is better equipped to cope with the shock of change. The global system is increasingly becoming a seamless web whose salient characteristic is dynamic equilibrium, not rigidly imposed order.

The world is in the throes of international upheaval and the search is on for new structures to restore global stability. Many believe that just as the global balance has been upset by two cataclysmic episodes—the disintegration of East European and Soviet Communism, the dismantling of the Soviet centralized state, and the end of the Cold War—so can equilibrium be restored only if through some sudden and equally dramatic international event. In fact, however, the rapid change in the Soviet-American relations have not occurred because of these recent events alone. Rather, the changes are historic milestones in a continuing process that has marked the evolution of our geopolitical world over the past quarter-century.¹

Assuming that equilibrium—a condition of equal balance between arrays of opposing forces operating at different geographical scales—is the desired state, then its restoration will take more than one or even a series of diplomatic strokes, no matter how defining they are taken to be. For what is now being widely heralded as a sea-change in world history has not occurred because reasonable or desperate national leaders suddenly decided to behave differently (Rizopoulos 1990). Rather, it happened because of a sequence of events that have robbed both superpowers of the ability and need to continue the conflict. Challenged early on by the emergence of other major power centers, they then became bogged down in unsuccessful regional wars, each with dire domestic consequences. Even more compelling, glasnost and perestroika could not ward off the collapse of the Soviet economy, and Reaganomics hastened the end of America's hegemony over the world economy.

It is not surprising that international military and political earthquakes give rise to hopes and dreams of new world order. After such unexpected events, statespersons and politicians eagerly embrace the goal of reordering and scholars busy themselves with explanatory theories.

In the U.S., older geopolitical ideas were embraced by Kennan, Acheson, Nitze, Dulles, Eisenhower, Rostow, Taylor, Kissinger, Nixon, Brezezinski and Haig (Brown 1989), and integrated into American foreign policy. Outdated versions of the Heartland-Rimland theory remained a tool for containment strategy long after that strategy had proved wanting. The
American geopoliticians grasped spatially obsolete views because of their limited understanding of geography. For theirs was and is a definition of the discipline that is static, deterministic, and naive.

One example is Brzezinski's (1986) rigid embrace of Heartland containment. This led him to project geopolitics as a superpower contest for "lynchpin" states—Germany, Poland, South Korea, the Philippines would encircle China, and its command of Iran, or both Afghanistan and Pakistan, would enable it to project its power on the Indian Ocean. Such a view is dismissive of the innate geopolitical positions and strengths of China and India, and surely underestimates the costs of superpower alliances with weak and unstable regimes. In the same genre of geopolitical determinism was lean Kirkpatrick's 1986 pronouncement that "Central America is the most important place in the world for the United states today." Current talk about a "New World Order" implies the possibility of an international situation that would remain stable. This is not a possibility. Change is not only inevitable but a necessary concomitant to progress.

In South Asia, the U.S. should recognize India's legitimate desires to be neutral in the superpower rivalry, as well as the reality of India's dominant position on the subcontinent. The American military alliance with Pakistan that brought India and the Soviet Union more closely together was based upon the flawed logic of a China-Pakistan-U.S. counterbalance to

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Soviet ambitions in Eurasia. Our choice of Pakistan as a partner has been as geopolitically unsound as was our espousal of Somalia as a counter to Ethiopia. In the Middle East, Europe's interests as an intrusive power are as legitimate as those of the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. Even if the superpowers exercise their military pressures in concert, they will not be able to bring contending regional powers to the peace table.

North-South relations cannot be ignored in the face of the overwhelming temptation to focus on East-West ties. The "Quarter-Sphere of Marginality" (Subsahara Africa and South America) will destabilize the world through local and regional conflicts, unless greater economic and political attention is accorded the region. It is especially imperative that the U.S. redirect its foreign aid to these needy lands, rather than continue to concentrate nearly all of its economic and military aid on a handful of military allies.

Moreover, regional balance is not an alternative to past efforts to strike a global equilibrium through a standoff among the major powers. Pan-regions are neither economically adequate nor politically feasible. The world is now far too interdependent. Global equilibrium requires an open system, not a precarious balance based exclusively upon megaregions. The geostrategic realm is the highest regional level of the global system.

The deteriorating economic and political fortunes of the Soviet Union may lead some to ask whether the concept of a Eurasian geostrategic realm still has validity. Those who have heralded the triumph of liberal democracy
over Communism and the collapse of the unitary governmental structure are premature in dismissing the Soviet Union, from its perch as a controlling state in an arena of the world that has impact upon much of the rest. A revived, albeit smaller and loosely confederated union, that is ideologically compatible with its East European neighbours will remain in a position to dominate its geostrategic realm—that vast spatial arena large enough to affect the areas within its strategic military reach. It is characterized by a distinct set of interrelationships expressed in terms of patterns of circulation, economic orientation, and historic, cultural, and political tradition. Place, movement and perspective combine to shape a geostrategic realm.

Realms are defined by "Continently" and "Maritimity". These are terms that not only describe lands and climates: they also describe outlooks. The Eurasian Continental World is more isolated, more inwardly-oriented, and more heavily endowed with raw materials than its maritime counterpart. Its people have deep ties to the land. Whatever happens to the Soviet Union, whether it loses such republics as the Baltics, Maldavia, Georgia and Armenia, or remains intact, there will be a Russia and some allied or subordinate republics to occupy the Eurasian Heartland. It will remain a large, well-endowed, and technologically advanced power, capable of influencing events in much of the rest of the world. China, too, belongs to this realm. It is not part of the Maritime World as portrayed by Mackinder and Spykman in their times, Richard Nixon in his. The vast majority of Chinese live off the land, not from sea trade. Even with China's recent spurt
in commerce, it only accounts for 1.5 per cent of the world's imports and exports. It is the mountain that holds a spiritual, mystical attraction for the Chinese, not the sea.

For a deeper understanding of India's foreign policy it shall be desirable to examine here relations with some of the leading countries as well as neighbouring countries.

1. Relations with Great Britain – India has maintained friendly relations with Great Britain from the very beginning. This was rather unexpected in view of the bitter struggle which India had to wage against the British to gain independence. However, the exemplary manner in which the British granted freedom to India and the non-violent nature of the Indian freedom struggle, greatly reduced the bitterness which usually exists between the imperialist power and the former colonies. Accordingly India decided to continue as a member of the Commonwealth despite her decision to become a Republic. The British leaders were also keen to retain India in the Commonwealth and made necessary amendment in the constitution of the Commonwealth to accommodate Republican India as a member. India's relations with Britain were somewhat strained as a result of the Pro-Pakistan stand of the British representative in the United Nations on the Kashmir issue. However, in the wake of Chinese attack on India in 1962 Great Britain came forward quickly with offers of assistance to India. In view of recent developments the attitude of Britain towards India in the post 1965 period underwent a remarkable change. She decided not to involve herself in the
conflict between India and Pakistan. She continued to follow this policy in the subsequent years. Commenting on the intimate relations of India with Britain, Prof. Toynbee says, "It is one of the vital interests of the Western people that this partnership of our (English people) with the people of India together constitute one of the two Asian quarters of the human race; and only two years after Great Britain had made a move for the reconciliation of Asia with the West by completing the liquidation of the British rule in Ceylon, Pakistan and the Indian Union and Burma."

2. **Relation with United States of America** – India's relations with U.S.A. during the period immediately following her independence were rather friendly. The Indian leaders acknowledged with gratitude the role played by the U.S. President inexerting pressure on the British to grant independence to India. The democratic ideals Americans also greatly attracted the Indian leaders and they saw close resemblance between the people and political systems of the two countries. For example Prime Minister Nehru in the course of his address to the American Senate in 1949 said: "Like you, we have achieve our freedom through a revolution, though our methods were different from yours. Like you we shall be a republic based on the federal principle, which is an outstanding contribution of the founders of this great Republic. We have placed in the forefront of our Constitution those fundamental human rights to which all men who like liberty, equality and progress aspire-the freedom of the individual, the equality of men and the rule of law. We enter, therefore, the community of free nations with the
roots of democracy deeply embedded in our institutions as well as in the thoughts of our people.\textsuperscript{3}

Despite these pronouncements by the Indian leaders regarding affinity between India and the U.S.A. leadership did not appreciate India's policy of non-alignment and interpreted it as a positive leaning towards Soviet Union. It may be noted that even Soviet Union did not interpret India's policy on non-alignment as a friendly posture towards her. On the other hand India declined to become member of the military alliances sponsored by U.S.A. The two countries also took opposite stand on various international issues, such as Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, South-West Asia etc. This was mainly due to the different approach adopted by India and U.S.A. to the colonial problem. Close at home America's support to Pakistan on the Kashmir issues in the Security Council, and grant of military aid to Pakistan to meet the Communist threat, were criticised by the Indian leaders. However, the American leaders tried to pacify India by pointing out that the military equipments which were being supplied to Pakistan as member of the various military alliances, were essentially meant to meet the Communist threat and would not be used against India. These assurances failed to satisfy the Indian leaders and greatly contributed to the straining of relations between U.S.A. and India. Despite these differences, India continued to receive financial and technical assistance from USA. USA rendered valuable assistance to India under the Technical Co-operation Agreement of 1951. India's relations with

\textsuperscript{3} Jawaharlal Nehru, \textit{India's Foreign Policy}, New Delhi, 1960, pp.590-91.
U.S.A. continued to operate a low key till there was change of Government in India and Jimmy Carter was elected as President of U.S.A. In contrast to Nixon and other leaders who had a clear pro-Pakistan attitude, the new American President was favourably disposed towards India. On the other hand in India, the Government of Mrs. Gandhi, who was more inclined towards the Soviet Union, was replaced by the Janata Party. With the change of leadership in both the countries it was expected that the relations between the two countries would improve and develop along friendly lines.

3. Relations with the Soviet Union – India's relations with Soviet Union also did not begin on a note of cordiality. India's decision to become member of the Commonwealth and here opposition to the Communist revolution in Malaya caused much misunderstanding in the Soviet minds. These actions were seen by the Soviet leaders as a clear advancement towards the Anglo-American bloc. These doubts were further strengthened after India's support to Greece and her stand on Korea. Though India had announced on a number of occasions that she would not join either of the two blocs and would follow a policy of non-alignment, the Soviet leaders interpreted India's non-alignment policy as a mechanism of pro-Western policy. But very soon the misunderstanding between the two countries started clearing up and their relations started improving. The role played by India, both inside and outside. The United Nations, as a leader of the anti-colonial powers also left a favourable impression on the minds of the Soviet leaders. During the Korean Conflict also India showed her independent position and refused to
brand China as an aggressor, much against the wishes of the Western powers.

But the real improvement in the relations of the two countries took place only after the death of Stalin. The new Soviet leaders (Bulganin and Khrushchev) started the policy of improving relations with other countries. With this view in 1955 the two Soviet leaders paid a visit to India and were given a warm welcome. The year 1956 witnessed closer as well as cooler relations between India and Soviet Union.

During the Sino-Indian conflict of 1962 Soviet Union extended support to India and agreed to co-operate with her in the building of M.I.G. Fighter Planes in India. This was rather surprising that the Soviet Union should support India against a communist country. In 1965, when the Indo-Pakistan war broke out Soviet Union tried to bring about a cease-fire and arrange a meeting between Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri of India and President Ayub of Pakistan with a view to find out a solution for the outstanding problems through negotiations. It was mainly due to the efforts of Soviet Union that the two leaders met at Tashkent and signed the historic Tashkent Declaration in January 1966.

Another significant feature of the peace treaty 1971 was that the two parties were not to conclude military alliances against each other and also not to permit the use of their territory to any other power against each other. In case either of the party was subjected on an attack or threat of attack, the two countries were to hold reciprocal consultations with a view to eliminate
the danger and to take effective measures for ensuring peace and security, of their country. By virtue of these provisions India was assured of Soviet support in case of Sino-American intervention in a conflict between India and Pakistan. Commenting on the significance of the treaty Swaran Singh, the then Foreign Minister of India said, "We are convinced that this treaty will serve as a shining example of how relations between two friendly countries can be and should be developed and how they can serve not only the interests of the two countries but be an important stabilising factor for strengthening peace and security in this region and throughout Asia and the West. The conclusion of this treaty marked a change in the foreign policy of India. It is difficult to agree with the critics that by concluding this treaty of peace and friendship with the Soviet Union, India abandoned her traditional foreign policy of non-alignment. It merely indicated that India was willing to adopt more pragmatic foreign policy and make necessary adjustment in her policy in the context of changed situation, if the national interests so demanded. This contention was further supported by the run of events which took place in wake of conclusion of this treaty.

Thus India's relations with Soviet Union continued to grow along friendly lines. However, after the defeat of Congress Government and emergence of Janata Party to power, it was expected that the close relations between the two countries would suffer a set back. There was an open demand for the snapping of the Indo-Soviet Treaty in certain quarters. The doubts were further strengthened by pronouncements of certain Janata Party
leaders. For example Prime Minister Morarji Desai told the critics of Indo-Soviet Treaty, that the treaty would not be permitted to stand in the way of friendly relations with other countries. This observation of Morarji Desai was interpreted in interested circles as if India under Janata Party would move away from Soviet Union.

What is of advantage to the country is in the final analysis the well-being of the people and the nation which is directly related to security and non-threatening environment. The security of a country is the most fundamental demand upon foreign policy. Every country's foreign policy is first of all geared to the objective of ensuring the maximum possible security in a given situation. Necessarily the concept of security in the contemporary world is not a simple arithmetic of the size of armed forces. It is a for more comprehensive exercise. It includes situation in and relations with neighbouring countries, the relations of neighbours with other significant actors in the international arena and your own relations with those actors, the country's place and role in international politics, whether it is a quiet or an unquiet state of affairs on the frontiers, and if unquiet how unquiet, and not the least significant internal strength and health of the country which, again, includes economic development and social cohesion, the level of industrialization and modernization of economy and the level of involvement of different sections and groups and regions in a country in the perception that the unity and the integrity of the country was of prime importance.
The geo-political compulsions for the evolution of a fairly comprehensive and co-ordinated long-term maritime policy were equally strong. Yet the extent of neglect of the Indian Ocean region by our policy makers till around the close of the decade of 1960s seems to have been even larger, and it continued even longer than in the case of the Himalayas. It is not without reason that the Indian Ocean bears its name after India. The centrality of India in the Ocean is too conspicuous to be ignored; it occupies a dominant position. Its stakes therefore, in the peace and stability in the region are too high to be ignored. India's maritime boundary almost 4000 miles long, is as large as its land frontiers. Location of India in the Ocean enables its accessibility to all portions of the Indian Ocean; most of the trade routes pass through the Indian Ocean which gives India an additional advantage in matters of foreign trade.

India has a number of islands in the Ocean. It is estimated that there are about 1200 such islands, half of them in the bay of Bengal and the remaining in the Arabian Sea.

The Indian Ocean contains several minerals and natural resources which are lying unexplored in the sea bed along the coast line. The fisheries zones in the Indian ocean waters have their value in meeting the food requirements of the people in the coastal region. Very recently India has discovered nodules which contain manganese and other precious minerals. It is for this reason that India's interests are very vital from the economic point of view.

Unlike the Himalayan region which has exercised more of an insular effect,
the oceanic region has enabled India to establish contacts with the far flung states and peoples. Peninsular India, unlike several other littoral states in the Indian Ocean, clearly understood the importance of sea power and established colonies in the historic past, in far flung areas like Sumatra, Cambodia, Thailand, Malaya and Indonesia. \(^4\) It is also believed that India probably was the first country of the Indian Ocean to have possessed naval battle fleets. \(^5\) Speaking of the importance of the Indian Ocean, K.M. Pannikar has written:

> It is an obvious fact to any student of history that India's security lies on the Indian Ocean; that without a well considered and effective naval policy, India's position in the world will be weak, dependent on others and her freedom at the mercy of any country capable of controlling the Indian Ocean. India's future therefore, is closely bound up with the strength she is able to develop gradually as a naval power. \(^6\)

Nevertheless, from the geo-political points of view, oceanic consciousness is rather weak in our psyche. Therefore, whenever we talk of geographical and cultural unity of India it is land-oriented. It is India from Kashmir to Kanya Kumari, as if that is the end of India; Port Blair is non-existent. It will not be surprising if many Indians are unable to locate it on the map. Consequently, emotionally and culturally, people living in the far off islands, and their activities and needs and problems are not fully


appreciated by the people in continental India. The Andaman and Nicobar Islands are Kalapani for most of us. It is therefore a land-oriented Indian psyche which still thrives. For these and some other reasons therefore, there was nothing, of what one might describe as a well conceived Indian Ocean policy of India for almost two decades after independence. As a consequence to this, policy makers were unable to define maritime priorities within a coherent and well conceived perspective. Once again, India lost the initiative and capability to "influence events in the Indian Ocean and to secure her interests in the area"\(^7\) as in the case of the Himalayan region. The intrusive and interventionist strategy which Washington followed in the subsequent years in the sub-continent and also in the entire Oceanic region was the result of this small beginning. Nehru, in fact, told the Rajya Sabha on 31 December 1963, that the movement of the US naval vessels did not necessarily threaten "our freedom, or imperils our policy of non-alignment. "Two days earlier in a statement in the Lok Sabha he had said, "Outside the territorial waters of India, the Ocean-is.... open to them"\(^8\).

The Anglo-US Agreement on Diego Garcia was finally signed in 1969. Washington had also acquired Polaris A-3 missiles. This was immediately responded to by the Soviet Union which also started strengthening its military presence in the Indian Ocean. It was on account of these developments that India, Sri Lanka and some other littoral countries started


\(^8\) Lok Sabha Debates (New Delhi), 24, 1963, 19 December 1963, Col.5768.
articulating and building up a regional opinion that the Ocean should be declared a Zone of Peace. Looking at the whole thing in a historical perspective it seems that the geo-political perspective was deliberately ignored and, if at all, was assigned a low position. With the experience of Germany in the background where the pre-eminence of the geo-political factors was directly and positively responsible for the expansionist and fascist policies of Hitler, leaders of free India, particularly Nehru, did not consider it a desirable perspective for building up a just and peaceful global system. Secondly geo-politics and power politics go together. In Nehru's world view a power political approach to world order was the very negation of a new global order that he had conceived of and was hoping to construct through non-alignment and Panch Sheel.

Two international revolutions have taken place in the post-war period: the availability of weapons of mass destruction, and their means of delivery from any point on the globe to any other point; and the creation of many new states out of former colonial or dependent areas. These two revolutions have had profound consequences on international relations and on India's foreign policy.

The more significant revolution of these two is the technological revolution with its significant impact on the nature of war and on the nature of power. Since the first atom bomb dropped on Hiroshima on 6 August 1945, a whole family of nuclear weapons capable of being carried by aircraft and submarines has been developed-some of them like the hydrogen bomb,
being 1,000 times as powerful as the Hiroshima atom bomb. To quote Einstein (he quote these words on 12 February 1950 when the hydrogen bomb was known to be a possibility): "If successful, radioactive poisoning of the atmosphere, and hence annihilation of any life on earth, has been brought within the range of technical possibilities."

The technological revolution, however, did not prevent local or limited wars. The period under survey witnessed several such wars, e.g. in India-Pakistan (1947-49, 1975 and 1971), in Korea (1950-53), in West Asia (1948-49, 1956, 1967), and in Vietnam (1946-54), which however resumed later.

The second revolution—the rise of several newly-independent states in Asia and Africa. Its effect on international relations has been the rise of three groups of states—the states led by the United States (not all of which, however, were democratic), the states led by the Soviet Union (the Communist) and the nonaligned states. The states, which act and exercise power independently, are not only in Europe, but are spread throughout the world; Asia and Africa have become more important than they were. The effect on international politics has been that the earlier system of balance of power—in which some six to eight leading European states in the world, and in which there was an intellectual and moral consensus supporting the system of balance of power—is no longer there. Two large groups of states, a third giant state (China) and a number of nonaligned states mutually interact, producing a situation totally different from the system before 1945.
Even since independence (1947) following the departure of British colonial power from the Indian subcontinent, the foreign policies of the South Asian countries had been, until the collapse of the Soviet State in 1990, and the end of Cold War, guided by the bipolar scenario that had resulted as a consequence of the decline of Britain's status as a global power, and the simultaneous rise of the United states and the erstwhile USSR as leaders respectively of the capitalist-democratic (the "Free World") and the Socialist-Marxist blocs. Of the two main successor states in South Asia, while Pakistan opted for an associate status in the US-led capitalist bloc, the Republic of India under the leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru went in for an independent stance in international relations, and pursued a foreign policy of equal distancing from the two rival power blocs; thereby keeping channels of free and friendly relations open with both.

The major contributory factor in this choice was India's long tradition (starting from the times of the Vedas) of faith in the essential unity of all mankind—indeed, of all living beings. A continuing threat in Indian philosophy of life has been the fundamental belief that in the God's creation nothing is one hundred percent good or one hundred percent evil, and that most things represent a mixture of both. This also applied to the attitudes of communities toward one another. Such a belief on the part of India's leaders created faith in the possibility of achieving international peace and harmony through concerted effort to bring leaders of the rival blocs at the conference table, and thereby helping them appreciate each other's point of view so that
a meeting ground could be found with a view to resolving the out-standing issues.⁹

A more mundane objective behind the country's policy of equal distancing between the two power blocs was the compelling fact that in view of its depressed economic state, India's new political masters needed goodwill, economic aid, know how, and collaboration on a host of matters in the mammoth task of nation-building and economic reconstruction, from all possible sources in the developed world. The situation was particularly difficult in view of the very high set of expectations that the country's overwhelmingly poor populace entertained from the new democratic structure. People were virtually hoping for things to get transformed overnight and paradise to be re-established on the earth, as it were. A policy of equal distancing between the two rival power blocs with a view to obtaining financial/technological assistance from both, apparently seemed to offer much better prospects for success in achieving this objective. Another contributory factor was that Jawaharlal Nehru was much too tall a political figure to feel comfortable with an associate (read subordinate) status in either of the two rival international formations. The nonaligned movement as a third force in international policies offered Nehru the preferred forum and stage from where he could effectively voice his opinions and launch peace initiatives whenever and wherever necessary.

The heightened self-confidence of the political leadership of post-independence India in global affairs had arisen from a number of factors. First and foremost was the country's geographical size and its status as the largest multiparty democracy in the world. Equally significant was the fact that India occupied a most distinctive and unique position among the new post-1945 crop of sovereign nation-states. India had not only heralded the process of decolonization that had brought them freedom, it had also served as a source of inspiration for and, in many cases, as an active promoter of freedom movements in the Afro-Asian realm. Furthermore, owing to her unbroken tradition of high culture and learning from the earliest times (a tradition which had been further strengthened by the system of liberal education under British rule), India became universally accepted as the natural leader of the Third World nations. Nehru's stature as one of the tallest political figures in contemporary world politics made it all the more incumbent that the mantle of leadership of the Third World should fall on his shoulders.

Another important source of strength for India vis-a-vis the two rival power blocs was that nature had endowed India with a uniquely favourable strategic location, both in terms of the Heartland as well as the Rimland world-view of global politics as presented respectively by Mackinder,10 and Spykman11 (both of them subscribed to essentially similar views, the chief

difference between their models being that whereas Mackinder gave primacy to the inner Asian Heartland region as the unassailable base for political-military supremacy in Eurasia, Spykman was convinced that in the post-Columbus era of maritime supremacy in global relationships, the strategic balance in Eurasia-and therefore the world-had permanently shifted in favour of the surrounding tier of maritime states, which together possessed much greater manpower, and strategic resources and military potential, than the Heartland). The foreign policies of almost all the leading countries in the post-Second World War period-most particularly the US policy of "containment"- were predominantly influenced by the global strategic thinking of Mackinder and/or Spykman.

Another aspect of India's geography that gave her strength in international affair, was the country's commanding geographical position in the Indian ocean. Unlike the Atlantic and the Pacific Oceans, the Indian Ocean (irrespective of her oceanic dimension) is more like a closed sea. Enclosed by the eastern coastlands of Africa in the west, South-East Asia and Australia in the east, the Arab World and the Indian subcontinent forming a roof over it in the north, the Indian Ocean is somewhat like a closed chamber that opens only in the deep south toward the frozen continent of Antarctica. Like any other chamber, the Indian Ocean had restricted channels of entry and exit – these were: the Oceanic route across the Suez Canal connecting it with Europe via the Mediterranean; the overland route via the basins of Tigris and Euphrates connecting it with
Mesopotamia and beyond with the central European region; the restricted oceanic route to the Far East via the port of Singapore; the circuitous route around the continent of Australia that connected it with the South Pacific region. Things had greatly changed after the departure of British power from scene, but India retained the strategic advantage conferred upon her by her geographical location. By virtue of it, India has continued to be pre-eminent regional power in this geopolitical region comprising the littoral states of Eastern Africa, South-West Asia, South Asia and parts of South-east Asia. This commanding strategic location in the Indian ocean conferred upon India considerable leverage in world politics. Notwithstanding the country's overwhelming commitment to non-alignment in international relations, critics have often times drawn attention to a definite tilt in India's foreign policy toward the former Soviet bloc during the cold war phase. Such a tilt has sometimes been explained by reference to Nehru's anti-fascist past (his support for the cause of the rebels in the Spanish civil war is cited as example) and his innate learning toward socialism. Whereas from the viewpoint of India's geopolitical perspective the Soviet Union stood out as the most powerful neighbour across the mountains whose help and protection should come handy in times of crisis; the United States had appeared more like a friendly acquaintance living across the seven seas. Complete understanding and close ties of mutual friendship with the former Soviet Union therefore had appeared a pressing necessity. This necessity was particularly underlined by the fact that the post-1949 geopolitical scene in
Asia was bound to hot up some day in future owing to the inevitable contest for leadership of the Afro-Asian world between India and China (the two somewhat evenly matched powers at that stage), notwithstanding their much publicized communality of interests, historical ties, the Panchsheel agreement, and other disclaimers to the contrary. India needed close Soviet friendship with a view to ensuring support in the event of any future conflict with China.

The other countries in the region also require activist diplomacy on India's part, much more imaginative than was permissible in less difficult times. Here, Bangladesh and Nepal are extremely important countries. In our relations with them, the initiative, the generosity, the understanding, has always to begin the New Delhi. Sri Lanka is a more difficult problem and no easy solution is with in both nation-states which make a civilised solution elusive.

In attempting to work out our new foreign policy agenda, there are some institutional features to which we will have to be more sensitive. We will have to build upon a much stronger monitoring mechanism within the foreign office than is now available. Both the Historical Division and the Policy Planning Section will have to be strengthened and restructured with a much more deliberate policy of inviting the participation of members of the foreign policy community in the country outside the government-academics, journalists and individual politicians. We have also to seriously take up the question of creating new official think-tanks and encouraging the emergenc
of unofficial ones. The American, the Soviet and the Chinese precedents are important in this regard.

Until now, we have followed a rather comfortable, easy going basis-most of the inputs coming from competent writings by journalists and the academics within the popular media. The Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses is sui generis. we have to be grateful for its contributions over the decades to popular education, but it cannot be expected to take the place of policy planning within the concerned four ministries, External Affairs, Defence, Finance and Commerce. In our system, a national security council may not be an immediately available option. We could strengthen the existing arrangements in the ministries and work towards a common policy planning apparatus within the government which will be able to draw upon the various concerned departments, and which will remain also at the unexciting level of expertise and monitoring-not decision-making or propaganda.

We have to take into account the new significance of China as participatory member of a new global oligarchy. China is interesting to us because it is the only developing country which is a permanent member of the Security Council team. China is also interesting to us because of its shared qualities with India, in multi-ethnicity, multi-developmental confusion, and an institutional strength which has survived many challenges during the last four decades. Our bilateral contacts will necessarily have to take precedence only after much more useful technological links with the advanced countries. But there is a great deal we can do between countries.
But there is a great deal we can do between each other and more importantly, together in the multilateral field.

All these global concerns are important. The great changes in the international system are bound to affect our ways of thinking and acting. But what a vital continues to be our diplomatic and security policies in the immediate region. Here we have a record of "negative continuity" in the case of Pakistan which we cannot ignore in charting our agenda for the future. Here, extra-regional interests are important but the central weaknesses are domestic, within our region and within our own national boundaries. Like most of the countries in this inter-dependent world, we have to come to terms with the new translucency in international relations, in weapons, in ideas, in smuggling, in the criminalisation of politics, and the politicisation of international crime.

This is essentially contemporary and new dangerous dimension added to the older problems within our national boundaries which we failed to solve in the earlier decades. There is no simple policy solution to these things, no diplomatic exit route from the domestic trap. Diplomacy can help but only so much.

Pakistan is the most important in creating of our regional problems. In one sense, all our foreign policy begins and ends with our western neighbour. If we are able to sort out our problems with that country, we will be more effective, more useful and more respected as a member of the world community. This is precisely the essence of Gujral Doctrine to solve our immediate regional problems.