Chapter 6

CHANGING SOVIET PERSPECTIVES ON THE THIRD WORLD

The current Soviet emphasis on a declassed, deideologised approach to international relations, deriving its justification from the new political thinking and embodying the ideas of an interdependent, integral world, the primacy of universal over class values, peaceful coexistence sans class struggle, promises to change the Soviet approach to the Third World. The Soviet policy towards the Third World and national liberation movement has had numerous turns to the "left" and to the "right".¹ This is not surprising as pragmatism has been the hallmark of the Soviet foreign policy since its inception. Ideology and practice have been frequently adjusted to suit the needs of the hour. What conceptually sets apart the present Third World policy of the Soviet Union from the earlier periods is that this policy is based on the de-ideologised approach to international relations.

This two-part chapter seeks to study the evolution of the conceptual basis of the Soviet policy towards the Third World. In

¹ Francis Fukuyama has listed "ten" periods of the Soviet Third World policy. According to this periodisation, the Andropov-Gorbachev policy toward the Third World began in 1982 and constituted the beginning of the 10th period characterising a swing to the right. See Francis Fukuyama, "Patterns of Soviet Third World Policy", Problems of Communism, September/October 1987, p.3.
the first part, the Soviet theory of the Third World upto 1985 is examined. In the second part, the Soviet policy towards the Third World under Gorbachev is taken up.

I


Marx's Views of the East

The Soviet theory of the national liberation movements has been concerned with the question relating to making of revolutions and their management in economically and socially backward countries. The immense debate which was witnessed in the 2nd Congress of Comintern in the 1920s (e.g. Lenin vs M.N. Roy) continued to rage in the subsequent years. No unified theory has been found which could take into account, explain and predict developments in the Third World. However, it was Marx, despite his Eurocentric views, who first foresaw the possibility and the importance of revolutions in backward countries, particularly in China. In his article of May 20, 1853 in the New York Daily Tribune, Marx wrote: "It may be argued that the Chinese revolution .... will be closely followed by political revolution on the continent." 

2. For the sake of convenience the concept of "Third World" has been used in a wide sense to include national liberation movements, former colonies, and developing countries.

This is indeed surprising considering that Marx had generally discounted revolutionary potentialities in the East, including in Russia. Marx had also foreseen the importance of the peasantry for a revolution. Thus, basing himself on his observations of France, Marx wrote in The 18th Brumaire: "In losing hope in the Napoleonic restoration, the French peasant loses faith in his small holding, overthrows the whole state apparatus built on that small holding and thus the proletarians' revolution obtains the chorus without which in all peasant countries, its solo becomes a swan song." (Emphasis in the original). And even more, interesting is the fact that Marx had even foreseen the possibility of skipping of the capitalist stage of development on the way to socialist revolution - an idea which Lenin developed later. Thus, writing in 1877 for the Russian periodical Otchestvennie Zapiski, Marx wrote that if Russia continued its revolution toward capitalism on which she had embarked in 1861, she would lose "the finest occasion that history had ever offered to people," and would afterwards be obliged to "undergo all meanders of the Capitalist system."5

Of course, it should be mentioned that the above references in Marx do not amount to any well worked out theory of revolutions in the backward countries. References to the East were generally scattered and Marx's preoccupation with the developed Europe remained all through his life.

5. Letter of Marx to the Russian periodical Otchestvennye Zapiski, in n.3, p.11.
Lenin's Views of the Colonies

Lenin had visualised the importance of revolutions in the colonial countries even before World War I. By 1908, Lenin had convinced himself that the situation in the Asian countries (e.g., India, Turkey) was such that "the Russian revolution has a great international ally both in Europe and Asia, but at the same time, and for this very reason it has not only a national, Russian enemy but also an international enemy".⁶ (emphasis in the original). In his article "Backward Europe and Advanced Asia", Lenin wrote in 1913, ".... Asia ... has a trusted ally in the proletariat of all civilised countries. No force in the world can prevent its victory which will liberate both the peoples of Europe and the peoples of Asia".⁷ Thus, the idea of cooperation between the proletariat of the advanced countries and the liberation movements in the colonial countries had taken shape in Lenin's mind much before the October Revolution. In his famous work Imperialism as the Highest Stage of Capitalism; Lenin had noted that in the backward countries imperialism had caused the growth of nationalistic tendencies which could be termed progressive under the circumstances. This was an extremely important conclusion which shaped the Soviet theory of the Third World in later years.

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The 2nd Congress of Comintern (1920) was a landmark event in the evolution of the Soviet theory of the colonial countries. In this Congress, Lenin argued in favour of support for the bourgeois-democratic movements in the colonial countries, while M.N. Roy, taking a more radical position, argued against supporting these "corrupt" movements and instead spoke of the need for placing proletariat and peasant movements at the head of the anti-imperialist struggle. It is significant that after a lot of debate, Lenin's original thesis was amended slightly and the Congress adopted both Lenin's as well as Roy's thesis. Lenin's thesis subsequently acted as the guidelines on the colonial question. 8

Another important guideline adopted by the Congress was that it was possible for the colonial countries to avoid the capitalist stage of development and move directly to socialism. Thus, in his report to the 3rd Congress of Comintern, Lenin noted that "backward people" need not "go through the capitalist stage of development" provided "the victorious ... proletariat conducts systematic propaganda ... and the Soviet government comes to their aid ..." 9. The help of the socialist Soviet government was considered essential for those who wanted to skip the capitalist stage of development.


Yet another feature of the 2nd Congress which foreshadowed developments of later years was the clash between the Eurocentric view of the delegates from developed countries and the Asiacentric view of delegates like M.N. Roy. Even the Muslim delegates of Czarist Russia distinguished between the nature of revolution in the East and that in the West. National specifics such as religion were considered important. The colonial question got closely interlinked with nationalism. In Russia, the national issues were sought to be subjugated to the Communist principles.

The colonial question came to be discussed in the subsequent Comintern Congresses but the basic Leninist thesis that bourgeoisie democratic movements needed to be supported for their anti-imperialist potentialities remained unchanged. The concept of collaboration with Socialist Russia to facilitate the theoretically possible transition to socialism without going through the capitalist stage also remained.

**Stalin's Views and Policy**

Stalin as the Commissar of Nationalities paid a great deal of attention to the Russian "border regions". In his lectures to Sverdlov University (April, 1924), he spoke of a "common

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10. Sultan Galiev, a former assistant of Stalin, advocated the creation of a separate "Colonial Communist International". His ideas are presented in Arsharuni and Gabidullin, Ocherki Panislamizma i Panturkizma v Rosii, (Moscow, 1931), pp.76-91. For a discussion of the Baku Congress, see n.3, pp.33-38.
revolutionary front" between "the working class in the developed
countries and the liberation movements of the oppressed people."\(^{11}\) However, he did not elaborate on the precise strata of the society
which ought to be supported. In his speeches in May 1925 at the
University of the Peoples of the East, Stalin was more forthcoming.
He emphasised the need to isolate the "compromising national
bourgeoisie" and to establish the hegemony of the proletariat
through organisation of "the advanced elements of the working
class" into an "independent Communist Party". Stalin advocated
formation of a "national revolutionary bloc of workers, peasants and
the revolutionary intelligentsia against the bloc of compromising
national bourgeoisie and imperialism."\(^{12}\) Thus, Stalin's policy of
"United Fronts" of Communists with other progressive non-
Communists was taking shape. The question of the role and place of
the Communists in such United Fronts was always a difficult
question to resolve as Stalin's policy towards the Chinese
Communist Party showed.\(^{13}\) Stalin's belief in the United Front
continued intact and was reflected in the Comintern documents. The
CCP episode clearly brought out the difficulties in harmonising
theory with practice.

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11. J.V. Stalin, Marxism and the National and Colonial
    Question. A Collection of Articles and Speeches,

12. Ibid., p.218.

13. Stalin had presurised the CCP to collaborate with Chiang ki
    Shek's kuomintang in a United Front. However, Chiang ki
    Shek attacked the Communists in 1927, Stalin passed on the
    blame for the debacle to the CCP itself of having committed
tactical blunders. Stalin, however continued to advocate
the United Front approach. See J.V. Stalin, "Notes on
Contemporary Thames:China" in Bruce Franklin, The Essential
The policy of United Fronts underwent many shifts till it was suspended after the Soviet-Nazi pact in 1939. However, it was once again reviewed in 1941 after the Nazis attacked the USSR.

Post-World War II Period: 1945-53

The Cold War began soon after the World War II ended. Zhādanov divided the world into two camps - the imperialist camp and the anti-fascist camp to which the USSR belonged. The camp was also seen to be supported by labour and democratic movements, Communist Parties and the national liberation movements in the colonies. During this period, the Soviets took a positive note of those national liberation movements - such as in China - which were headed by Communist Parties. In sharp contrast, "the bourgeoisie nationalists" leaders like Nehru were described by the Soviets as "cunning slave(s) serving two masters." There could be no "half-way house" between "imperialism and democracy". Thus, the alliance approach requiring Communist collaboration with national elements was ruled out.

A mention must be made of the Varga controversy. Soviet academican Eugene Varga, in his book (1964) suggested that after the war, stabilisation of capitalism had set in and that national liberation movements had become strong and independent. He maintained that India was in a position to maintain her independent

14. See Margot Light, n.9, p.101 and Kessing's Contemporary Archives, no.1-8, 1947, p.8920. Zhādanov claimed that Indonesia and Vietnam were joining the anti-imperialist camp and India, Egypt and Syria were in sympathy with it.
policy. These moderate views came in direct clash with the hardline views which took into account the Cold War psychosis of those years. During this period, the revolutionary potential of the national bourgeoisie was discounted along with the concept of the non-capitalist path of development.

Post-Stalin Era

The 1955 visit of the Soviet leaders to a number of Asian countries and the 20th CPSU Congress (1956) brought into existence a new appreciation of the newly independent countries and their role in the world affairs. These countries, though not socialist, still had anti-imperialist potential which the Soviets proceeded to harness for their own benefit in the Cold War against "imperialism". At the 20th Party Congress, Khruschev devoted an entire section in his report to the disintegration of the imperialist colonial system. The struggles of the colonies for independence were lauded, the political and economic support of the socialist countries was offered to even the non-socialist countries who showed independence of the West, the principles of the Bandung Conference and the decision of some countries not to join military pacts were hailed. Newly free countries were assured that the USSR would not be interested in the export of revolutions. Khruschev built a strong case for a policy of close ties between the world socialist system headed by the USSR and the newly free

15. Margot Light, n.9, p.100.
countries. He declared, "... a vast zone of peace, including peace-loving states, both socialist and non-socialist of Europe and Asia; has emerged in the world." Khruschev assigned an important role to the Third World countries in the socialism vs capitalism struggle.

As regards the internal developments in the developing countries, Khruschev strongly endorsed the working class participation in the Parliamentary form of democracy. At the same time, he noted that the working classes, headed by its vanguard, was an indispensable condition for the transition of these countries to socialism.

As a result of these important shifts in the Soviet conception of the world, a stage was set for a highly active Soviet Third World policy which continued right up to 1982 when Brezhnev died. The Soviet activism in the Third World was perceived in the West as a major threat to world peace. The anti-imperialist stance of the Soviet Third World Policy worried the West and often led to exacerbation of the international situation as in Cuba (in 1962) and Afghanistan (in 1979). The anti-West rhetoric in the USSR became strident as was reflected in the 1957, the 1960 and the 1969 Declarations issued after the meetings of the Communist Parties. The "alliance" of the world socialist system

headed by the Soviet Union with "the peace-loving states of Asia and Africa..." warned "the bellicose imperialist maniacs" of serious consequences if the latter dared to unleash war against this alliance (1957). The 1960 Statement of the Communists was a significant advance over the 1957 Declaration as far as the theory of the Third World was concerned. It defined "revolutions" in ex-colonial countries as "national, anti-imperialistic, democratic" and put forward a detailed definition of "independent national democracy": a state fighting imperialism, refusing to join military blocs, carrying out agrarian reforms and a state in which "broad democratic rights and freedoms" were ensured. National bourgeoisie, "unconnected with imperialist circles" were defined as "progressive" and the Communists were asked to support those actions of the national government which undermined "the imperialist positions". To keep flexibility of policy, the "unstable" nature of the bourgeoisie was also pointed out. The non-capitalist path of development was mentioned in passing only. The statement revived some of the issues which were debated in the 1920s. In its definitions, the Statement assigned such features to national democracies which would easily fit countries like India. Clearly, the Soviets had begun to realise the importance of the large Asian and African countries who tried to follow independent policies.


The basic theoretical framework of the USSR's Third World policy was retained in the 1969 Statement of the World Communist Parties on the "Tasks" before the Communists. Thanks to the Sino-Soviet split, the tone of the Statement was harder. The Communists were declared to be the "Vanguards of the National Liberation Movements" and hostile attitudes to Communism and persecution of the Communists in some of the Third World countries and was declared to be harmful to the course of "national and social emancipation". 19

A study of Brezhnev's reports to the 23rd, 24th, 25th and 26th CPSU Congresses gives one an idea of the official ideology with respect to the Third World Countries from 1960 to 1981. In the 23rd Party Congress, Brezhnev described the non-capitalist path of development as the "best way" for the newly free countries to overcome backwardness and these countries were seen as being "in fierce combat with imperialism". There was also an implied criticism of those liberated countries which followed "the capitalist road" and succumbed to the local reaction. 20 At the 24th CPSU Congress, Brezhnev endorsed the non-capitalist path of development but referred to the difficulties that had already appeared in some of these countries. "Domestic and neo-colonial reactionaries" in these countries were criticised. 21 By the time


the 25th CPSU Congress came along, the difficulties in the socialist-oriented countries following the non-capitalist path of development were considerable. To explain these, Brezhnev, at the 25th Congress, added that the class struggle in the socialist-oriented countries was intensifying. However, he positively noted the example of India and Egypt who were carrying out "progressive changes". Insistence on the non-capitalist way as being the "best way" was absent. By 1981, Brezhnev came round to accepting that the picture with respect to the socialist-oriented countries was a "motley one". He also gave prominence in his report to India and its "peace-loving", independent policies. The charm of socialist-oriented countries was wearing off. Greater emphasis was being given to cooperation with all newly free countries irrespective of their domestic policies.

The Debates in the Scholarly Literature

The richness of the Soviet thinking on the Third World countries was reflected in the Soviet scholarly literature after 1956. An editorial appearing in the Sovetskoe Vostokovedenie in 1956 heralded the post-Stalinist perspective on the non-aligned, developing world. The editorial opined that political independence of a country was a prerequisite for its economic independence.

It justified great Soviet attention to countries which followed anti-imperialist policies despite their internal socio-economic weaknesses. In the early sixties, the concepts of national democracies and revolutionary democrats to cover such radical, anti-West regimes such as Algeria, Burma and Ghana were coined. Even Army officers, nationalist intelligentsia and petty bourgeoisie were extolled simply if they were anti-West. The absence of a proletariat in many of these countries was not considered a hurdle in socialist development. Soviet assistance to these backward countries was regarded as sufficient to push them along the non-capitalist way of development. This view climaxed in 1963 when an article in Voprosi Ekonomiki gave the revolutionary democrats the same status as the vanguard of the proletariat. This conceptual shift led to the emergence of the concept of "revolutionary democracy" or "national democracy".25

The entire theory of revolutionary democracies, non-capitalist path, etc., came under review after the setbacks for the Soviet policies in Ghana, Indonesia, etc. The concept of non-capitalist path was upheld but it was recognised that this was a highly complex question. In the literature published in the USSR in the late sixties, some scholars felt that a mere declaration that a country was following a non-capitalist path to socialism was not the same thing as actually building it. Caution was advised in

pushing radical policies indiscriminately. Some scholars emphasised the earlier rejected theme of economic dependence as being a prerequisite for a social revolution (e.g. Rymalov). The need to involve the masses and strengthen democracy and unify all progressive forces was stressed.\textsuperscript{26}

Nkrumah's fall in Ghana also led the Soviets to emphasise the role of a vanguard party in a revolutionary process. In the 1970s, the Soviet intolerance of countries developing along the capitalist path once again increased.\textsuperscript{27}

The evaluation of the Third World related concepts as reflected in the Soviet scholarly literature continued throughout the seventies. Moscow's Institute of Oriental Studies and the IMEMO published several studies in this regard.\textsuperscript{28} These studies focussed on the exploitation of the Third World countries by the TNCs, the importance of the science and technology revolution for these countries, and the significance of the state structure, which was said to have become the leading part of the basis. The studies also made light of the continued existence of private capital in these countries on the ground that it had been deprived of its negative influence by the state sector. The revolutionary

\textsuperscript{26} "Immediate Problems of the National Liberation Movements", \textit{International Affairs}, no.5, 1967, pp.51-78. This was a discussion forum in which many leading Soviet scholars took part.

\textsuperscript{27} V.Tiagunenko, "Natsialnoe Demokraticheskie Gosudarstva i Ekonomicheskia Razvitie", \textit{Sovetsko Gosudarstvo i Pravo}, no.1, 1968, p.89.

\textsuperscript{28} For a listing of such studies see Devenirka Kaushik, "Soviet Perspectives on the Third World: Ideological Retreat or Movement", \textit{The Non-Aligned World}, vol.1, no.1, January-March 1983, p.92, n.1.
democracy concept was criticised as of "limited and provisional" nature.\textsuperscript{29} The realities of the ad hocism of policies in a number of socialist-oriented countries was being recognised by the Soviet scholars and suitably criticised. And yet, the Party theoreticians like R.A. Ulyanovski persisted with the theory of the non-capitalist path which was constantly refined to explain the difficulties in the socialist-oriented countries. A concept of multistructural society was advanced in the late seventies to explain the extreme diversity in the countries of socialist orientation.\textsuperscript{30} By the end of the Brezhnev period, the Soviet scholars were painfully aware that the socialist-oriented countries had run into serious problems of economic and social development.\textsuperscript{31} More and favourable attention came to be given to countries like India, Brazil, Mexico, etc. and a strong case for stepping up of the USSR's cooperation with these capitalist but

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\textsuperscript{30} For details see Devendra Kaushik, n.28, pp.88-89.

\textsuperscript{31} G. Kim, "The National Liberation Movements Today", International Affairs, no.4, 1981, pp.27-37. G. Kim recognised that NCP was fraught on account of weak production base, underdeveloped class structure of the society, and a major contradiction between the non-proletarian social base and the scientific, socialist ideological platform of the national democratic revolution. Kim admitted that capitalism had "engulfed large areas of the Afro-Asian world".
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economically better performing countries was made out.\textsuperscript{32}

Post-Brezhnev Period: Andropov and Chernenko (1982-85)

It is generally believed that Andropov remained too busy with East-West relations to give sufficient attention to the Third World. In official pronouncements, Andropov warned the socialist-oriented countries that while the USSR would help them "to the extent of our abilities", their progress, in reality, would "only to be the result of the work of their own people and the correct policies of their leadership." It is significant that in his speech at the June 1983 Plenum of the CPSU,\textsuperscript{CC}, Andropov discussed capitalist developing countries before the socialist-oriented countries. Equally significantly, Andropov, in his November 1982 CC Plenum speech omitted socialist-oriented countries altogether and spoke only of the non-aligned movement. China and India were the only two countries mentioned by him by name. He also spoke of the "mutually-beneficial" relations with

\textsuperscript{32} Karen Brutents, "The Soviet Union and the Liberalised Countries: Questions of Theory", \textit{Pravda}, 2 February 1982. "The Liberated Countries at the Beginning of the 1980's", \textit{Kommunist}, no.9, 1987. Karen Brutents has been a consistent advocate of geo-strategic shift in the Soviet third world policy towards larger countries like India, Brazil, Mexico etc. Nodari Simonia, the Soviet third world expert, writing in 1982 noted approvingly of India's capitalist development taking place on "broader and more democratic" basis. Academician Primakov, now a leading member of Gorbachev's Presidential Council, wrote in 1982: "... the development of some of the former colonial and semicolonial countries along the capitalist road does not necessarily take the anti-imperialist sting out of their policies (as witness India, for instance) since these are determined by a clash between the interests of imperialism and national capitalism". \textit{Pravda}, 11 August 1982. Thus, even during the last days of Brezhnev, a reassessment of the Soviet Union's Third World policy had been initiated.
the developing countries. It would appear from his speeches that the socialist-oriented Third World was not a priority area for Andropov.

Chernenko gave far too few speeches and interviews during his short tenure. However, under Chernenko some of the Brezhnevian orthodoxy re-emerged as for instance, during his February 1984, CC Plenum speech in which he spoke of "solidarity with ... peoples that have thrown off the fetters of colonial dependence ... and especially ... with the peoples that have to repel attacks by ... imperialism." 34

During the period 1983-84, authoritative articles on Third World were published indicating the resurgence of traditional line on the NCP and socialist orientation. These articles shed the ambivalence of articles published in 1981-82 period on Socialist-Orientation etc. G. Kim of the USSR Academy of Sciences' Institute of Oriental Studies wrote "... there is no road, nor can there be any, to socialism that bypasses the common laws discovered by Marxism-Leninism and confirmed by the historic experience of USSR". Kim also advocated applications of the teachings of Marx and Lenin in daily practice of the countries developing along the NCP. Alexei Kiva another Soviet Third World

33. For Andropov's speeches see Y. Andropov, Speeches and Writings, (Oxford, 1984).

34. K.U. Chernenko, Selected Speeches and Articles, (New Delhi, 1984), pp. 268-86.
expert followed Kim in resurrecting the traditional line in his
article in 1984 in which, in partial reversal of some earlier
strands of thinking in the Soviet literature, he wrote: (a) class
struggle had become acute in the "Socialist-Orientation"
countries; (b) the "revolutionary democracies" were introducing
serious social changes in their respective countries; (c)
"revolutionary democrats" were "a definite ideological and social"
phenomenon and that they were gaining "political experience";
(d) the countries of "socialist orientation" had great "historical
prospects"; (e) "Socialist-Orientation", 'superior' to capitalist
road, represented "one of the major achievements of the
contemporary national liberation movement". The resurrection
and the strong defence in 1984 of such concepts as "revolutional
democracy" and "revolutionary democrats" which were being
criticised even in the late sixties indicated return to Brezhnev
orthodoxy under Chernenko. This was also obvious in Kiva's
assertion that the "possibilities of real socialism" were
"steadily growing" in the countries of "Socialist-Orientation"
despite the serious mistakes that had been committed there. 35

35. G. Kim, "The USSR and National State Construction in
Developing Countries", International Affairs, no.1,
1983, p.35; "Marx's Teachings and the Peoples of the
East", International Affairs, no.8, 1983, p.20; A. Kiva,
"Socialist Oriented Countries: Some Developmental
Gorbachev

The theoretical framework of the Soviet Union's Third World policy is in the process of being transformed significantly under the impact of Gorbachev's 'new political thinking' about international relations. The main conceptual strands of the 'new political thinking' viz. the world is integral and interdependent and that international relations should be deideologised, are bound to dilute the Soviet Union's commitments to some of its formerly close allies in the Third World. The balance of interests approach and East-West cooperation instead of ideological confrontation characterise the Soviet Union's foreign policy as a whole, including its policies towards Third World countries. With the Cold War having been proclaimed as over, many Third World countries which were befriended by the USSR because of their anti-imperialist potential have lost some of their importance for the USSR. Gorbachev's attempts to seek close cooperation and integration with the West and latter's support for perestroika means that those Third World countries which remain in confrontation with the West may find it difficult to get automatic support from the USSR. This has vividly been demonstrated in the Iraq-Kuwait crisis. Further, the sorry state of socio-economic affairs within the USSR acts as a limit to the extent to which the Soviet Union would support the Third World countries. The Soviet troop withdrawal from Afghanistan and its approach towards the Cambodian issue is indicative of the dilution of the emphasis in
the Soviet Union on the former Third World allies. With the
Soviets having condescended in the break up of the socialist
world as created in the post-War years, it is obvious that they
are likely to review their political and economic commitments
abroad, be it in the socialist world or in the Third World. In the
process of the review, it is, of course, possible that some of the
larger and more important countries in the Third World will be
given more attention by the Soviets than hitherto.

It may be emphasised that the hints of change in the Soviet
thinking on the Third World were contained in the Soviet
theoretical writings even in the late Brezhnev period when the
socialist orientation and the non-capitalist path of development
came to be criticised albeit mutedly. The shift then consisted
mainly in paying greater attention to the "capitalist" Third World
countries. However, the revised thinking on the Third World
appeared more visibly in the Soviet writing only after Gorbachev
came to power. This 'new thinking' consists of the following
important strands:

- The Third World has a great importance for global
  stability. The unresolved problems in the Third World
  are seen as worsening "the prospects for universal
  peace".36 Further, there is also a thinking that
  Third World problems fall in the category of global
  problems which can be resolved through a joint East-
  West approach.

36. R. Ovichinikov, "The Main Components of a Stable World",
    International Affairs, no.6, 1988, p.13.
The past theory of socialist orientation and non-capitalist path of development was wrong and should be discarded. The USSR overstretched itself in trying to launch 'hundreds of millions' of people on a path towards socialism (i.e., non-capitalist path, socialist orientation). This was a wrong step.37

The earlier notion that the imperialists were out to plunder the developing countries is being revised. It is being pointed out that imperialism is no longer interested in keeping the ex-colonies backward. Some scholars feel that imperialism wants to develop the ex-colonies "at the expense of the socialist world". Also rejected is the notion that the break up of colonial empires meant a defeat of the imperialists.38

The stress is now on making the Soviet foreign policy economically viable. Thus, the policy will be not to go on sinking resources in unproductive economies of the Third World.39

The Third World countries are often criticised for their record on human rights and democracy.40

The nuclear and missiles potential of the Third World countries is criticised and joint cooperation with the West to regulate the "risk zones" in the Third World is being talked about in some influential quarters of the Soviet intellectual circles.41

The Soviet scholars advocate supporting nuclear free zones everywhere including in the Third World countries.42


38. Ibid., p.28.

39. Ibid.

40. Ibid.


42. Ibid., p.44.
On the question of arms sales to the Third World countries, the Soviet officials and scholars agree that such arms supplies induce instability. While a complete halt to arms sale is considered impractical, a well-coordinated, multilateral, international approach on the sale of conventional weapons to the Third World is recommended.43

The Soviet scholars regard the Third World debts as extremely destabilising for the world economy. Mr. Gorbachev, in his address to the 43rd UNGA session suggested long puratoriums on debt repayments, writing off of debts in some cases and soft debt servicing terms. However, the Soviets have as yet not implemented these suggestion in case of countries owing debts to them.44

On environmental issues, the Soviet writings show concern on the spread of "dirty technologies" in the developing countries and criticise them for taking a "politically accusatory and categorical approach".45

There is still sympathy in the Soviet writings on the new international economic order demanded by the developing countries. However there is also feeling in the Soviet official circles the "slogan of new international order is "... hampering and will continue to hamper a productive discussion and solution of world economic problems".46

The Soviet view of the non-aligned movement has also undergone some change. Earlier, the importance of the non-aligned movement for the Soviets lay in its anti-imperialist potential. The Soviets prided in calling themselves the "natural allies" of the non-aligned countries. Now the importance of the non-aligned countries lies for the Soviets in their potential towards the solution of global problems, in the fight for nuclear disarmament and in promoting the concept of the new political thinking.

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3. Ibid., p.45.
4. Ibid., p.46.
5. Ibid., p.47.
6. Ibid., p.46.
In any case, the very concept of non-alignment may undergo a change in the light of rapid disintegration of Cold War politics. The Soviet view of the non-aligned could evolve further. For instance, Nodari Simonia, a leading Moscow theoretician believes that the non-aligned movement will disappear in the 21st century and some countries in the movement "will seek salvation not from other members of the movement but from the world community".

Gorbachev's views on the Third World have been noted in Chapter 4. The relative lack of emphasis on the Third World in Gorbachev's report to the 27th Party Congress was striking. At the 70th anniversary of the October Revolution, Gorbachev admitted that the "impulse for liberation" in the Third World was "waring". At the 19th CPSU Conference (1988), Gorbachev did not mention the national liberation movements although India and Afghanistan were mentioned. At the 28th CPSU Congress, Gorbachev did not mention the developing countries or the Third World in the foreign policy section of his report. However, in the context of the USSR's foreign economic relations, Gorbachev spoke of the need for making 'adjustments' in USSR's relations with the Third World.


The current state of USSR's Third World policy was elaborated by E. Shevardnadze in an interview to Pravda in June 1990. Rebutting the charges that the Soviet diplomacy was "forgetting about the Third World", he said:49 ".... We are not satisfied with our relations with developing countries, and not so much in the political, in the economic, cultural, scientific, technical and other spheres. We are already restricted by the state of the Soviet economy and the structures of foreign economic relations". He added:

"The Third World is also an arena of regional conflicts and such global problems as pollution, development strategy, foreign debt, the popularisation of advanced civilian technologies and the non-proliferation of technologies for the production of nuclear, chemical, missile and other weapons. All these problems are intertwined and can be solved only if we stop dividing this planet into categories and regard it as a single whole".

On July 24, 1990, Gorbachev issued a presidential decree on the restructuring of the Soviet Union's foreign economic relations. According to the decree, USSR's economic cooperation with the developing countries will be solely "on the principles of mutual benefit and interests" and "international standards and practices". The decree could mean an end of Soviet preferential treatment to countries like Cuba and Vietnam and also a substantial reduction in USSR's foreign economic and from the 12 billion dollars level in 1989.50

49. Pravda, 26 June 1990.
50. For the text of the Presidential decree see Pravda, 25 July 1990.
From the above it becomes obvious that the Soviet Third World policies is poised for radical restructuring.

So stark has been the reversal of views held by established Soviet scholars that some of them have publicly regretted the 'mistaken' views on held by them earlier.51

Soviet Policy in Action

An obvious trend in the Soviet foreign policy with respect to the Third World since 1985 has been to pay greater heed to the "regional leaders" i.e. the countries with sizeable political, economic potential at the regional level. The cooperation of such countries was sought to win support for 'new political thinking' and to promote mutually beneficial, equitable economic relations.

Indo-Soviet relations are a case in point. True, Indo-Soviet relations developed tremendously under Brezhnev, particularly since the 1971 Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation between them. However, towards the end of the Brezhnev period, a plateau had been reached in these relations.

51. A. Kiva, a prominent Soviet expert on Third World, writing in 1988, expressed 'regret' that his earlier writings on 'Socialist - Orientation' were "influenced by subjective views and ... occasionally fell short of scientific analysis of reality in revolutionary democracies". Kiva admitted that the Soviet theory took a simplistic view of the possibilities of bringing socialism in backward countries. The thesis of non-capitalist path, though "basically correct" was applied "dogmatically". He wrote, "For a long time a vulgar conception of Marxism-Leninism ate away our social sciences like a malignant tumour...". See Alexei Kiva, "Socialist Orientation: Reality and Illusions", International Affairs, no.7, 1988, pp. 80 & 85.
Since Gorbachev's rise to power in 1985, and since Gorbachev's November 1986 visit to India and the signing of the Delhi Declaration on a non-nuclear, non-violent world, the relations between the two countries have developed at a rapid pace and taken on diverse forms. On the Kashmir issue, the Soviets are referring to the Shimla Agreement more often than in the past.

Earlier India's economic and political independent policies were lauded by the Soviets. Under Gorbachev, India was seen as a country with which it was easy to find common grounds under the new political thinking. Thus, Gorbachev, speaking to the Indian Parliament in November 1986 said, "To me personally, it is quite obvious that much of what we call 'new political thinking' manifested itself for the first time in relations between the Soviet Union and India". Gorbachev also described the basis of the Delhi Declaration as "priority of universal human values". Gorbachev has routinely mentioned the Delhi Declaration in several of his speeches and interviews. There has, at the same time, been a less frequent mention of the 1971 Treaty between the two countries. Interestingly, Gorbachev avoided a direct answer to that famous question (in his Press conference in Delhi in November 1986) as to whom would the Soviets side with in case of war between India and China. The Soviet Union's relations with India have developed under Gorbachev but new factors like the end of the Cold War and the Soviet Union's preoccupation with its own internal affairs may influence the bilateral ties in some new ways.

Prime Minister V.P. Singh’s visit to the USSR in July 1990 showed that while the USSR and India continued to remain politically close to each other, there was a recognition on both sides that the bilateral relations needed to be deideologised and new methods of bilateral cooperation needed to be worked out as it would be impossible to continue in old ways. There was confidence on both sides that perestroika in the USSR would not adversely affect the bilateral ties.  

The Soviets have also cultivated a number of important Latin American and Central American countries in the recent years. For the first time, the Soviet Foreign Minister visited Mexico (1986) and Brazil, Uruguay, Argentina (1989) with a view to upgrade bilateral relations. The joint documents issued at the end of these visits incorporated in varying degrees the elements of 'new political thinking' and praised the concerned countries for their role in the region and world affairs.

In a similar vein, Shavardnadze visited the ASEAN countries in 1987-88. In an interview to an Indonesian newspaper,

54. An "Indo-Soviet Statement", reaffirming faith in the "Delhi Declaration" on 1986 and jointly affirming faith in certain principles of international conduct was signed at the end of V.P. Singh's visit. Text of the statement appears in The Hindu, 24 July 1990.

55. For the texts of these Communiques see Pravda, 1 October 1987 (Brazil), 5 October 1987 (Argentina), and 5 October 1987 (Uruguay).

56. For details see Fukuyama, n.1, p.8.
Harieka, Gorbachev welcomed the ASEAN initiative on Kampuchea saying that ASEAN countries could "greatly contribute to the unfolding process of the Kampuchean settlement". In saying so, Gorbachev was merely echoing the principles formulated by him in Vladivostok and Krasnoyarsk in 1986 that the regional countries should be involved in resolving the regional problems.

In the Middle East and Gulf, the Soviets have considerably improved their relations with Israel, Kuwait, Oman, Saudi Arabia and Iran. (Some tension with the last mentioned may arise due to internal developments in the Soviet Azerbaijan). The resettlement of the Soviet Jews in the occupied territories has led to fresh tensions between Israel and the Soviet Union. The Arabs feel disturbed at the large scale migration of Soviet Jews to Israel under new, liberal Soviet emigration laws. While the Soviet policy seems to be to get as many new friends in the Third World as possible, its relations with former allies in the Third World have undergone some shifts. The main shifts here are: (i) to make the Soviet cooperation programmes with these countries effective by insisting on efficiency on the part of the concerned Third World country; and (ii) to pressurise the concerned country to make adequate compromises on any of the conflicts that it may be involved in.


Thus, the Soviet Union, after 1985, reaffirmed its solidarity with Mongolia, Ethiopia, North Korea, Cuba, Algeria, Mozambique, Mali, Sudan, Vietnam, etc.\textsuperscript{59} The Soviets insisted that the improvement in the mechanism of the Soviet bilateral relations with these countries was a must. Gorbachev, speaking at a banquet speech in honour of Nguyen Van Linh, the Vietnamese Party Chief on May 19, 1987, lamented: "... the weaker aspects of economic bonds (between the two countries) and their failure to correspond to the situation have also begun to show" and stressed that "efficiency of the cooperation must rise significantly".\textsuperscript{60} He also advocated "renewal and change" in Vietnam and suggested "... abandoning outdated work methods and ... bringing out the possibilities of socialism."\textsuperscript{61} The Soviets were not deterred by the Vietnamese apprehensions concerning the improvements in Sino-Soviet relations.

The recent developments in the Soviet-Cuban relations demonstrated that in the new paradigm of the Soviet Third World relations, the USSR may be compelled to dilute ties which were a strain on it economically or politically. There have been widespread concerns that the emphasis on economic cooperation was diminishing, particularly in countries like North Korea, Algeria, Mozambique, Mali, Sudan, and Vietnam.

\textsuperscript{59} See \textit{Pravda}, 25 August 1985 (Mongolia); 28 November 1985 (Ethiopia); 5 December 1985 (Zimbabwe); 24 January 1986 (North Korea); 7 February 1986 (Cuba); 27 March 1986 (Algeria); 3 April 1986 (Mozambique); 20 July 1986 (Mali); 18 August 1986 (Sudan); 20 May 1987 (Vietnam).

\textsuperscript{60} \textit{Pravda}, 20 May 1989.

\textsuperscript{61} Ibid.
spread apprehensions in the Cuban official circles over perestroika and the 'new Political thinking'. The US-USSR relations and the US pressure on USSR to curtail economic assistance to Cuba is causing anxiety to the Cubans. Although the Soviet Union reaffirmed its political and economic support to Cuba in April and June 1990 during high level visits to Havana, the Cubans fear disruption of vital supplies from USSR due to USSR's own economic difficulties. 62

The Soviet response to the recent developments in the Gulf triggered off by the annexation of Iraq by Kuwait and leading to unprecedented massive induction of the US and other western armed forces in Saudi Arabia and in the Gulf in response provides a dramatic demonstration of the Soviet attitude towards the Third World. The Soviets were quick to denounce Iraq, a one time close ally of the USSR, and also lent support to the UN sponsored resolution in the UN Security Council calling for sanctions against Iraq. As for the US naval presence in the Gulf, the USSR, merely accepted the US assurances that the US military presence in the Gulf was 'temporary'. West was relieved of meeting no Soviet opposition, what soever, to its military presence in the Gulf. 63

62. Cuba depends upon the USSR for 12 m. tonnes of oil and over 700 types of varied products. USSR, in turn, purchases over 4 m. tonnes of Sugar and over 200,000 tonnes of citrus fruit from Cuba.

The new Soviet approach to the regional conflicts is a direct result of the 'new political thinking'. The Soviets saw in regional conflicts a big stumbling block in the improvement of their relations with the USA and other Western countries. 

In the past, the Soviet policy towards the Third World at a time when the Cold War was raging and the world was sharply polarised into two confrontationist polities, Gorbachev's 'new political thinking', following a logic of cooperation with the West, has changed all that. With the Cold War winding down, the importance of countries like Afghanistan, Angola, Mozambique, Ethiopia, Cambodia, Vietnam has gone down. The Soviets are now in the process of putting their relations with the Third World on a new footing. To follow a policy of compromise rather than confrontation.

In conclusion, the resolution of the regional conflicts in the broad approach with suitable modification has been used by the Soviets toward the resolution of the regional conflicts in Afghanistan, Kampuchea, Angola, Nicaragua, etc. An essential feature of their approach has been to presuise the directly affected countries (Afghanistan, Kampuchea, Angola, Nicaragua, etc.), encourage to the UN involvement and international conferences, etc. This great stress on political solutions, national reconciliation, political and other compromises, involvement of regional countries and due attention to their interests, encouragement to the UN involvement and international conferences, etc. This renewed Soviet approach to these conflicts consisted of laying great stress on political solutions, national reconciliation, political and other compromises, involvement of regional countries and due attention to their interests, encouragement to
countries on a new footing. The Third World would remain important to the Soviets but for different reasons. The liberation movements or the prospects of socialist revolution in the Third World countries are not so important for the Soviets. The Third World will be important for them because its problems are seen as threatening the peace and stability in the region. Some Third World countries — "the regional leaders" — would be cultivated by the Soviets for their local clout. Thus, the Soviets are likely to pay more attention to a different set of Third World countries while they scale down their relationship with some of their former Third World allies.

The internal problems in the Soviet Union are likely to have significant impact on the Soviet Union's relations with the Third World countries. China, Cuba, Vietnam, have their own reservations about Gorbachev's perestroika. Similarly, fresh tensions have appeared in Iran-Soviet relations owing to developments in the Soviet Central Asia, particularly, Azerbaijan and Soviet-Arab relations on the question of migration of Soviet Jews to Israel. The Soviets who had generally welcomed the Islamic Revolution in Iran are now worried about the Soviet soft belly in Central Asia. The flux in the situation in Soviet Central Asia worries the Arab world lest Iran should gain our of these developments.

There is also an apprehension among the Third World countries that the Soviets and Americans, joined with other Western countries might act as a condominium to decide Third
World issues. Several Communist Parties in various countries are critical of the Soviet retreat and its efforts to seek accommodation with former rivals in the West.

On the whole, it is difficult to predict at this juncture the direction in which the Soviet Union's Third World policy would proceed. Much will depend upon the success of the Soviet Union in finding an alternative basis of relationship with the West and also the way internal problems in the USSR are resolved. What can, however, be said is that the Soviet Union's policy towards Third World countries will change significantly in the coming years.