CHAPTER I

DETERMINING FACTORS OF SOVIET POLICY IN SOUTH AND CENTRAL AMERICA
The main objective of this chapter is to identify the basic Soviet approach with respect to the Third World with special reference to those factors which shaped its policy towards South and Central American region of Latin America. Further, highlights the success of Cuban revolution and emergence of the guerrilla warfare strategy in Central America which made a profound impact on the Soviet policy towards the region. Finally, the chapter has also taken into account the limitations of the Soviet-Central American policy.

In the post-World War II period, the world community had witnessed the gradual liquidation of Western colonial empires. Many Afro-Asian and Latin American countries achieved freedom from their colonial masters. One of the most conspicuous developments in the post-second World War international relations was the emergence of the Soviet Union as a global power, eventually breaking its longstanding isolation is world politics.

As the Soviet Union had consistently been supporting the on-going national liberation movements in colonial and semi-colonial countries, it was but natural for them to forge close relations and cooperation with the former. Moreover, the newly established Socialist Community of nations in the post-war Eastern Europe under the Soviet leadership opened another area with which these countries
could easily expand their multi-dimensional relationship. The Third World, consisting mostly of the newly independent Afro-Asian countries, found in the socialist community of nations, useful partners in trade as well as a role model for their social and economic development. The Soviet Union and other Socialist countries, on their part, looked towards the Third World for the much needed political support in the World Politics for the propagation and legitimisation of the Marxist-Leninist ideology. It was indeed the basic dynamics of relationship between the Third World and the world of socialist community that brought them together as partners in freedom, peace and progress.

Another important factor influencing the nature of the post-war international politics was the growing rivalry between the Soviet Union and the United States as the two superpowers. More particularly, "the presence of the United States in Europe, with the responsibility for European economic reconstruction and security was termed as a source

1. The terms 'developing countries', 'emerging countries', and 'less-developed countries (LDC's)' are synonymous with the Third World countries. Such countries belong to the 'terms' include the following: (1) all countries of Africa except the Republic of South Africa, (2) all countries of East Asia except Hong Kong and Japan, (3) all countries in Latin America except Cuba (After 1979), and (4) all countries in Middle East and South Asia except Israel". Joseph G. Whelan and Michael J. Dixon, The Soviet Union In the Third World : Threat To World Peace (New York : Pergamon-Brasseys, 1986), p.3.
of threat to the Soviet Union and its East-European allies"².

Despite high pronouncement for playing a leading role in the post-war international situation the Soviet Union, on most occasions, found itself checkmated by the United States and its allies. The creation of the United States led chain of security alliances such as 'NATO, CENTO and SEATO³ in Europe and Asia were basically aimed at encircling the Soviet Union and Preventing it from further spread of social economic and ideological influence.

Nevertheless, the Soviet Union was successful in consolidating gradually its political, economic and military hold on Eastern Europe. It responded to the creation of NATO by the formation of its own military alliance system called Warsaw Treaty Organisation (WTO) and to the European Common Market by a Socialist Common Market, generally referred to as Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA). The success of the socialist revolution in China, North Korea and North Vietnam not only expanded the geo-political area of socialism, but also provided much needed political support to the Soviet

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3. North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO); Central Treaty Organisation (CENTO); South East Asia Treaty Organisation (SEATO)
Union in spreading out its socialist wings in Asia and Africa.

Soviet Union and the Third World:

The Soviet Union's objectives in the Third world were many fold - ideological, political, economic and strategic\(^4\). Ideologically, the Third World had always been central to the Soviet world view. Although "Lenin initially perceived the vulnerability of the West's Colonial System"\(^5\) and "called it the weakest link in World Capitalism"\(^6\), the Third World was nevertheless destined, at least in the contemporary era "to be a natural ally"\(^7\) of the Soviet Union. In broader terms, the subsequent Soviet leaderships envisioned "the Third World to be an important component for the creation of a Soviet Socialist World State"\(^8\). Thus, "the Soviet ideological objective was to shape and strengthen that linkage in material forms with the Third World in general and Latin American Countries in particular"\(^9\).


6. Ibid.

7. Ibid.

8. Ibid.

For the Soviet Union, the Third World had a great political value, because it presented political opportunity and also it was supposed to be constituting the instrumentality for expanding and globalizing Soviet influence and power. The Third World enabled the Soviet Union to magnify its great power role on the World scene as regional interests of the individual. Third World countries very often merged with "Soviet Global Interests". The Third World connection also sustained the Soviet compulsion to maintain its prestige and its status as a world power.

Conversely, "the Soviet Union pursued the further political goal of denying Western and Chinese influence in the Third World. They sought to detach key Third World countries from the so-called "capitalist-imperialist world system" and aligned them as potential allies in the "anti-imperialist struggle". In this process the Soviet Union was selective, particularly of its strategic needs"\textsuperscript{10}.

Economically, the Third World, a potential source for raw materials, a market for Soviet goods and military weapons supplies had provided an opportunity for economic integration to the Soviet advantage. "Potentially, it had served both political and economic purposes by creating conduits for the inflow of materials, personnel, and ideas

\textsuperscript{10}. Whelon and Dixon, n.1, p.8.
from the Soviet Union into the Third World"\textsuperscript{11}. In this process, Soviet Union also put forward, wherever it was expendient, its model for economic development and building of socialism.

Finally, from the strategic point of view, the Third World had immense geopolitical importance for both the Soviet Union and the West. It was perceived that the areas of strategic importance would further decide the future of world power and they wanted to get hold of as extensively as possible. The very interests of the Soviet Union had significantly changed its activities from traditional continentalism to globalism. To achieve such objectives, the Soviet Union had been forced to develop its world wide naval presence, offered development aid to the Third World and to improve their port facilities, etc. "Granting of air facilities had also served its sourse dual economic and strategic interests"\textsuperscript{12}. The principal objectives in the upward Soviet thrust was the development and modernization of the Soviet Naval power with its overseas base, port facilities, refuelling stations and many others\textsuperscript{13}.

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\textsuperscript{11} Donaldson, n.4, pp. 314-15. \\
\textsuperscript{13} Whelan and Dixon, n.1, p.10. 
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The Third World, therefore, was always considered by the Soviet Union as a potential ally in the existing contemporary configuration of powers and thus very important in its foreign policy paradigms. Each component (ideological, political, economic, and strategic) was interrelated in promoting the Soviet global interests.

However, in the immediate aftermath of the World War II, the Soviet leadership showed "lack of interests" in pursuing an active Third World policy. Stalin was preoccupied with reconstruction and recovery of the war-devastated Soviet economy, and the consolidation of socialism in Eastern Europe. In the background of such priorities, which were need to be tackled urgently, the Third World did not figure so prominently in its scheme of things.

In the post-Stalin period, the Soviet policy had gradually witnessed an overwhelming shift in its perception of the newly independent Third World countries. As compared to Stalin, the Soviet leader Khrushchev had followed an


15. Nikita S. Khrushchev was the greatest innovator who ruled Soviet Union (Russia) since Czar Alxander II in the 1860s. His policy of de-stalinization and further reforms thinking left no institution of the Soviet Society untouched. - see Martin McCauly, ed., Khrushchev and Khrushchevism (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), p.7.
ambitious and active strategy in the Third World about which an analyst has said, "Crack the Chrysalis of Containment"\textsuperscript{16}.

The new Soviet-Third World design was to unite the Socialist Community with the emerging Third World countries and their national liberation movements into a new and enduring correlation of forces. This policy paradigm of Khruschev was greatly influenced by the view that the Soviet Union would be natural leader of this United Community of Socialist and the newly independent 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"\textsuperscript{17}. He also assigned an important role to the Third World countries in the struggle between socialism and capitalism\textsuperscript{18}.

Moreover, "Khrushchev had strongly endorsed the working class people to participate in the Parliamentary form of democracy. At sometime, he noted that the working class, headed by its Vanguard, was an indispensable condition for the transition of those countries to socialism"\textsuperscript{19}.


\textsuperscript{17} Report of the CC of the CPSU to the 20th Congress (Moscow : Foreign Publishing House, 1956), pp. 20-22.

\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., pp. 22-23 & 25-30.

Soviet Union perceived that this combinations of power had tipped the balance of world forces against world capitalism which was further useful for world socialism.

Within this new ideological construct, Zhdanov's "two-camps" doctrine was revised and formulated into a new theory called "non-capitalist path of development". In world politics the Soviet Union pursued a policy of "peaceful co-existence" with the West. The way was thus cleared for a radical shift in the Soviet - Third World policy:

"Khrushchev openly courted the Third World; their national bourgeoisie were selectively accepted as allies and their states as national democratic states; and Soviet Policy further moved the stones of isolationist continentalism toward interventionist globalism."

20. In "two-camp" theory, the World was either Socialist or Capitalist. The colonial regimes were part of the latter camp and Third World would be a part of a 'Zone of peace' that also included the socialist states of the world. See Khrushchev, n. 17, p. 23.

21. This new theory had provided a greater opportunity to those newly independent countries of the Third World, who were engaged in their national reconstruction process.

22. The theme of the peaceful co-existence was interpreted as that the cooperation with the Third World countries would be necessary for peace and further it would help to promote socialism's final victory over capitalism. On the other side Leninism was also redefined to emphasize the necessity for supporting anti-Western nationalism. See Peter Zwick, *Soviet Policy: Process and Policy* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1990), p.49.

The change was reflected in the growing diplomatic relation with the "flow of Soviet resources"\textsuperscript{24} (both in development funds and military equipments) into the Third World.

Furthermore, Khrushchev unburdened by a colonial past by the sheer efforts (in Arab World, South Asia, Africa and Latin America) took advantage of existing anti-colonial and anti-imperialist nationalist sentiments of the Third World and had aligned with them to oppose the policy and interests of the United States. Nevertheless, the scope of Khrushchev's activities did not even ignore the lesser actors (such as Burma, Cambodia, Indonesia, Yemen, Sudan, Argentina, Ghona, Algeria, etc.) of the Third World and tried his best to forward Soviet presence wherever he could establish.

Thus, Khrushchev's approach to the Soviet-Third World policy was characterised by political opportunism, and adventurism. The Soviet activities were witnessed in South and South-East Asia, the Middle East, Cuba in Latin America and to a lesser extent Africa. However, the main instrument of Soviet political activism was economic and military assistance. There is no denying that in a good number of

cases, this policy registerd impressive successes for the Soviet Union.

The Krushchev period is also known for quite a few significant failures in the Soviet Foreign Policy. The notable among them were the "loss of China" and the humiliation of the Soviet Union, in the face of U.S. pressure, in the Cuban missile crisis in 1962. No doubt, it contributed to his downfall on 14 October 1964. However, "it was a remarkable coincidence that the chinese exploded their first nuclear device on the very day when Khrushchev fell from power" 25. Nevertheless, his tenure was known for its great success too. For the first time in Soviet history the USSR became a significant competitor for influence beyond the Soviet periphery, i.e., a power with its global ambitions and role.

Brezhnev's Realistic Activism:

The Soviet pursuit of active Soviet-Third World policy, which remained till 1982, led to the steady developments of its military might, achieving "military parity" 26 with the


26. Advancing her objectives, the Soviet Union had expanded its military power by achieving military (Nuclear strategic capability) parity in 1969 with US, built up their conventional military power with ocean going navy and a worldwide merchant fleet, etc. See Edward A. Kolodziej and Roger E. Kanet (eds.), The Limits of Soviet Powers in the Developing World (London: McMillan Press, 1989), p.44.
United States and then sought to achieve detente in East-West relations. Under the new leadership, a great stress was laid on the ideological purity in domestic and foreign policy areas.

The new leadership under Leonid Brezhnev sought to pursue what had been rightly called a policy of 'cautious detente'. The primary objective of the Soviet leadership was to lay the groundwork for more productive future i.e., Soviet involvement in the Third World as well as to evaluate the revolutionary potential of the Third World regimes.

The Soviet - Third World approach was marked by highly rationalistic, real-political, pragmatic and, until Angola in the mid-1970's, cautious considerations. The Soviet priorities in the Third World were reversed mainly because:

"Economics took precedence over politics; ideology took a back seat to economic rationalism; the policy of peaceful coexistence changed into detente" 27.

This was the period of consolidation, reappraisal and diplomacy of the Soviet power, which partly served to reduce the Western, especially American, response to the expansion of the Soviet involvement throughout the Third World. The Soviet Union perceived that "leaders of the NATO alliance countries would not leave the economic benefits of

27. Whelen and Dixon, n.1, p.5.
detente"\textsuperscript{28}. Thus, any attempt to counter Soviet activities elsewhere in the World was not feasible for the West.

The basic theoretical framework of the Soviet - Third World policy, in terms of chronology could be drawn from Brezhnev's report to the 23rd, 24th, 25th and 26th CPSU Congresses. He described:

"The non-capitalist path of development as the 'best way' for the newly freed countries to overcome backwardness and these countries were seen as being in fierce combat with imperialism"\textsuperscript{29}... "the communists were declared to be the Vanguards of the National Liberation Movement"\textsuperscript{30} 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"\textsuperscript{31}. Further, at the 24th CPSU Congress, he 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 those countries were criticized\textsuperscript{32}.

By the time of the 25th CPSU Congress, the difficulties in


\textsuperscript{29}Report of the CC of the CPSU to the 23rd Congress (Moscow Foreign Publishing House, 1969), p.35.


\textsuperscript{31}Ibid.

socialist oriented countries, following the non-capitalist path of development were considerable. He added that the class struggle in the socialist oriented countries was intensifying. However he positively noted the example of India and Egypt which were carrying out "progressive changes." In the 26th CPSU Congress, Brezhnev's "non-capitalist way as being the 'best way' was absent'. In his report, he gave prominence to India and its 'peace loving' independent policies." The charms of Socialist-oriented countries was wearing off. Greater emphasis was being laid on the cooperation with all free countries irrespective of their domestic policies.

The economics of this strategy was to institutionalize "Marxist-Lenisist Vanguard Parties" which possibly pushed structural changes in the Third World countries. On the other hand, through them, the Soviet Union could easily


infiltrate into these organizations and indirectly control them. Moreover, by the 1970s, through its "diplomatic support and economic assistance"\(^{37}\) wider military capabilities, the Soviet power had been expanded and extended to play a decisive role in various "international and regional crisis"\(^{38}\).

Globalism on Defensive:

A turning point or a major departure in the Soviet-Third World policy came after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. Though it was claimed that this invasion was the result of a threat to the Soviet territorial security but it altered very fabric of the Soviet policy towards the Third World countries and forced to change international politics. This event was also identified as the resurgence of Cold War with the West.

37. 'Offering economic and military assistance' to the Third World countries was indirectly pursuing Soviet desire to expand their relationship with new countries (such as Iraq, Syria, South Yemen, Turkey, Iran etc.). It was also a offer to them to reduce their dependency on the West. See Stephen T. Hosmer and Thomas W. Wolf, (eds.), *Soviet Policy and Practice Towards Third World Conflicts* (USA: Lexington Books, 1983), p.11.

38. In international crisis situation, the Soviet naval power played an important role during Indo-Pakistan war, the Arab-Israel war, Suez Canal crisis and other regional conflicts because it provided an economic and political opportunity for both the Soviet Union and the disputing countries to initiate long term relations between the two. Treaties of Friendship and cooperation was another source for closes and committed relationship with the Third World countries.
The implications of the Afghan crisis was realized rather acutely throughout the Third World countries. It particularly became a dominant factor in their further relations with the Soviet Union. Some of the Asian and Middle East countries strongly criticized the Soviet action. Though quite a large countries such as Ethiopia, Cuba, Vietnam, Laos, Grenada, etc., voted against United Nations Security Council resolution condemning the Soviet action, there were other countries such as India, Nicaragua, Uganda, etc. which preferred to take a neutral position by abstaining from voting. It was indeed found that even the Third World majority had moved away from extending their support to the Soviet Union.

**From Active Consolidation to Active Disengagement**: 

After Leonid Brezhnev, the Soviet foreign policy lacked clearcut vision about international politics. This situation continued till 1985, when Mikhail Gorbachev came to power as the new General Secretary of the CPSU. It was under his leadership that the entire orientation of the Soviet foreign policy, hitherto pursued, were altered. During his short tenure of little over six years Gorbachev rejected the basic premise of the Soviet foreign policy of his predecessors which had resulted in the systematic division and confrontation between capitalism and socialism at global level. Gorbachev was the first Soviet leader who
acknowledged that in its endemic struggle and competition with capitalism, particularly in economic field, socialism was a loser. Further, socialism by isolating itself from technologically superior Western capitalism had suffered incredible losses and lagged miserably behind in the race of development. The Soviet foreign policy had hitherto ignored the imperatives of domestic requirement in the name of ideology and class struggle. It was made necessary to recognise that the world economy was dominated by capitalism and there was a need for the Soviet Union and other socialist countries to enter this economy even on the terms of dictated by the West. Besides, the easing of confrontation with West would help the Soviet Union to divert national resources, that was spent on its military, to other productive areas. The West could also be a source of aid, technology and an area of market for Soviet goods. Thus, the Gorbachevean bluprint of new Soviet foreign policy altered substantially its confrontationist stance and laid emphasis on its active cooperation with the West. It is however debatable, how far the Soviet Union was able to derive benefit from new orientation of its foreign policy. But it is undeniable that the very logic of this new orientation made her to withdraw its involvement from the Third World. A number of countries, of different political persuasions, which had depended upon the Soviet Union for
economic, aid, trade, arms and political support suddenly found themselves bereft and isolated. The Soviet - Third World policy under Gorbachev needs to be analysed in this background.

This shift in the Soviet policy as pointed out earlier had manifold reasons. By the time Gorbachev came to power the Soviet system of client states was in disarray. The Marxist government of Grenada had been overthrown by U.S. invasion in 1983.\(^{39}\)

The new leadership broadly assessed the Soviet interests and priority in changing international environment, especially the vulnerability of its client states and the emerging role of the United States. Gorbachev immediately tampered the rhetoric of the Soviet - Third World policy.

The traditional theoretical framework of the Soviet - Third World policy was transformed significantly under the impact of Gorbachev's 'new political thinking'.\(^{40}\)

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39. Many other countries, such as Angola, Mozambique, Afghanistan and Nicaragua, who were locked in their civil-war like situation and anti-government forces supported by the CIA, were presumably not serving Soviet interests. Most notably, in 1986 war among Marxists in South Yemen deeply embarrassed the Soviet Union.

40. The 'New Political Thinking', a direct off-shoot of domestic *Perestroika*. The 'term' championing the deideologisation of the international relation was the

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international relations. The 'balance of interests' approach and East-West cooperation, instead of ideological confrontation, characterized the Soviet Union's new foreign policy as a whole. Gorbachev's attempts to seek close cooperation and integration with the West and their support for Perestroika meant that no Soviet support would be given to Third World countries who were confronting with the West. This was vividly demonstrated in the "Iraq-Kuwait Crisis"\textsuperscript{41}.

The sign of change in the Soviet foreign policy was first visible in March, 1985, Plenum of the Central Committee that had also named him as General Secretary:

"The Soviet Union has always supported the struggle of the people for liberation from the colonial yoke and today, too, our sympathies are on the side of the countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America that are following the path of strengthening their independence and social renewal"\textsuperscript{42}.

The same theme was also echoed in the new edition of the CPSU Programme adopted in 1986, which expressed:

"profound sympathy for the aspirations of the peoples who have experienced the heavy and

\textsuperscript{41}...\textsuperscript{42}...
demeaning yoke of colonial servitude." 43.

Further, in his address to the Twenty-Seventh CPSU Congress of 1986, under a particular section dealing with "The Basic Goals and Directions of the Party's Foreign Policy Strategy", Gorbachev had virtually 'not mentioned the name of the Third World'. "Under the Soviet clients, he only recognized Afghanistan by name" 44. His substantive comments on the Third World issues were made in the context of 'Soviet national interests'. At the 70th anniversary of the October Revolution, he categorically admitted that the "impulse for liberation" in the Third World was "waning" 45.

At the 28th CPSU Congress, Gorbachev did not even mentioned about the Third World countries in the foreign policy section of his report. However, in the context of the Soviet foreign economic relations, "he stressed the need for making 'adjustments' in USSR's relations with the Third World" 46.

Further changes in the Soviet - Third World policy were


44. 27th CPSU Congress Report, n.40, p.267.

45. Gorbachev's Report at the 70th Anniversary of the October Revolution, 1987; see, Gupta, n.19, p.89.

elaborated by E. Shevardnadze in an interview to Pravda. On 26 June, 1990, "Counter the charges that the new Soviet diplomacy was forgetting about the Third World"\textsuperscript{47}. He declared:

"We are not satisfied with our relations with developing countries, and not so much in the political, economic, cultural, scientific, technical and other spheres. We are already restricted by the state of the Soviet economy and structures of foreign economic relations"\textsuperscript{48}

On 24 July, 1990, Gorbachev issued a presidential decree on the restructuring of the Soviet foreign economic relations. "The USSR's economic cooperation with the developing countries was to be solely on the principles of mutual benefit and interests and ... follow international standards and practices\textsuperscript{49}. This decree signified an end to the Soviet preferential treatment to countries such as Cuba and Vietnam and also a substantial reduction in the USSR's foreign economic burden.

Finally, the new Soviet interests in the Third World were confined to promote its own economic and security interests. Unlike Khrushchev and Brezhnev, Gorbachev followed less adventuristic and less active policy towards


\textsuperscript{48} Ibid.

the Third World. Although, Moscow was not in a mood to turn its back on existing clients, it was obviously no more interested in the active pursuit of new clients also. Moreover, the Soviet leadership believed that the Third World stability would be better served if its economic interests were taken care of rather than aiding and abetting the ongoing turmoils in different parts of the world. The reservations that had crept into the Soviet policy toward the Third World was mainly due to the ideological flexibility, adopted by Gorbachev in his last days and was further followed by Shevardandze. It was further compounded due to misinformation, miscalculations and mistakes on the part of the Soviet Union as well as incompetence of the leadership in the Third World countries.

Factors Shaping the Soviet Policy Towards Latin America:

Historically, to a large extent, the relationship between the Soviet Union and the Latin American region and their reciprocal political and economic interest were conditioned by the state of the Soviet - U.S. relations and the role that this relationship played in the Latin American region. In geopolitical sense, the region was least important to the Soviet Union. It was situated far from the

Soviet territory and occupied no place of significance in the Soviet - U.S. rivalry in international politics. Neither did it promise a source of vital resources to the Soviet Union nor any key trading partner from among the countries for her. Yet the region remained one of indirect concern to Moscow. Being the backyard of the US, it constituted an area of vital interest for the Soviet Union. Ever since the pronouncement of the Monroe Doctrine in 1823, the United States had continued to remain the predominant powers in this region.

Over the years the precise geopolitical priority of the region had changed significantly and matched with the Soviet - Third World policy. The region had witnessed many upheavals, according to international politics and to the Soviet geopolitical concern. Thus the increased importance of the region within the Soviet - Third World policy framework represented merely an extension of a general historical trend of the Soviet foreign policy.

Traditionally, since 1920, Moscow had maintained its presence in the region through the native communist parties. These parties, members of Communist International (Comin-

tern) had also served as a principal Soviet policy instrument in the region. But the region first drew the Soviet attention by the end of the 1950s. "Though Moscow had sound diplomatic relations with Mexico, Argentina and Uruguay without any formal political and economic tieup". However, "the first Soviet help had been formally extended to Guatemala (1953-54)"\textsuperscript{53}, where the communists supported progressive military regime of Arbenz who was pursuing an anti-United States policies of the country. Soon the regime was overthrown by a coup engineered by the U.S. support. The U.S. role had virtually convinced the Soviet Union that internal and external conditions in the region remained essentially unfavourable for the survival of such regimes. It also stifled any red expansion of the USSR's role in the region.

"The region was dominated by the conservative landholding classes (Leftifundist), and many countries of the region were in fact ruled by these leftifundist-military regimes"\textsuperscript{54}. They continued to serve as the final orbiters of


political authority, regardless of whether they held the
defacto reins of powers or de-jure. However, both groups
evinced an anti-communist and pro-American orientation. On
the otherside, "the United States supported these regimes
and gave every support to act decisively in order to defend
any breach of the Monroe Doctrine"55.

"It was Cuban revolution in 1959 and in its aftermath,
the mounting tensions between Cuba and the United States
that produced a new Soviet interests in the Western
Hemisphere56. After a moment of confusion, and caution from
both sides, their reciprocal interests pushed them towards a
closer relationship. Moreover, Cuba's geo-strategic location
in the Caribbean Basin had given an unique leverage to the
Soviet Union. This was an opportunity to project the Soviet
power into the U.S. strategic - rear and, therefore, an
asset in the Soviet bilateral competition with the United
States. Cuba thus became a primary concern for the Soviet
Union to play an active role in the Western Hemisphere. The
emerging interest in Latin America was another factor that
forced the Soviet Union to support Cuba and also to find out
a possible political and economic hold in other parts of the
region. The Soviet presence was also necessary to collect

55. Stephen Clissold, (ed.), Soviet Relations with Latin
    America 1918-1968: A Documentary Survey, (London:
56. Ibid., pp. 39-40.
informations, to establish communication channels, and to influence the developments in the region. Moreover, this thinking also coincided with broader international interests that these countries had provided a strong basis for the Soviet participation in the Third World, the United Nations, and the other World forums. Diplomatic relations with most of the Third World countries including those in Latin America, were also a part of a well thought out policy where these countries might legitimize the Soviet role in the World as a great power.

In spite of the leftist and anti-American sentiments the people always identified themselves with Cuba, which eventually made them incapable of winning power anywhere in the region. The international humiliation suffered by the Soviet Union in the wake of the Cuban missile crisis had further shattered her optimism for any significant Soviet role in the region. Moreover, "the Sino-Soviet split in 1963, whose political defeats in Africa and Indonesia - along with other factors forced the Soviet Union to keep away from the main international arena, had also marked a setback for the Soviet Union interest and influence in the Latin American communist movement." 57

The number of national and international crisis during the 1960s, not only led Khrushchev’s ouster from power, it also contributed to a great extent a shift in the Soviet - Third World vis-a-vis Latin American policy.

Introduction of detente with the West, specially with the United States, had also provided a fresh lease of confidence to the Soviet leaders that they could exploit the new opportunities which were, yet to be explored, in Latin America without provoking direct U.S. intervention. "To minimise the confrontation between the two world depended internally on political-economic developments in the Soviet Union and externally on the Soviet global policy with regard to the United States" 58. Furthermore, the very "Policy of peaceful co-existence" 59 had provided an advantage to the Soviet Union to initiate "regional revolutionary strategy" 60 and an opportunity to "mobilize communist parties" 61 for social and 'political change' 62 in Latin America.


59. Report, n. 29, p.35.

60. Ibid., p. 36.

61. The emergence of nationalist regimes in Bolivia (1966) and in Peru (1968) fostered the belief that the changes which is occuring in the region sufficiently fundamental to alter the regions relationship with US.

"Growing Soviet Latin American interests led to the publication of a Journal *Latinslaya America* (Moscow) in 1969. With this publication the interest in analysing regional matters became widespread*63*.

The political developments in Latin America, particularly in the Caribbean and Central America, reflected radical trends that benefited the USSR. Growing success of the communist movement of Cuba, Chile (United Front experiment), Grenada and finally Nicaragua bolstered the Soviet Union's image as great power. Many countries, particularly those which were sympathetic to her, established their relationships with the USSR, while Soviet activities towards the regions reflected a policy of caution.

The end of 1970s, had witnessed a sharp decline in the relationship between the Soviet union and the region. "The reasons for this downward relationship were multiple"*64*. The differences over the support to guerilla forces, was one instance which affected the Soviet relations with Cuba.

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*64* The Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia (1968) had badly affected the relations with the Communist parties of the region. This action also led to the splits in other socialist forces of the region as in Venezuela. The Soviet invasion in Afghanistan (1979) and Guerrilla success in Central America had also effected Soviet relations with many south American countries.
The deterioration in Latin American perception of the Soviet Union, and the Guerilla successes in Grenada and Nicaragua had one again provided a new fillip to the Soviet revolutionary interests. The Guerilla success in the region not only stimulated communist insurgencies in the entire region, but forced the United States to comeout of "Vietnam syndrome". With greater determination and belligerence as it was witnessed during the US action against Grenada in 1983.

The United States reactive policy had also compelled the Soviet Union and Cuba to play more cautiously in the future. But untimely the departure of Brezhenev further weakened the Soviet policy towards Latin America. The new leadership under Gorbachev, however, tried to follow Brezhnev's Latin American policy.

The following factors had in fact shaped the Soviet Union's overall policy towards Latin America:

**Geo-politics of Latin America**:

Latin America had always been guided by two separate Soviet judgements. Firstly, the significance of the Third World in her global politics, and secondly, a relative importance of the region in comparison with other parts of the Third World.

The Third World had occupied a major place in Soviet perspective of global affairs. Latin America always played an important role in the Soviet geopolitical thinking that
reflected the interplay of several factors. It was situated in the backyard of the United States, not only a recognized global power, but also the chief rival of the USSR in world affairs. "It was true that any adversities for the United State in this region were termed as gains for the USSR in international affairs" 65.

Not surprisingly, the prescise Soviet geopolitical priority of Latin America within its Third World policy had shifted over the years. The region had never claimed the top priority in Soviet - Third World thinking. On the contrary, "Asian and African and the southern rimlands of the USSR had occupied an obvious importance to the USSR, for they constituted its soft underbelly" 66.

Latin America drew serious Soviet attention in the mid-1950s. Previously, "Moscow had maintained relationships with Communist parties in all three sub regions but this relationship was unable to produce promising results" 67. Skeptically, "it vocally backed anti - U.S. Arbenz government, in Guatemala in 1953-54. The ouster of this government however, convinced the Soviet Union about the US


power as well as the role of conservative land-holding classes and conservative military in the region. Moscow had now focussed on the former Western colonies in Asia and Africa, whose leaders evinced a desire to have relationships with the USSR.

"The unexpected Cuban revolution in 1959 in Caribbean region and its mounting tensions with the United States had produced the new Soviet interest in Latin America. Thus, Cuba became another deciding factor in Soviet-Latin American approach. It also paved the way to revive diplomatic relation with the Caribbean state. However, for the time being, the Cuban missile crisis of 1962 had dashed Soviet-Latin American optimism. Nevertheless, Castro remained in authority in Cuba and his persisting need for Soviet economic and military assistance continued to be a main factor in keeping relations between the two.

By the late 1960s and early 1970s, Latin America became only a secondary target for the Soviet geopolitical calculations. By the fall of 1971, Boris Ponomarev, the head of the International Department of the CPSU, declared that "the upsurge of the revolutionary movement in the Latin American continent had tremendous significance for the world."

69. Duncan, n. 57, p.9.

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revolutionary process"\textsuperscript{70}.

"Beginning in the late 1960s, there was visible decline in Pan-Americanism, among the Latin American states. The number of "progressive" governments in the region were growing, especially in South America\textsuperscript{71}. These governments found themselves in odd position with the United States over such issues of control of natural resources. The overthrow of Salvador Allende's government in Chile in September 1973 had signalled the Soviet Union's overestimation about the decline of US influence in Latin America.

By the end of the 1970s, the region witnessed a rise in the Soviet geopolitical interest. By early 1981, Leonid Brezhnev stressed that "the States of Latin America.... are playing a more important role in international affairs"\textsuperscript{72}. Certainly in "the mid-1980s the region occupied a position immediately below the southern rimland of the Soviet Union her geopolitical assessments"\textsuperscript{73}. Furthermore, there were some signs of leftist insurgencies even in areas, critical

\textsuperscript{70} Mujal-Leon, n.54, p.9.


\textsuperscript{72} Report, n. 34, p.37.

\textsuperscript{73} Report, n.40, pp. 246-58.
to the United States, namely, the Caribbean and Central America.

This general development was triggered not only by the Jewel Movements of Granal in March 1979 and also by the revolution in Nicaragua the following July. "These developments were a growing sign of weakness in the most vital part of the U.S. "strategic rear". The Soviet Union depicted the Nicaraguan revolution as the "beginning of a new stage in the struggle on the scale of the entire continent".\textsuperscript{74}

As the 1980s progressed, several other considerations strengthened the Soviet conviction that the ability of the United States to keep its "backyard" quiet and submissive had decreased dramatically. Among these were the civil war in El Salvador. The ire of Latin American governments against the U.S. backing of the Great Britain in Falklands/Malvinas War in mid-1982 etc. All these were further evidence of the break-down of the old inter-American system under U.S. aegis. But the U.S. invasion of Grenada in October 1983, Haiti and Panama in 1989 restricted further the Soviet thinking and convinced Moscow that the Washington still possessed formidable capacities for shaping the situation in Latin America. However, the Latin American

\textsuperscript{74} Izvestia, July 29, 1979; reprint in \textit{CDSP}, vol. 31, no. 31, 1979, p. 4.

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states particularly South America had assumed "a more important role in world affairs" and their foreign policies contained "an anti-imperialist element" that could restrict the sphere of imperialism's freedom of movement in the global arena.

**United State Hegemony:**

Latin America, was always considered as an area under the U.S. hegemonic influence, and was politically dominated by pro-U.S. conservative forces. As in the case of Guatemala (1953-54), Cuba (1962-82), Chile (1972-73), Grenada-Nicaragua (1979) etc. The United States hegemonic position, with its attendant exploitation, has contributed to and perpetuated under-development and the inhuman condition facing most Latin Americans. The region was economically exploited by the United States and their natural resources had served her economic purposes. It was long desire of the people of the region to attain freedom from the United States' hegemonic circle.

The advent of the Soviet Union as a global power and her initiation to help Third World countries to attain full independence from her colonial and imperial empire, suddenly attracted many Latin American countries. "In their struggle for independence, the Soviet Union firmly extended her help to them".

75. Petras, n. 50, p. 232.
In other words, the Soviet Union wanted to reduce the Western influence in Latin America. It was largely meant for restricting the US role in her own backyard. "Perhaps the most obvious development, in this regard was that Moscow had played a key role in maintaining substantial ties with the self-proclaimed Marxist governments whose policies were anti-US"76. The Soviet Union also supported Marxist-dominated forces seeking to oust pro-American governments from power. The "liberation movements" in El Salvador and Guatemala in Central American region were provided another source of Soviet thinking. In addition, Moscow had "sought to cooperate with a large number of countries which expressed discontentment with the United States"77 for various reasons.

**Economic Factors**:

The United States was the only economic power in the region, controlling an area with enormous natural resources and an exclusively big market for her. On the other hand, the Soviet Union wanted to reduce the U.S. influence in the

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76. The Castro government in Cuba, the Allende in Chile, Sandinista in Nicaragua and the Bishop in Grenada (1979) were such countries, Mujal-Leon, n. 54, p.15.

77. Soviet help was also extended to Brazil and Argentina in the late 1970s and early 1980s, left-leaning governmets of Michael Manley in Jamaica in the 1970s and Forbes Burnham in Guyana in the 1970s and 1980s, Mujal-Leon, n.54, p.15.
region and, if possible, to replace it as a predominant
economic actor in Latin America. The Soviets received
positive response from many countries of the region who
initiated economic tieup with the Soviet Union." 78

Trade had clearly assumed greater importance in Soviet-
Latin American relations and was intended to play a greater
role in future. As indicated by the Guidelines for the
Economic and Social Development of USSR for 1981-85 and for
the period ending in 1990 adopted of 26th CPSU congress in
1978, which envisaged:

"The development, on a long term and equitable
basis, mutually beneficial exchange of goods...
with developing countries." 79

"The Soviet Union was using her trade primarily as a
political instrument in order to increase its influence
within the region." 80 Some states in the region had sought
to buy Soviet arms, which was an easy proposition for Soviet

78 The main Soviet economic partners in the region were
Argentina, Brazil, Peru, Uruguay, Mexico, Venezuela,
Panama etc., Blasier, n. 53, pp. 50-60.

79. Soviet Union extended $260 million in credits and loan
to Allende's Chile. See J.L. Nogee and J.W. Sloan,
Allende's Chile and the Soviet Union: A Policy Lesson
for Latin American Nations, See king Autonomy', Journal
of Inter-American Studies, vol. 21. no. 3 (August),
1979, p. 353.

80. Pyotr Koshelev, "The USSR's economic and technical
cooperation with the countries of tropical Africa",
Foreign Trade (Moscow), vol.18, no.10, October 1982,
pp.8-12.
Union. Certainly, direct fight with the U.S. in Latin America was not feasible for her. As a result, the Soviet Union had used economic aid as the most politically feasible alternatives.

The Soviet Union was using her 'Two-track' policy in the region. In South America, without provoking any regimes, the Soviet Union tried to establish state-to-state relationships with them. The Soviet perception was very much guided by her desire to have trade relations with the South American countries, especially Brazil and Argentina. The reasons were clear, that both were possessing potentially a large domestic markets.

In addition, the Soviet efforts to establish a longterm presence in Latin America, trade had been used to lend political, economic, and military support to governments against the interests of the United States. The Soviet Union also employed trade in support of the Marxist government of Salvador Allends in Chile (1970-73).

The Soviet Union's use of trade as a political weapon had not only served her political ambitions but, also given

81. Soviet aid usually takes the forms of lines of credit for the purchase of Soviet equipment. While the terms of repayment of loan is fairly long, compared to commercial terms in the West, Soviet terms are concessionary. See Blasier, n.53, p.66.

a position to influence future events in the region.

**Ideology of Marxism-Leninism and Castroism:**

The Soviet external policy had always been conditioned by two elements; one pragmatic, the other ideological. The former was characterised by the need to survive and to have relations with other nations had led her to adopt a foreign policy very similar to the others. The ideological factor, whose aim was expanding socialism worldwide, made the Soviet Union to encourage and support Communist parties, as auxiliaries for the pursuit of the Soviet state interests.

The communist movement in Latin America had passed through three phases:

- "the revolutionary period from the 1920s until 1935 (during these year, intellectual Marxist analysts such as Jose Carlos Mariategui in Peru and important revolutionary experience, such as the Salvadoran insurrection could be possible);

- the Statinist period, from 1935 through the late 1950s (when Soviet Marxist interpretations become the rule and the "four-class alliance", called United Front, Scheme was applied to Latin America);

- the second revolutionary period opened by the Cuban
Revolution in 1959, Nicaraguan success in 1979 (during which all previous tactics were revised and questioned that groups tactics within and outside the existing Communist parties).\textsuperscript{84}

Nationalist Castro's success in Cuba opened a new period in the Latin American revolutionary history. The success of the "guerrilla strategy"\textsuperscript{85} had posed a serious question mark on the Soviet endorsement of their revolutionary strategy. It not only questioned the role played by the native Communist parties, but gradually overshadowed them. After much discussion, the Soviet Union came with the concept of "national" and "revolutionary democracy"\textsuperscript{86}, which was unacceptable to many Latin American Communist parties.

\textsuperscript{83} Until Cuban success, the region was ideologically dominated by the Catholic Church. Thereafter attempts were made to synthesise both the ideology of Marxism-Leninism and Church, and become known as 'Liberation Theology'. Marxism was first inculcated within region through the intelligentsia, later through Communist International and than October Revolution. Certainly, ideology of Marxism-Leninism rose in the region through the native Communist and Labour parties in 1920s. Since then it maintained their presence in the region as an independent political force, played an instrumental role to enhance Soviet interests in the region. See Millar, n. 52, pp. 24 and 31.

\textsuperscript{84} Mujal-Leon, n. 54, p. 121.

\textsuperscript{85} Ibid., no. 54, p. 127.

\textsuperscript{86} Ibid.
Surprisingly, Castro and Castoits came out with another concept of "Socialist construction", which dislodged the entire Soviet theoretical and political framework. Confronted with this situation, the Soviet Union came with a theory that allowed various revolutionary movements to take any one of the multiple set of strategies: Some parties (Venezuela, Colombia, Honduras, Peru, and Haiti), supported to form guerilla fronts, while other (Chile, Argentina, and Uruguay) agreed to continue with legal or semi-legal tactics.

"With the advent of the Peruvian military radical in 1968, the brief rule of left-wing General Torres in Bolivia in 1970 and election of Chile's Popular Unity in September 1970, had forced Cuba to endorse the 'peaceful road' strategy. However, in 1980s subsequent developments in revolutionary tactics in Latin America, such as El Salvador, Chile, Uruguay and Honduras) had made them to revise their position on armed struggle, although the peaceful road endorsed by the Soviet Union remained the preferred strategy in the majority of Latin American countries.

87. Millar, n. 52, p. 53.
88. Ibid.
89. Both the Nicaraguan FSLN and the Salvadoran FMLN had attempted to combine the use of the armed struggle with the building of a mass movement.
Cuban Success and Its Responses:

The Cuban Revolution profoundly changed Soviet perspectives on Latin America. Fidel Castro's consolidation of power, despite vigorous U.S. opposition demonstrated the real weakening of the American power in the region. These events had surprised not only the Soviet leaders but also the South and Central American traditional communists. Surprisingly, "Castro's support for guerrialla movement throughout Latin America during the 1960s, further split and weakened the region's communist parties". It also hindered the development of a broader Soviet-Latin American diplomatic and trade relations.

After initial friction, military ties between Cuba and the Soviet Union intensified and the island became a major Soviet naval base. "Assuming an increasing importance in the Soviet strategy toward Latin America, Cuba became both the interpreter of Latin American reality for the USSR and its interlocutor with extreme left groups in the region".

The Cuban Revolution increased the Soviet interest in Latin America and provided it with its first ally and thus became its client in the region. The Soviet Union's Cuban connection, proved undoubtedly very useful in Africa and

90. Mujal-Leon,n.54, p. XVII.
91. Ibid, p. XVIII.
later in Central America". It also encouraged the rise of left wing nationalist sentiments in the English-speaking Caribbean. This axis not only marginalised Cuba's isolation and paved the way for increased Jamaican trade with Soviet Union, but also helped to expand the Soviet diplomatic and trade relations with other countries in the region. On the other hand, the establishment of a political military base in Cuba and leftism in the Caribbean provided additional opportunities for the USSR to augment and establish commercial and political relations with the region as a counter weight to the U.S. influence. They also hoped to capitalize on local nationalist's frustrations with the strong impact of the United States on the region.

Moreover, "Cuba as a Soviet Third World client became almost a global power if one could judge by its extensive military activities abroad". With its military resources, Cuba not the Soviet Union, consistently played an unique role.


role in Central America and the Caribbean. "Entirely guided by its interest and also with the real limitations, Cuba became an agent of the Soviet Union in the region and beyond, where she did not want to involve directly." As a matter of fact both the Soviet Union and Cuba were heavily dependent on each other and wanted to play mutually a significant role in world affairs.

In the last three decades, Cuba maintained its position of pride in the Soviet Global foreign policy and had advanced her objectives in Latin America and beyond.

**Emergence of Guerrilla Success in Central America**

During late 1970s and early 1980s, the political development in Central America had brought the region into a distinct regional focus for Soviet policy makers, though the increasing political turmoil was another source for increased Soviet-Cuban involvement in the region. By

95. The Socialist Revolution in Grenada in Caribbean and Nicaragua in Central American region were more 'Cuban Projects' than the Soviet efforts. See Payne, n. 91, p.11.

96. Ibid, p.11.

97. Castro could not have been as effective without Soviet logistical support, sealift capabilities, and weapons and supplies and Soviet Union's dependence on Cuban ground forces in both Angola and Ethiopia for advancing Moscow's objectives. Even Cuba needed Moscow's backing in order to continue playing such an important role in World affairs, which clearly is consistent with Cuba's size and resources.
stressing Soviet-U.S. rivalry and seeing the world primarily in terms of East verses West, the United States had inadvertently made the Soviet Union an alternative for Central America in particulars, and Latin American in general, who were determined to gain more economic and political independence from the United States.98

"To some extent, Latin American reaction against "dependent capitalism" promoted by the United States has increased the socialist prestige and made the Soviet Union and Cuba as more favourable in the region."99

"The guerrilla success in Nicaragua had galvanized Soviet interests and greatly altered Moscow’s view with regard to other revolutionary opportunities in the region.100 The region had constrasting political system. Excluding Nicaragua and El Slavador had centrist civilian government with its restless military forces and persistent leftist insurgents. Guatemala and Honduras had democratically elected government, leftist guerrilla movement

98. Payne, n. 91, p. 96.


and strong military heritage and Costa Rica, true Democratic country with no military influence.

Political turmoil in Central America in the 1970s created new, but initially unperceived, opportunities for Moscow. By 1979-80, this region was considered to be "Ripe for revolution". Although success could be achieved in Nicaragua only, the process to liquidate U.S. interest and achieving revolutionary success through guerilla forces had begun in all Central American countries. Especially El Salvador, whose intense struggle with Salvadore military during "final offensive"101 had put a broader impact on Latin American Communist movement. Further, various U.S. backed military or non-military groups in different corners of the region had launched almost a war against the guerilla groups which finally shattered their dream to capture power102.

Limitations of the Soviet-Central American Policy

The Soviet efforts to mobilize the Third World in favour of its ideological struggle against the West had not

101. During 1981, the guerrilla forces combined with other like minded revolutionary forces of the country led a stage of 'final offensive' war against El Salvadoran military forces to capture country's power, which finally failed.

102. As it happened in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras, during 1983-1989, the US had a huge military base in Honduras to tackle those guerrilla in the region.
been a success to a great extent for the following reasons:

- The Soviet Union neither succeeded in establishing its ideological hegemony in the West in general and the United States in particular, nor it could overpower the West militarily or outmanoeuvre the US strategically. The USSR sought to undercut United States power and influence by competing more effectively in its strategic backyard and striving to achieve political parity with the United States through an expanded presence in the Latin American region.

- The Soviet economic limitations, meanwhile, severely constrained Moscow’s capabilities to finance "other Cubas", as vividly demonstrated by Nicaragua’s huge economic problems. Neither Cuba nor Nicaragua provided an attractive model of economic development. Moreover, Cuba’s economy was in decline despite Moscow’s $4-5 billions annual aid103.

- The region’s debt crisis and need for economic aid, which Moscow could not provide104.

- Central American nationalism, and anti-Americanism in Latin America could not mature in to pro-Soviet

104. Blasier, n.53, p.64.
sentiments, and even Cuba resisted Soviet pressure.\textsuperscript{105}

- Factionalism which prohibited unified party behaviour as in El Salvador's Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN).

- The entire central American region was predominantly an agrarian economy which was controlled by the powerful conservative landlords. They actively supported the pro-American conservative military regimes to preserve their privileged status. Besides this, their anti-Soviet stance blocked further revolutionary success in the region. The region neither made an asset for the Soviet Union nor proved profitable economically.

- And, finally, the domestic economic crisis of the Soviet Union which engaged the active attention of the new leadership conclusively forced it to retreat from the policy of "hand shakes to hands off".

Conclusion:

The Cuban revolution of 1959 in Caribbean region of Latin America put a formidable challenge to the United States and was also able to drew the Soviet attention towards the region in a big way. From now on this region became a bone of contention between the Soviet Union and the United States. The success of the guerrilla warfare in

Nicaragua helped the Soviet Union to make further inroads to Latin American region. However, these guerrilla upheavals in other parts of the Central American countries such as El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras gradually started proving to be quite a costly affairs for the Soviet Union. Most of these guerrilla forces were beset with factionalism and lacked proper ideological orientation and strategy. Their failure to establish credentials in a decisive way proved to be a loss of face for the Soviet Union politically. At the same time helping them logistically proved to be an additional burden for the ailing Soviet economy. The pro-American conservative forces with its anti-Soviet fervour challenged the Soviet interests in the region.