CHAPTER I

TOWARDS NONALIGNMENT

On the threshold of India's independence Jawaharlal Nehru introduced the basic principles of her future foreign policy as the "outcome of the economic policy". He proposed:

1. not to align with any of the rival powers,
2. to forge close association with other Asian countries,
3. to help in the emancipation of the colonial and dependent nations.

These guidelines had to be consistent with, and serve, India's perception of herself, her position in the international community, and her quest for status in this community.

She perceived herself as a new entrant in world politics, militarily insignificant but of potential strength. The operation of her foreign policy was based on two considerations: that as the first and biggest among the newly-liberated countries she desired to influence in a decisive way the process of decolonialization; and that her size and population predestined her to have a say in the future of mankind. Nehru pointed out that India could not be ig-

1 Jawaharlal Nehru, "India's Foreign Policy: Selected Speeches of Jawaharlal Nehru", September 1946 - April 1961, New Delhi, Publications Division, 1961, p. 25.
nored because of her resources and actual or potential power. Thus it was emphasized that she had a special status in and responsibility towards Asia and that, she would exercise an important influence in the Pacific region; that "her position gives her an economic and strategic importance in a part of the world which is going to develop rapidly" that she should play her role in the new phase of Asian development. It was also realized from the very beginning that statements of this kind would easily provoke suspicions of India's intentions about leadership role in Asia.

In the early years of independence, India's foreign policy was in quest of a short cut to international status. She tried to assert herself in the political and economic spheres abroad since 1947 in areas where she had the capacity to do so. Where she did not have this capacity she created and developed institutions and infrastructures enabling her to make her presence felt internationally. Chapters IV and V discuss her endeavours in this respect.

India pursued her idea of an Asian countries association on three fora: Asian Relations Organisation initiated at the time of Asian Relations Conference in March-April 1947, the British Commonwealth of Nations, and the United Nations Organization.

2 Sisir Gupta, "India and Regional Integration in Asia", Bombay, 1964, p. 254.
3 Jawaharlal Nehru, "The Discovery of India", Calcutta, 1946, p. 653.
Asian Relations Organisation was shortlived, but the international political mechanisms of the Commonwealth and the UN served India particularly well as an operative base to exercise her influence and grow in prestige. From these fora she could act effectively to articulate the hopes and aspirations of the newly-freed developing countries wanting to follow their own developmental paths without joining any other power blocs.

The efforts of the countries with shared concerns brought about a movement, encompassing many countries even beyond Asia.

Beginnings of Regional Thinking

India's attempts at regional integration go back to the 1920s when Gandhi wrote of the growing solidarity of Asian countries and the need of an Asian federation. 4

Closer cooperation with other Asian countries became one of the underlying ambitions of the Indian national movement during India's struggle for freedom. Initially she looked for emotional links with the Soviet Union and Japan as counterfoil against European imperialism. In 1940, Nehru advanced the idea of an eastern federation incorporating India, China and other eastern countries as a part of a future world federation. He stressed India's pivotal location in Asia facilitating her closer links with Southeast Asia, Afghanistan, Iran and the Arab World. He empha-

4 This is discussed in great detail by Sisir Gupta in "India and Regional Integration in Asia", Bombay, 1964.
sized the necessity of conscious efforts towards advancing this close association.

**Asian Relations Conference**

When after the II world war the trend towards regional integration emerged, Nehru came back to the idea of federations of Asian countries which could embody India and countries to the West or to the Southeast. He contemplated a South Asian Federation consisting of India, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan and Burma. After independence the idea re­appeared. Suggestions from outside India had also been advanced from time to time about establishing some kind of standing forum for consultations and cooperation of Asian countries. A formal step in this direction came when India; a few months before her legal independence, convened the Asian Relations Conference in Delhi in March and April 1947 with 25 Asian participants.

It was a search for reasons for unity and cooperation. The meeting generated real enthusiasm among the participants. Yet, the suggested standing Asian forum for consultation and cooperation, though discussed in details could not succeed due to setbacks at non-political level.

The growing number of independent Asian states made the necessity of closer Asian links more and more evident. The unity and cooperation appeared even more important in the context of inadequate attention being given to Asian problems on the international forum. Although Asia was one
of the centres of world tensions, Nehru observed the tendency to undervalue Asian problems as compared to the problems of traditional centres of power.5

The conference specified the areas of Asian priorities: upliftment of the status of women in Asia, improvement of communication among Asian countries, and economic progress as an attribute of political freedom. These problems identified as Asian priorities came later on the agenda of the nonaligned movement and were elaborated in its subsequent action programmes.

Nehru also understood that the new independence of these countries was still quite fragile and, though politically independent, they were still interlinked in various ways with their ex-colonial masters. In his opinion the existing links dictated a rather cautious policy towards the developed world. He saw it to be in the interest of the developing world to play down any anti-Western sentiments. His unwillingness to antagonize the great powers and other industrialized countries was determined by his plans of shaping India's foreign policy. He wanted to bring the developing and industrialized worlds to cooperate at least in the sphere of solving problems of the newly-freed countries. This aspect of Nehru's vision manifested itself,

particularly since 1948, in India's foreign policy's stress on international cooperation. According to one commentator "The need for these countries (of 'backward areas') was not so much to exert the strength that they potentially possessed but to invoke international cooperation in the solution of their vital problems". This seems to imply a rather passive attitude of the developing countries waiting for their problems to be solved by others from outside without applying themselves too much to this task. This attitude earned them in the course of time the criticism of the developed world.

Nehru carried on with the idea of international cooperation while speaking before the United Nations in November 1948. He wanted to draw the attention of the world body, preoccupied with political issues, to the economic problems and poverty in many parts of the world. He saw it as a problem of social and economic imbalance in a global perspective.

In the wave of enthusiasm generated by the Asian Relations Conference in 1947 the participants decided to continue this forum and hold the next conference in China in 1949. However, after the high point in Asian relations and apparent success of the Delhi conference the rapport among the coun-

tries weakened. The conference revealed two major sources of discord. These were the marked rivalry between India and China, and common distrust against these two big countries among the smaller ones. The proceedings exposed the difficulties involved in any attempt at Asian regional cooperation and changed the approach towards it.

In these circumstances, particularly after China became communist, the conference which was to be held there in 1949 did not take place. The Asian Relations Conference as a non-official body did not have any noticeable impact. It ceased to exist in 1957.

The Conference on Indonesia

The next meaningful attempt at initiating closer links within Asia was prompted by the Dutch invasion of Indonesia in December 1948. The event made the newly-freed Asian countries realise the continuing danger of colonialism and provoked anti-colonial sentiments. It was feared that these emotions might serve as a basis for the formation of an anti-colonial bloc. This would have worked against the earlier specified Asian interests based on the cooperation with the developed world.

The conference on Indonesia was convened in New Delhi in January 1949. It was attended by 15 countries including Australia and New Zealand, with China, Nepal and Thailand as observers. The meeting had official status and was political in nature. The agenda of the conference dealt not only with tasks directly related to the events in Indo-
nesia. It had to work out a system for the governments of the participating countries to maintain contact among themselves. Nehru made an open appeal for regional integration similar to the efforts in Europe and America. However, on the next day he opposed his own idea, due to alleged reservations expressed by Western powers. This indicated a lack of firm approach to such an important issue on Nehru's part, and also of decisive influence still enacted by the traditional powers.

As a result of the subtle influences the conference decided that the first efforts to find out possibilities for consultations and cooperation would take place within the framework of the United Nations Organization. This is also why the nonaligned countries later on constantly pleaded for strengthening of the UN structure and its importance. This expressed the willingness of the Asian countries to institutionalise a cooperational base. The representative of Philippines hoped for the establishment of a permanent organization of Asian states, functioning as a regional body along with similar organisations.

**India's Prerogatives**

Asian integration was an idea frequently thought of by Indian policy makers. As they did not want to bind India in any way they visualized links in the form of cooperation which would not demand any commitments from one towards

another. India was interested in cooperation with several regions of Asia, thus she kept her options open as to the region of cooperation and the nature of her cooperation relations with particular Asian regions.

The Indian Council of World Affairs suggested a blueprint of a possible organization of Asian States which would evolve gradually according to emerging needs.9

Less affected by the political reservations towards regional integration and cooperation was the economic sphere, though here also the competitive and uncomplementary economies were not making the task easier. The idea of economic cooperation was close to Indian thinking which was trying to focus the attention of other countries on the internal problems of the states and the region. Nehru emphasized the need to develop the argument in the economic field.10

Thus India was ready for economic collaboration with other countries in the region, and it was observed that her readiness was distinct.11

The United Nations forum was quite new and dominated

---

10 Jawaharlal Nehru, "India's Foreign Policy", Selected Speeches of Jawaharlal Nehru, September 1946 - April 1961, New Delhi, Publications Division, 1961, p. 25.
by the two big powers; India could not expect to use it effectively at that time and had to be content with making general statements on peace, mutual understanding and cooperation among nations. But the forum of the British Commonwealth of Nations helped form political and economic links among the Afro-Asian countries.

The Colombo Plan

The first effective attempt towards cooperation was made by the Commonwealth members. Their foreign ministers met in Colombo in January 1950 to discuss the needs of the region and emphasized the significance of regional cooperation. They decided also to assess the available resources and manpower and to initiate an international framework for economic interaction among the interested countries. The result is known as the Colombo Plan. India's contribution to it is discussed later.

An impressive volume of aid and assistance has been channelled through the Colombo Plan. It is important to note, that the Colombo Plan with its flexible arrangement based on goodwill, was not a rigid structure, had no formal rules, did not try to work out any integrated regional development programme, had no central organization. It presented a forum for various forms of bilateral cooperation among those interested in it.

Bilateral Pattern of Cooperation

The US tried to influence the process of regional
integration in the area while offering US $ 200 million\textsuperscript{12} for projects which would change the existing pattern of bilateral transactions.

The offer was discussed by the Shimla Conference in 1955. Almost all the proposals it contained were rejected. The Conference decided against establishment of a permanent secretariat for the Colombo Plan and of a regional fund. It was also against expansion of the inter-Asian trade. The European countries interested in joining in the Plan were advised to follow the bilateral pattern of cooperation.

The proceedings of the Conference revealed that most of the Asian countries were either not ready or afraid of regional approach towards their developmental problems. Among the factors inhibiting the efforts of this type were:

1. fear that a vast regional body would marginalize the smaller countries and become a third party between the US resources and the interested country,

2. lack of developmental plans of their own in most of the countries in the region,

3. historical suspicions and fears of supra-regional organizations,

4. misgivings that the real US intentions was to create markets for Japan,

5. apprehensions on the part of some countries that this would give India an opportunity to become powerful.

\textsuperscript{12} Sisir Gupta, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 80.
Thus the regional cooperation and economic development had been carried on through bilateral means. This loose arrangement also served India's policy of avoiding commitments and keeping options open.

Impact of Communist Revolution in China

China's decision almost a year later to take the communist path of development brought the cold war into the region and transformed the political scene in Asia as well as the thinking of regionalism. India became rather sceptical of the possibility or even desirability of initiating a regional grouping in Asia. She understood that accepting China in any such grouping would mean dovetailing it to the communist bloc. And acting in the opposite direction i.e. creating any association designed to counter the communist bloc. Both the options were against India's decision not to align herself with either of them.

It has to be pointed out here that China who opted for the communist path of development eliminated herself as a decisive power in efforts for Asian integration leaving this place for India which enhanced her status in Asia.

India's Changed Attitude

In the changed context India could not have been enthusiastic about subsequent attempts made by other countries to approach problems of regional concern. She rejected an Australian suggestion to form a Pacific Pact and
responded indifferently to the Philippines initiative to discuss regional issues. Philippines emphasizing the need for collective security in Asia also proposed a Pacific Pact. As she was considered as a client of the USA and the Asian countries did not want to become satellites even by association, this attempt was also not likely to succeed.

India viewed the post-war world as being divided in two ways: apart from the widely recognised line running between the communist and the non-communist world, there was another dividing line at work separating the developed and the underdeveloped worlds. She understood that the states in the region should rather look for economic and not for military solutions of their problems. Thus she was not interested in the suggested Pacific Pact. She attended nonetheless the conference held in May 1950 on this topic. Pakistan, Australia, Indonesia, Thailand and Ceylon were also present. But the conference limited itself to the resolutions which recommended general cooperation in cultural areas.

Under the influence of these developments from the beginning of 1951 India's stress shifted from the problems of cooperation and regionalism towards the doctrine of peace area i.e., area outside the cold war and free from military alliances so that without any regional integration India was able to gain a status she thought she was qualified by her size, geographical position and potential etc. She wanted to remain a factor in inner-bloc politics
while remaining generally nonaligned in the cold war. Her foreign policy was now directed towards establishment of a peace area or a third area of peace, distinct from a third force, third bloc or a third power in a military sense, which did not want war but did want to work for peace and cooperation. This led India to bring together in the United Nations an undefined, but noteworthy, category of an emerging pressure group initially of Arab-Asian and later on African and Latin American states. They brought problems of poverty and backwardness that had to be dealt with internationally.

Group of Colombo Powers

In the search of some common platform for Asian countries Ceylon, Burma, India, Indonesia and Pakistan convened a conference in Colombo in April 1954. It attempted to give a geographical implication to the peace area and had on its agenda political problems of that time and the question of communism in general. The proceedings exposed the fact that the cold war had already created divisions among Asian countries. This was a new and critical obstacle to their understanding and further limited the scope for the establishment of a regional grouping.

Lack of unanimity was visible among the participants with regard to the identification of crucial problems. They were not able to arrive at common conclusions or formulate any resolutions. According to the statement, the prime
ministers informed each other about their views and attitudes towards communist ideologies, could not, however, reach any agreement on the cold war question. The communique issued by the conference contained a paragraph on economic cooperation generally. In this context it was cautioned that the countries should respect the sovereignty of each other and not interfere in the domestic affairs of the others.

The Colombo powers met again in New Delhi in November 1956 to discuss the issues of those days. Pakistan did not send anybody to attend it. Since then they have not met and the group or bloc of Colombo Powers has not been revived.

The set-back of this attempt on regional integration has been partly attributed to the fact that Pakistan abandoned her policy of nonalignment and accepted military assistance from the USA. US decision to aid Pakistan had many implications for the region and one of them was to hinder efforts towards regional cooperation on the Indian subcontinent. Those impediments are felt till today, as for example, some of the difficulties faced by the SAARC.

Further Militarization of the Region

In the 1950s, when the Southeast Asia Treaty Organ-

14 Ibid.
zation was masterminded, India's political orientation was too well known for her to be invited. The SEATO met strong criticism in India as being directed against the idea of the area of peace. Her opposition to military pacts related also to the Baghdad Pact. She understood that the problem for the Asian countries was not communism but deteriorating economic situation and political autocracy which generated it. In her opinion the growing gap between the developing and developed worlds was generating tremendous tensions threatening peace. She saw the danger of military pacts shifting the focal point, sustaining outdated regimes, frustrating social reforms and holding up programmes for economic development.

Bardung Conference

Although the Colombo Powers were not able to form a group with agreed policy and common approach to the problems of the member countries, the suggestions made by the Prime Minister of Indonesia on the conference at Colombo in April 1954 and at Bogota in December 1954, had their follow-up. It was decided in Bogota to convene a meeting which would foster understanding and cooperation among the countries of Asia and Africa as well as their mutual and common interests, review their social, economic and cultural problems, and to analyse how these states could contribute towards world peace and cooperation. It was declared that they did not intend to organise themselves as a regional
bloc.

The proposed conference met in Bandung in April 1955. It proceeded along the earlier lines assuming attitude towards economic, and cultural cooperation, human rights and self-determination, problems of dependent nations and world peace.

The part of the conference's communique containing a declaration on the promotion of world peace and cooperation specified many problems which were later continued in the NAM forum. The participants saw the necessity of

1. regional economic cooperation,
2. mutual technical assistance, exchange of know-how, and setting up of regional training institutes,
3. common approach towards stabilization of the prices for raw materials,
4. regional negotiations with shipping lines,
5. regional banks,
6. improvement of communication, contacts and information exchange within the Third World.

They also recognized the role of United Nations in the process of development and pleaded for a special UN fund for economic development which would channel more resources to the regional. However, as Nehru later pointed out in the parliament, the recommendations of the conference "wisely avoided any provision for setting up additional machinery of international cooperation" sidestepping also

---

16 Jawaharlal Nehru's Speeches, March 1953-August 1957,
from structural changes of the relations within the Third World, revealing differences of political opinions in the Afro-Asian world and showing the presence of outside pressures.

Although the conference worked out some departure points for further developmental discussions, it revealed also the fact that despite the geographical proximity and mutuality of interests among the countries of the region, the difficulties in the way of their integration were immense, their diversities were vast, and there was no consensus among them. Factors like political fluidity and economic competitiveness added to the complexity of the situation. All these notwithstanding, the antagonism between the great powers influenced the relations among the Asian nations who entered into treaty alliances with outside powers and were moving in different directions making their cooperation all the more difficult.

Outside involvements of some of the participants put them against the policy of nonalignment, followed by India and some other countries present at Bandung, in their foreign policy.

Some Western countries made efforts to denigrate the role of nonalignment and to show that the cold war made it meaningless.

Cont'd. f.n. 16

As India was not ready to negotiate or compromise on her nonalignment which for her was a positive concept she did not support the idea of holding another conference of this type, although Indonesian and Egyptian leaders tried to persuade Nehru. In Indian view there was not enough scope for agreement as far as the foreign and domestic policies of the countries present were concerned.

Brioni Conference

India's needs, expectations and interests were better served by the conference convened at Brioni in July 1956 by the leaders of the three nonaligned countries, India, Yugoslavia and Egypt. This conference also agreed on a communique stressing the decisive importance of common international effort to develop the newly emerged countries of the developing world. The UN framework was considered as the most appropriate to carry out this task.

The following years formed Indian position which was to concentrate on the internal problems and to build in countries like India societies of real freedom and free men, as it was put at that time. Regional integration had also its role to play in the efforts for economic emancipation. Nehru, who represented this position, was against allowing the people in their ignorance and poverty to be caught in the trap of the seemingly easy way out. This distinguished him from leaders of other countries who also

17 The Economist, No. 6159, 9 September 1961.
opted for nonalignment.

**Conference of Asian Planners**

In September 1961, when the nonaligned movement was also initiated, problems of regional cooperation were considered again on a conference of Asian Economic Planners convened in New Delhi. It established the Asian Institute of Economic Development and the Regional Advisory Group on Economic Development Planning. The conference dealt vaguely with the possibility of an Asian economic community which would be enacted under the sponsoring of ECAFE and evolve gradually. Ceylon and Pakistan voiced reservations expressing fears existing till today among India's neighbours and cautioned that, "regional cooperation ... should not mean the colonial type of complementarity". So the opportunity for cooperation in the region was missed, although the role of ECAFE in developing a sense of regional unity and understanding the methods of the cooperative effort was considerable.

The numerous attempts at cooperation among the Asian developing countries crystallized into the nonaligned movement which soon was encompassing almost the whole developing world. It commenced in the same month as the Conference of Asian Planners and its first summit conference debated in Belgrade.

The policy of nonalignment in the post-war world added

---

a new dimension to the world's political scene: with the spreading of nonalignment in most of the newly independent states, the world became tripolar rather than bipolar.

It may sound strange today that India joined the movement reluctant and with reservations. Her nonaligned attitude in international politics evolved from her long-term foreign policy objectives. The practice of nonalignment became for her as well as for other member countries an instrument to pursue the goals of their national interests in various spheres.

19 Sisir Gupta, op.cit., pp. 70-72.