CHAPTER V

POLITICO-STRATEGIC DIMENSIONS OF INDO-SOVET BI-LATERAL RELATIONS

The Indo-Soviet Treaty of 1971 was the fitting response to Sino-US-Pakistan axis which had led to a dramatic shift in the South Asian situation to the disadvantage of India. The Treaty added to India's diplomatic and military power enabling it to deal with Pakistan while tackling the Bangladesh problem and to forestall Sino-US moves in their defence of the repressive dictatorship in Pakistan during that crisis. Indo-Soviet relations are based on the clear identity of interests and the basic convergence of perceptions between the two countries. In no small measure the multiplicity of geopolitical and strategic factors has strengthened the bonds of traditional friendship between New Delhi and Moscow. An analysis of how the Treaty worked out in the political relations of both countries is given below.

The Soviet Union had helped India in defeating Pakistan against the combined opposition of USA and China, and Soviet prestige in India rose to new heights. The victory of India created a new situation in South Asia. After the Bangladesh crisis India emerged as an unchallenged power in the sub-continent. The emergence of a strong India was enthusiastically welcomed in the Soviet Union. The Soviets viewed India as a dominant power in
South Asian region which would play an important role in maintaining peace and security in the sub-continent and keep the Chinese away from the region. The Soviet and Indian leaders were convinced that they had a wide range of common interests and decided to give greater emphasis in broadening this relations, particularly in political and economic spheres.

Thus, with the eclipse of its antagonists, Pakistan and China, India emerged from the Bangladesh crisis as a regional power. India had also proved to be skillful enough to utilise the Treaty to serve its own ends. But the Western contention was that Soviet influence was on the continuing ascendency in India, whereas Mrs. Gandhi emphasized the continuance of India's non-aligned status. In an interview with C.L. Sulzberger of the New York Times during which she was asked whether India felt obligated to reciprocate Soviet support in kind, Mrs. Gandhi responded:

We are unable to display gratitude in any tangible sense for anything .... And I might add that it would be a very different kind of aid if it were based on the expectation of gratitude. Countries help one another because they need one another.¹

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The Soviet President Podgorny declared that "the year 1971 was a remarkable one" in the history of relationship between the two countries. He justified the position taken by the Soviet Union in the liberation of Bangladesh. The principles pursued by the Soviet Union were to support the national liberation movements on the lines laid down by Lenin. In Moscow, deputy Foreign Minister, Firyubin, assured a group of Indian Parliamentarians that India could rely on the Soviet strength and friendship to fight any threat to peace. The Soviet Union offered assurance to Mrs. Gandhi to exercise her influence to avoid any "unhappy situation" in the sub-continent. He also assured the Indian deputies that Soviet-American detente did not affect Soviet obligations towards India and was certain that Soviet relations with India would always be sincere. The Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Co-operation has elevated these relations and they will grow further in strength.

To demonstrate the solidarity of the two countries the 25th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between India and Soviet Union was celebrated with unprecedented enthusiasm in April 1972. Addressing a public meeting to mark the occasion, President, V.V. Giri said that Indo-Soviet friendship was

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3. Times of India (New Delhi), 28 June 1972.
an example of a fruitful co-operation between the two different social systems. At the same time the Soviet contention was that she had consistently followed a policy aimed at ensuring peace in the sub-continent as this was important for the economic development of the whole region, on which depended the prosperity of the peoples.

But this did not mean that both the countries never regretted having signed the Treaty of friendship and co-operation. On all levels they maintained good relations to keep their friendship in good faith. As far as India was concerned, she adopted positions on international issues in accord with those of the Soviet Union, and when the Soviet and Indian interests diverged, India would attempt to minimise those differences.

The reason is obvious. The Soviet Union established friendly relations not only with India but also with many of the South Asian countries. Soviet Union never wanted to alienate any of the countries in this region at the expense of Indo-Soviet Treaty. More than ever before, it was after the emergence of Bangladesh that Moscow's role as a peace-maker in South Asia acquired a significant dimension. While welcoming the Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the President of the Bangladesh, Soviet Premier, A.N. Kosygin promised assistance to normalization of relations in South Asia. He stressed that among the peoples of the East, the Soviet people saw the Indians as their partners to fight colonialism and imperialism. Both requested all peace-loving countries to help normalization of
relations in South Asia on the basis of bi-lateral political
settlement of outstanding issues without interference.

In March 1972 Sheikh Mujib visited Moscow and concluded
an economic agreement with Soviet Union. Two weeks later, Moscow
received Z.A. Bhutto, the Pakistan President, for a frank and
useful exchange on prospects of building up Soviet-Pakistani
relations. Kosygin lauded the readiness of India and Bangladesh
to hold talks with Bhutto and asked him to display "a realistic
approach in this important matter". Kosygin told him that
interference by aggressive forces from outside was not good for
South Asia. Bhutto acknowledged Premier Kosygin's points and laid
emphasis on the stoppage of unfriendly propaganda in the
sub-continent and expressed his readiness for strengthening
conditions of peace in the sub-continent.

The Soviet Union expressed its support to the process of
normalization of relations in the sub-continent. Here the
significance of the Treaty with India and of good neighbourly
relations between India and Bangladesh as contributory factors for
healthy political climate in Asia was emphatically stated. On 19
March 1972 India and Bangladesh signed a 25-year treaty of
friendship, co-operation and peace. On 13 April, India's External

4. Devendra Kaushik, Soviet Relations with India and Pakistan (New
Delhi, 1974), p.140.
Affairs Minister, Swaran Singh, visited Moscow. He had talks with Brezhnev, Kosygin and Gromyko. His talks with Soviet leaders took place in a warm and cordial atmosphere and reaffirmed their identical positions on a wide range of global issues. The joint statement issued on 5 April after the visit of Swaran Singh, gave unequivocal Soviet support to a peaceful settlement of outstanding issues in the sub-continent through direct negotiations between the government of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. The statement said that, India and the Soviet Union were convinced that every effort should be made to bring to the sub-continent an era of peace, friendship and good neighbourliness. Referring to the Indo-Soviet Treaty, the statement said that it had become an important factor in strengthening international peace, security and co-operation, and it had opened up new horizons for widening and deepening comprehensive Indo-Soviet co-operation. The statement drew attention to the fact that any normalization of relations in the region must take into account the existing political realities. This was a reference to Pakistan's refusal to deal with Bangladesh's approval and the failure of India to deal with the settlement of questions related to the prisoners of war as India was doubtful regarding the genuineness of Bhutto's affirmation of friendship with this country.

The first anniversary of the Indo-Soviet Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Co-operation was celebrated in the Soviet Union and
India with great fanfare. L.I. Brezhnev, Nikolai Podgorny and Alexei Kosygin sent congratulatory messages to President Giri and Prime-Minister Mrs. Gandhi declaring that the "signing of the Treaty has marked the opening of a new stage in strengthening and developing Indo-Soviet friendship and co-operation and the past year has reaffirmed that the Treaty is an important factor in strengthening peace in Asia and in the world. We express our confidence that friendship and fruitful mutually beneficial co-operation between the Soviet Union and India will continue to become stronger and broader for the good of the Soviet and Indian peoples and in the interest of securing peace in the east".

Defence Minister, Jagjiven Ram declared that India had been able to liberate Bangladesh and free its population partly because of the confidence that had been generated in the country after the Indo-Soviet Treaty. The Indo-Soviet Treaty has stood not only for the progress of India, but also for the liberation of struggling peoples all over the world. The Soviet Union also described the Treaty as a "logical conclusion" of the development of friendly relations between the two countries. Its aim was to consolidate friendship and co-operation between the Soviet Union and India, to prevent an outbreak of war and to guarantee security in South Asia. The Treaty did not in any way infringe upon India's policy of non-alignment. In the context of Bangladesh crisis, India used it's treaty with Soviet Union as a weaponry strategy against the aggression from Pakistan. Because for the first time, on a
wide scale, India had acknowledged that it cannot opt out of the power game. The region to which India belonged was a place of acute contest among great competing powers like China and United States via Pakistan\textsuperscript{5}. In such a grave situation, India had tried to protect its national interests by using the treaty as a strong means of non-alignment policy.

**Fruitful Consultations Under the Treaty**

In early September 1972, Foreign Secretary, Kaul arrived in Moscow for the annual Foreign Office Consultative Meeting. The Foreign Office Consultations are an annual feature of Indo-Soviet relations and assumed special importance after the Treaty. The Treaty made specific provision for political exchanges at all levels. Kaul's talks with Kosygin and Firyubin took place, "in an atmosphere of utmost cordiality and warmth" and the Soviet leaders demonstrated their "full understanding and appreciation of India's efforts to consolidate peace and promote neighbourly relations" in the sub-continent. Firyubin also expressed Soviet "appreciation of the wisdom and far-sightedness of Prime Minister Mrs. Gandhi and the policies of the Government of India", and extended "full support" to India's position and policies\textsuperscript{6}. The joint press release

\textsuperscript{5} Sanjay Gaikwad, *Dynamics of Indo-Soviet Relations: The Era of Indira Gandhi* (New Delhi, 1990), p.100.

\textsuperscript{6} *Statesman* (New Delhi), 7 September 1972.
marking the end of the consultations declared:

The two sides expressed satisfaction at the successful development of bi-lateral relations which meets the national interests of the peoples of the Soviet Union and India and serve the strengthening of peace in South Asia and throughout the world. The firm conviction was expressed that new prospects for further strengthening and expansion of fruitful and mutually beneficial co-operation between the two countries have opened especially after the signing of the Indo-Soviet Treaty of Peace, Friendship and co-operation in August 1971.  

The Simla Accord of 1972.

The breakthrough into Indo-Pakistan relations towards normalization was initiated at the Simla Summit in July 1972. The Simla atmosphere was marked with cordiality and readiness on both sides to appreciate each other's point of view.

The Soviet desire to maintain normalization of relations in the sub-continent was clearly manifested in its suggestion for an official level meeting between India and Pakistan to prepare the ground for a summit meeting. Kosygin offered whatever help possible to find a political settlement between India and Pakistan. Meanwhile, Pakistan President, Bhutto arrived in Moscow with a delegation on 16 March 1972. Kosygin expressed willingness of India and Bangladesh to hold talks with Pakistan and advised Bhutto

7. Indian Express (New Delhi), 12 September 1972.
to renounce his policy of confrontation and adopt a policy of peace and co-operation. Bhutto accepted the advice and the same was communicated by Moscow to New Delhi. In response to the communication, New Delhi designated D.P. Dhar for the further consultations. A summit meeting between Mrs. Gandhi and Bhutto was arranged after completing the formal talks between Indian and Pakistani officials. The summit took place at Simla between 28 June and 3 July 1972.

The Simla Accord signed by Mrs. Indira Gandhi and Z.A. Bhutto on 2 July 1972 after three days of negotiations provided a new framework for Indo-Pakistan relations. Both countries undertook not to use force in solving their mutual problems including Kashmir and decided to enter into bi-lateral negotiations to settle outstanding issues. The Agreement provided for the withdrawal of Indian and Pakistani forces to the international border of their respective side and acceptance by both the line of control in Kashmir.

The accord was ratified by Pakistan National Assembly on 15 July and by India on 28 July 1972. It was welcomed as an important stage towards peace in the sub-continent. It was a significant step on the road to peaceful co-operation between the two countries and expected that the Treaty would open a new chapter in the history of Indo-Pakistan relations. Of course, it was an important step on the way to durable peace in the Indian
sub-continent. The Simla spirit was rightly understood in Soviet Union and India as a triumph of great statesmanship which could make it possible for the countries of the sub-continent to develop their relations in conditions of peace and co-operation.

Agreements in Other Fields.

India and the Soviet Union went on continuous consultations at different levels throughout 1972 and much of 1973. In September 1972 an agreement for the creation of an Inter-Governmental Soviet-Indian Commission was signed. The commission was assigned the task of examining the possibilities of further development of economic and scientific-technical co-operation between the two countries.

In November 1972, the Soviet Government took steps to correct old Soviet maps of India. On 9 November 1972 Tass distributed a report from India describing North-East Frontier Agency as Indian territory, departing from the position of old Soviet maps which showed it as part of China. On 22 November, Foreign Minister, Swaran Singh informed Lok Sabha that the Soviet envoy in India had conveyed to the Indian Government officially that the Soviet Union would publish a new map on the Sino-Indian boundary.

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The map issue had been discussed in the Indian Parliament in the past. The question of incorrect maps had taken up with the Soviet Government during the visit of President V.V. Giri and Mrs. Gandhi. Giri said that the ambassador's message should be taken as "quite authentic", "but unless the new maps come, I would not like to comment anything more", he added.

The 50th anniversary of the formation of the USSR was celebrated in December 1972. India also celebrated this historic event with great enthusiasm because Indians were also aware of the presence of the Soviet Union as a source of strength in the struggle of India's independence. The Soviet Union and India had already acquired much experience in fruitful co-operation and later strengthened their relations on the basis of the Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Co-operation. The Treaty enabled India to show her progressive and anti-imperialist tenor in the relations with other countries.

India's dependence on the Soviet Union for the strategic demands of its economy and security increased as a result of developments in the international field. It was the Soviet Union, which came to India's rescue when near-famine conditions threatened to sweep through vast parts of the country in 1972. When the world energy crisis produced adverse repurcussion on

10. Ibid.
Indian economy in 1973, the Soviet Union supplied India with large quantities of fertilizer, kerosene and crude oil as well as massive renewed assistance for oil exploration.\textsuperscript{11}

Brezhnev's Visit.

Brezhnev and Gromyko visited India during the last week of November 1973. This was Brezhnev's first foreign trip to an Asian Country since becoming General Secretary. During the stay in New Delhi, he held several rounds of discussions with the Indian leaders on bi-lateral and multi-lateral issues. Both Indian and Soviet media gave maximum coverage to the Soviet leader's visit as fruitful for the maintenance of peace in the sub-continent. At a civic reception Brezhnev stated: "Friendship and co-operation with India form an integral part of the policy of the Soviet Union". He reminded the Indian people that the Soviet Union was with them when India's new statehood was in the process of formation, in times difficult and critical for India, and when various external forces tried to bring pressure to bear on India when it defended its vital interests. And he went on to assure India: "We will stay together with you in days of joy and in days of trials".\textsuperscript{12} These assurances had a deep impact on the Indian people.

\textsuperscript{11} The Statesman, 18 December 1973.

\textsuperscript{12} Vinod Bhatia, \textit{Indira Gandhi and Indo-Soviet Relations} (New Delhi, 1987), p.65.
At a banquet Brezhnev declared that the Soviet Union attached "great importance" to this visit.

We see its purpose (as) steps for further widening and deepening our relations in economic, political, scientific, cultural, technical and other fields which are of great importance for our states and our peoples. The experience of Soviet-Indian relations has to our mind, a principled importance. It shows what close, many-faceted friendly relations can unite states with different social systems .... Soviet-Indian relations have now reached a degree of stability and mutual trust in which we can look forward many years ahead and, to certain degree, plan the future in various fields of our co-operation.¹³

During his visit to India, Brezhnev praised the Congress party's programme of reform. Despite the persistent failure of the Indian government to introduce far-reaching socio-economic reforms, the Soviet Union believed that progressive tendencies within the Congress party could be strengthened by being encouraged to join forces with other democratic left wing elements on the Indian political horizon.¹⁴ A significant event of the visit was Brezhnev's separate meetings with the President of the Congress party and a delegation of the CPI. The CPSU was then trying to establish collaboration with the principal political parties in India. An immediate outcome of the visit was the electoral pact concluded between the Congress party and CPI to quadruple its seats in the

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Brezhnev's visit was probably not an unmitigated success. The Soviet friendship strategy was aimed at establishing a "genuine consensus at a certain level of values" between the CPSU and the "left and democratic forces" in third-world countries. The relationship with the Soviet Union appeared to divide the Indian national bourgeoisie and the impact of this divisiveness could be seen even in the Congress Party too. Mrs. Gandhi's concern was that she needed Soviet co-operation for the Indian economy, defence and to build her own image as a progressive prime-minister. But she could not afford to close the doors of India before the United States or China or both. As a result during Brezhnev's visit Mrs. Gandhi resisted his pressure for a formal endorsement of the Soviet proposal for a Collective Asian Security System.

Brezhnev in his address to the Indian Parliament on 29 November stressed on the political and economic aspects of the idea of collective security in Asia. On the principles of Bandung and the policy of Panchasheel, he observed that "a broad, active, constructive and comprehensive discussion on this question would definitely help trace a common approach acceptable to all states concerned". He congratulated India for playing the role of an

"innovator" by strictly following the policy of non-alignment and expressed satisfaction with India's contribution to the normalization of the situation in South Asia.

Although Brezhnev stood for an Asian Collective Security System, Mrs. Gandhi was silent on the issue and the concept was omitted from the final communique. But several economic agreements were signed, including one between GOSPLAN\textsuperscript{16} and the Indian Planning Commission on planning, co-operation, and a fifteen-year trade agreement. "In all these years, Soviet leaders have never put pressure on India, never dictated any considerations, or imposed their will on India"\textsuperscript{17}. Both leaders, in their speeches, referred to the Treaty, although Brezhnev put more emphasis on it. A feature of Mrs. Gandhi's speeches was her reference to the Indian transition to socialism and to the Soviet role in this. After India's attainment of freedom Soviet Union was the first country to help India in establishing industrial enterprises in the public sector, and strengthening in their relationship at all levels. It was with the help of Soviet Union, India is marching ahead along the path of progress. Even then, Brezhnev did not use the term 'socialist' to describe Mrs. Gandhi's policies, but emphasized the importance of

\textsuperscript{16} The Soviet State Planning Commission.

\textsuperscript{17} Robert C. Horn, \textit{Soviet-Indian Relations Issues and Influence} (New York, 1982), pp.85-93.
Indo-Soviet relations as an example of uniting 'states with different social system'.

Brezhnev was happy over the growing prestige of India and the historic changes in the sub-continent since Indo-Pakistan war of 1971. India's policy against colonialism, racism, aggression, imperialism and subversion are whole-heartedly appreciated in Soviet Union. The Indo-Soviet Treaty of 1971 had heralded a "new era" of friendship. "It is like a magnetic needle which indicates the right direction which the two countries have to take".  

Immediately after the aforesaid accords were released to the press, criticisms were voiced about military contents in these agreements from domestic and foreign circles. The visit was characterised as "a new foreign policy offensive" in order to compel India for accepting the proposal of Asian Collective Security system. Newsweek commented similarly and ascribed the visit to enable the Soviet Union to get port facilities in the Indian Ocean. The Times cautioned that since India was "a classical area in the left-wing analysis" and "a very substantial piece in the great game of Sino-Soviet rivalry, the visit will be used "to woo her support for collective security in Asia". An important British newspaper

observed that the Indo-Soviet agreements were neither in India's interest, nor in those of the West, because through these agreements India was "sucked into the Soviet orbit."²¹.

All criticisms of the visit were either based on lack of understanding or were politically motivated. This was evident from the text of the Indo-Soviet joint communique issued at the end of the visit. In this document, both sides expressed their readiness to participate together with other countries, on an equal basis, in finding a fair solution to the question of making the Indian Ocean a zone of peace. Such a declaration was befitting reply to the barrage of various allegations levelled against nominal Soviet presence in this strategic waterway. It is important to note that the readiness of India and the Soviet Union to work together for making the Indian Ocean as a zone of peace was a loud invitation to all littoral countries to keep a constant watch on imperialist designs in that region. As to the speculation about the Soviet demand for naval facilities in the Indian Ocean, India categorically rejected any such military contents either in their discussion or in the agreements with the Soviet leaders²².

²². Times of India, 7 December 1974.
Soviet Stand on Indian Nuclear Test.

A major event of 1974 was the implosion of a nuclear device by India in the wasteland of Rajasthan in 18 May. This was a matter of great gratification to India's scientific community and India's political leadership. It demonstrated to the world India's prowess in the nuclear field and its capacity to manufacture nuclear weapons. However, Indira Gandhi gave her firm assurance to the world that India had no plans to manufacture nuclear weapons. Despite her commitment to the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes alone, world reaction on India's nuclear test was diverse.

The US State Department indicated its disappointment with India's nuclear test and noted with concern that it would disrupt the already unsettled political solution in the area as well as help proliferation\textsuperscript{23}. The White House did not announce any aid-cut because Nixon had already frozen all assistance programmes for India during the Bangladesh war. \textit{New York Times} called upon the USA, France and the Soviet Union to follow the example of Canada and suspend aid to India's nuclear programme\textsuperscript{24}. The Japanese Government regretted India's experiment and barred her from additional aid for nuclear development. Canada suspended all nuclear aid to India. The Canadian Foreign Secretary, Mitchell

\textsuperscript{23} \textit{Times of India}, 19 May 1974.

Sharp, announced this punishment (23 May 1974). It was explained that when the Canadian Prime Minister, Pierre Trudeau, had visited India in 1971 he had expressed concern over how India would use its nuclear capability and had warned Mrs. Gandhi that "any explosion would be interpreted as non-peaceful". Initially, official Chinese source did not announce India's test, but later Beijing spoke of the futility of this device in the India's staggering economy.

But Moscow showed great understanding of the circumstances in which India had to advance its research. Soviet commentators and officials took India's peaceful intentions at their face value. The TASS reports:

Striving to keep at the level of the world technology in the peaceful uses of nuclear explosion, the Indian Government carried out a research programme. The results of these investigations may be used in mining and earth-moving jobs.

TASS also quoted the Indian atomic Energy Department saying that India had no intention of manufacturing nuclear weapons and it remained strongly opposed to the use of nuclear explosions for military purposes. Thus it is clear that Soviet Union did not share


the apprehensions about the Indian nuclear programme.

On 8 August 1974, Foreign Minister, Swaran Singh arrived in Moscow and held talks with Gromyko on Indo-Soviet relations and international subjects of mutual interest. During his meeting with Brezhnev, the Soviet leaders expressed Moscow's "firm and constant" support for India's policy and wished the Indian people and the government success in the future development of the country "along the road of peace and prosperity". The joint communiqué issued at the end of the visit pointed out that meetings and talks between Singh and the Soviet leaders were "extremely useful". It said that both sides expressed their "deep satisfaction" that the friendship and co-operation in political, economic, scientific, technological and other fields between the two countries were expanding and growing strong on the firm foundation of the Indo-Soviet Treaty signed in August 1971.

Merger of Sikkim

Sino-Indian relations continued to be in a stalemate. The opportunity to demonstrate the Soviet friendship toward India came in September when New Delhi's decision to grant Sikkim the status

27. The U.S. defence Secretary Schlesinger gave a warning that his country could withdraw its commitment to protect India with nuclear weapons in the changed context. See, Ravi Kaul, India's Nuclear Spin-off (Allahabad, 1974), p.21.

of an Associate State brought angry denunciations from China. There was an eruption of polemics over the merger of Sikkim to India; which China called India's "colonial expansionism". Beijing charged that Soviet "revisionist social-imperialism" and Indian "expansionism" were the cause for the instability in South Asia. Moscow, however, defended India indirectly. It ran a publicity campaign against China on its territorial ambitions and on its nuclear programme.

The Chinese criticised India for regarding herself as a sub-super power in South Asian region. Linking their verbal assault between Indian action and the Soviet Union, the Chinese declared that "Soviet revisionist social-imperialism and Indian expansionism constitute a serious threat to the independence and sovereignty of the South Asian countries and are the main causes of the unstable situation there." In a swift counter-attack the Soviet Union denounced the Chinese for their "crude attacks" on India and declared that "China's position in Sikkim, reflects the pro-imperialist orientation of Beijing foreign policy. In these current campaigns against India, Beijing leaders have chosen the main target Sikkim. Maoists have long been showing increased interests in Sikkim, occupying an important strategic position in


South Asia. The Soviets then called upon the Indians to keep a close watch on China's inimical activities in South Asia.

The opening up of arms supplies to Pakistan by both USA and China drove India to the same predicament as before. But now Washington was also building up the Shah of Iran in the Persian Gulf. This became clear when a naval exercise was held, hosted by Pakistan, Britain, Turkey and Iran as a demonstration of the revival of CENTO. India was also concerned over the moves by Washington and Beijing in their alliance of animus against Moscow and New Delhi. In these circumstances, India sent a military mission to Moscow in November 1974 and Moscow promised to send a high-level military delegation led by Defence Minister Grechko consisting of Admiral Sergei Gorshkov, Chief of Soviet Navy and Air Chief, Marshal Kutakhov. It was one of the most powerful Soviet military missions ever to visit any country. It had extensive discussions with Indira Gandhi and other Indian leaders on various aspects of India's security problems as also on the military build up in the Persian Gulf and Pakistan. The Soviet side promised to step up co-operation in defence production and transfer of sophisticated defence technology, especially for MIG production. The communique expressed "grave anxiety" over the action of certain quarters to intensify the arms race in the region. Grechko declared

31. Ibid.

that his talks with Indian leaders on problems of mutual interest, and his talks with the leadership of the defence ministry would help further strengthening of friendship and all-round co-operation between the peoples and armed forces of the two countries. There is no doubt that the visit of the Soviet military delegation had a powerful psychological boost for India where as it had determining effect in other quarters.

Indo-Soviet relations remained consistently steady during the year 1975. The Soviet Defence Minister Marshal Andrei Grechko arrived in India on 24 February in response to an invitation by the Indian Defence Minister. A joint statement issued at the end of his visit expressed "grave anxiety" at the US attempts to step up the arms race in the sub-continent.

The American decision to resume arms supply to Pakistan thus helped to remove the turmoil created by the Soviet action to place embargo on the supply of fissionable materials and specialised equipment to present India's nuclear programme. In 1976 when India was in need of heavy water to recharge the atomic reactor in Rajasthan, the Soviet Union readily agreed to provide New Delhi with 200 tons of heavy water without any formal safeguards agreement in


34. Ibid.
a demonstration of Moscow's readiness to help India's nuclear programme to the astonishment of the United States. Thereafter Indo-Soviet relations continued to develop to the satisfaction of Moscow and New Delhi. In February 1975 a delegation of Soviet scientists led by Vice-President of the USSR Academy of Science, Vinogradov came to India to discuss further scientific and technical co-operation between the two countries and signed a five-year working programme of co-operation in applied science and technology.

Soviet Union and the Emergency

The political and economic situation in India had deteriorated rapidly during 1974 and early 1975. In the meantime, situation had became particularly explosive with large-scale agitations in Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, and Bihar led by Jaya Prakash Narain and supported by most of the opposition parties. Soviet media castigated these forces for fomenting unrest among students and inviting command feuds. Later, when the Allahabad High Court gave judgement against Indira Gandhi in the election case, the Soviets observed that this would only affect the right-wing forces. Soviet media publicised the CPI's support to Indira Gandhi's decision not to resign, but to refer the case to the Supreme Court. However, the opposition kept up the agitation, and the country was amidst chaos.

Internal developments in India during the 1974-76 period were less conducive to the extension of the Indo-Soviet relationship.
In part this stemmed from the changing character of the Prime Minister’s senior advisory group as a number of top aides with overtly pro-Soviet leanings retired from the political scene. The eclipse of these pro-Soviet advisers occurred roughly at the same time as the rise to prominence and influence of Mrs. Gandhi’s son, Sanjay, within the Congress Party hierarchy 35.

On the night 25 June 1975 President Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed declared a state of emergency to avert chaos and lawlessness in the country. On the morning of 26 June 1975, Indira Gandhi explained to the people of India in a Radio broadcast that:

The President has proclaimed an emergency. This is nothing to panic about. I am sure you are conscious of the deep and widespread conspiracy which has been brewing ever since I began to introduce certain progressive measures of benefit to the common man and woman of India. In the name of democracy it has been sought to negate the very functioning of democracy .... How can any government worth the name stand by and allow the country’s stability to be imperiled? 36

The declaration was accompanied by the jailing of several opposition leaders. For the next 18 months, India’s democracy was in a state of suspension as widespread arrests followed by often lengthy detentions continued. Strict press censorship was imposed


on the domestic media as well as on foreign correspondents. Constitutional provisions and amendments were passed by a pliant legislature, which gave further legal basis to the emergency and Mrs. Gandhi's increasing power. With a decision in December 1975 to postpone the sixth general elections, scheduled for March 1976, the "temporary" emergency looked more and more permanent. The proclamation also authorised the Government to suspend court proceedings regarding enforcement of civil rights and to conduct military operations to maintain public order.

The Prime Minister's strengthened internal position as a result of her declaration of a state of emergency in June 1975 was a further factor inhibiting Soviet influence. As a result of his move, Mrs. Gandhi no longer needed assiduously to curry favour with the CPI and other leftist parties in order to obtain the parliamentary support. The lessening of the domestic constraints proved her with wider scope of independent action.

For its part the Soviet leadership lent full weight of its political backing to Mrs. Gandhi during the emergency. This direct personal endorsement marked the continuation of a trend in Soviet policy towards India already noticeable some two years prior to this episode. On the occasion of Brezhnev's visit to New Delhi in November 1973, for example, the Soviet Party Chairman publicly
identified Mrs. Gandhi as a leader of the democratic progressive forces within India.\(^{37}\)

In a despatch from Beijing, the *People's Daily* published a lengthy article on the emergency situation in India entitled "Ferocious Reactionaries Fully Exposed" in which the author, referring to Indira Gandhi observed that "those who bow before her survive and those resist perish". It condemned the Soviets for supporting Mrs. Gandhi. On June 30, Zinhua a News Bulletin of Beijing observed, "New Delhi Government declared a state of emergency in the whole country ... to extricate itself from the plight caused by Indira Gandhi's election malpractices"\(^{38}\). On 2 July it cited anti-Indira articles and editorials from the Thai, Malasian and Singapore papers. *Peking Review*, alleged that "backed by the lads of the Kremlin", Indira Gandhi took recourse to "reactionary measures and criminal acts"\(^{39}\). On 29 July this news agency of the Chinese Government condemned "Indira Gandhi's fascist rule". It had levelled similar charges even earlier.

The Soviet press reacted sharply to the adverse comments in the Western and Chinese media on emergency in India. Soviet Union


\(^{38}\) S.P. Singh, n.15, p.213.

accepted the 'rationale' of the emergency. Soviet Press and leaders sincerely believed that Mrs. Gandhi represented the progressive forces of India and she needed all help in her fight against what they considered right reaction.

Pravda said on 13 July 1975: "Right wing opposition had been trying for some time to create an atmosphere of chaos, anarchy and lawlessness in the country and steps taken by the Government were timely and necessary". Two other political commentators observed that "the intrigues" of the Indian "Right Wingers" had "forced Indira Gandhi's Government to declare a state of emergency" on 25 June 1975. In an interview with the Tass the Congress President D.K. Barooh explaining the background of right-wing offensive against which the emergency was proclaimed and need to boost the economy and improve the living conditions of different sections of the people.

The Soviet Union continued to support Indira Gandhi on the ground that the new measures she had introduced, were required to speed up socio-economic development. In early June 1976, the Indian Prime Minister was warmly received in Moscow on her first foreign


42. Indian Express, 7 July 1975.
visit since the emergency proclamation. At a Kremlin dinner in her honour, Brezhnev told Mrs. Gandhi that her "government's actions against reactionaries at home and abroad find complete understanding in the USSR". Attempts by these forces to launch an offensive against Congress Party have been soundly rebuffed by all the democratic forces of India. In fact, Moscow thought that there was determined effort on the part of the reactionary forces to take over power and mutate the progressive measures Indira Gandhi had introduced. This view was shared by the Communist Party of India, which supported the emergency. During the emergency, Indira Gandhi's energies were wholly directed against the opposition. Yet there were developments in India's external environment that she could not ignore. India-Pakistan relations continued to be under strain. This was reinforced by Pakistan's fears and anxieties on account of India's efforts to establish close relations with the Daud regime in Afghanistan. India on its part was getting increasingly worried by the supply of Mirage fighters by the French to Pakistan.

India and China come closer

Indira Gandhi had made in early 1976 some friendly gestures towards China. These were reciprocated by Beijing with coolness. However, on 15 April 1976, India announced her decision to send

back its Ambassador to Beijing after 14 years. This increased the level of India's diplomatic representation in China. In July 1976 India appointed its Ambassador and in September the Chinese envoy took up his charge in New Delhi. This change of mind in India and China was interpreted as India's persistent opposition to Moscow's proposal on Asian Collective Security System and convinced Beijing that India was not tending to Moscow against China. As far as India was concerned, only an opening up towards Beijing could have allowed it to normalise its relations with Pakistan and Bangladesh.

Apparently Moscow was not unduly perturbed over this process of normalization in Sino-Indian relations, for at the 25th CPSU Congress in February 1976, L.I. Brezhnev appreciated the leadership of Indira Gandhi and India's continuing commitment to 'progressive transformations' in the face of heavy pressure from reactionary circles both at home and abroad. Speaking on the Indo-Soviet Treaty, Brezhnev pointed out that even in such a short time its enormous importance to bi-lateral relations and as a stabilising factor in South Asia had been clearly demonstrated. Brezhnev concluded by saying:

Close political and economic co-operation with the Republic of India is on steady course. Soviet people are sympathetic toward—more than that, they feel solidarity with India's peace-loving foreign policy and the courageous struggle of the country's progressive forces to solve the different social and economic problems confronting it. We wish the
people and government of India complete success in their struggle 44.

Brezhnev, however, chose to remain silent on the process of normalization of relations between New Delhi and Beijing. Though Moscow made no critical observations on India's moves towards China, it could not, however, have been happy over India's unilateral initiatives. However, Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister, Firyubin came to secure assurance that any new ties with China would not affect Indo-Soviet relations 45. During this period the Soviet Union demonstrated its willingness to fulfill India's demand for more Soviet arms and economic assistance. In March 1976 it agreed to supply India with the advanced version of MIG-21 planes and the know-how to manufacture it in India.

Amidst these developments India and China announced their agreement to raise their diplomatic representations in Beijing and New Delhi to ambassadorial level. Simultaneously, New Delhi assured the Soviet Union that the 'normalization' of relations with China would not "affect India's relations with the Soviet Union" 46. For New Delhi the Soviet connection was very important to a barter for questionable "friendly relations" with China, a country which had exploited India's earlier friendship to occupy its territory and

44. Vinod Bhatia, n.12, p.78.
denigrate its non-aligned policy without any regret. The Indians were aware that the Soviet arms had permitted them to become an impressive military power in Asia.

Consequently, Mrs. Gandhi visited Moscow from 8 to 13 June 1976. Speaking at the Kremlin banquet on 8 June, L.I. Brezhnev told her:

Your government's actions against internal and external reaction met with full understanding in the USSR. Reactionaries attempted to launch an offensive which encountered a resolute rebuff from all democratic forces of India. We wish your government, the entire industries and talented people of India new success. In this connection may I repeat again: the Soviet Union was, is and remains a reliable friend of India and the Indian people.

During her stay in the Soviet Union, Mrs. Gandhi held talks with Brezhnev and other Soviet leaders on further strengthening of Indo-Soviet relations. But China dominated their talks. Mrs. Gandhi said that China was among a wide-range of subjects discussed. "When we discuss international situation, we cannot leave out a country like China" and "the Soviet leaders understand our position in regard to normalization of relations with China because there is no question of its coming in the way of friendship with the Soviet Union." Assuring the Soviet leadership that India's


move to "improve" relations with China was essential for peace and understanding in Asia, Mrs. Gandhi stated:

To the Indian people, peace and serenity are the highest state which the human spirit can attain. The acceptance of the right of other countries to live as they choose is the first essential of peace .... Asia most urgently needs an atmosphere of sympathy and co-operation .... Darkness is not dispelled by cursing, but by lighting lamps. Along with international efforts for peace each country must act on its own to reduce areas of suspicion and to enlarge areas of good will. My government has worked consistently to improve relations with all our neighbours. We hope that the international community will support these healthy developments. The Soviet Union genuinely wants peaceful co-operation, mutual understanding and good neighbourliness between the countries of Asia .... Both our countries thus have a common interest in promoting stability and harmony in Asia. This relaxation of tension is important in itself.

The joint declaration issued at the end of the visit stressed the determination of the two countries to strengthen mutual friendship and co-operation. It stated:

... in every way and to do all in their power for the further improvement of the international climate particularly through augmenting their joint contribution to the solution of fundamental international problems in the interests of strengthening peace and security of the peoples of the world.

Indian and the Soviet leaders noted with satisfaction that "Indo-Soviet Treaty of 1971 has a solid political and legal basis in

49. FAR, n.47, pp.182-183.
50. Ibid., p.188.
accordance with the long term interests of the peoples of both countries”.

The Soviet attitude towards the state of emergency in India after initial enthusiasm had become somewhat mixed. Although public support had continued there were other hints of Soviet dissatisfaction. The rise of Sanjay Gandhi, the son of Mrs. Gandhi was not greeted enthusiastically by the Soviets. He was openly contemptuous of the Communist Party and seemed to be indifferent to socialism. Sanjay was a very different character from his mother with whom the Soviets had comfortable relations of mutual understanding. To the CPI and undoubtedly to many in Moscow, Sanjay represented the reactionary right wing of the Congress Party. Mrs. Gandhi’s bitter denunciation of the CPI in late 1976 and various other programmes favouring the private sector and “big business” in India certainly added to the consternation within the CPI and the CPSU.

1977 Election in India.

Having twice postponed elections, Mrs. Gandhi announced in Mid-January 1977, that parliamentary elections would be held two months later. The repercussions of this unexpected announcement dominated India’s next three months. New initiatives were not taken in foreign policy. India only sought to maintain continuity in its external relations, especially in its improving ties with neighbouring countries.
The announcement of General Elections in India was immediately welcomed by the Soviet Union and proclaimed their support to Mrs. Gandhi and the Congress Party. The main issues in the campaign revolved around domestic issues mainly the state of emergency. The Soviet Union recognised that certain failures of Congress policy, such as in the "Down with Poverty", promise tended to "complicate the position of the Congress party and make its election campaign more difficult than in 1971". Nevertheless, the Soviets perceived the opposition, united under the label of Janata, as

a group of zealous champions of the interests of the big land owners, usurers and local and foreign monopolists and enemies of peace-loving anti-imperialist policy of India and co-operation with the socialist states. The real motivation underlying the Soviet Union's unchanging commitment to the Congress party lay not so much in a belief that it was progressive or that its main opponent was particularly reactionary, but rather in the knowledge that the Indian government's policy towards the Soviet Union could radically change with a change of government. The imperatives of Soviet foreign policy

51. Robert C. Horn, n.17, p.142.

52. During the election campaign, certain Janata leaders warned that they would (if they were returned to power) reorientate the Indo-Soviet relations, if necessary by abrogating the Indo-Soviet Friendship Treaty.
continued to prevail over all other considerations including ideological ones.

**Congress Defeat and the Emergence of the Janata Party.**

The Janata Party, which had undergone recurring criticisms by the Soviets almost until the day of elections, had come to form the government after recording grand successes at the polls. The Manifesto of the Janata Party was "committed to genuine non-alignment free from the attachment to any power bloc". It was largely understood from this that close relations with the Soviet Union would not be entertained, if the Janata Party came to power. In the election campaign, the different constituent units of the Janata Party alleged "definite foreign interference" during emergency. The President of the Janata Party, Mr. Morarji Desai had openly criticised the Indo-Soviet Treaty in his election campaign and declared that if his party came to power, the Treaty will automatically go. Atal Behari Vajpayee had also expressed similar views in an election meeting on 4 March. He, elaborating the purpose of emphasising the 'genuine' or 'proper' in non-alignment, stated:

> When we decided to use the adjective "genuine", we had two things in mind. Firstly, the entire non-alignment has to be developed on the basis of fundamental principles which have guided the movement since its inception. Secondly, the basic


philosophy of the movement is that all international issues should be judged on merits. The concept of neutrality has to be a positive one. The policy must be pursued in such a manner that the countries of the world should feel that India is really non-aligned. We not only have to be non-aligned, but we must appear to be non-aligned.

Soviet Russia had supported Indira Gandhi's emergency measures against the so called 'reactionaries' led by Jaya Prakash Narain and condemned the "grand alliance" at the time of election. It was expected that the contempt and anger against Indira Gandhi's emergency regime, must have some fallout on those who stood by her and her 'dark deeds'. Predilections and prejudices of the leaders of the Janata Party were quite well known. The entire gamut of Indo-Soviet relations in the wake of Janata victory was thus, placed in a very delicate situation.

The people gave clear verdict, expressing their strong disapproval of Congress regime. The Janata Party, a five party coalition of the opposition, won a commanding 328 of the 542 parliamentary seats and 43.2 percent of the popular vote. Congress (I) representation in the Lok Sabha declined from 350 to 153 seats; the party's share of the vote dropped from 43.6 to 34.5 per cent. The result of the elections was an acute source of embarrassment to

55. *India Today*, 16-31 January 1979, p.9.

the Soviet Union. Soviet anxiety was not allayed by comments regarding India's quest for 'genuine' non-alignment made by Prime Minister Morarji Desai. After two years of virtually undifferentiated support for Mrs. Gandhi, the Soviet leadership faced the awkward task of coming to terms with the 'forces of reaction'. For a while it appeared that Mrs. Gandhi's defeat marked a setback to Soviet policy in the Indian subcontinent. It is true that the Janata's decisive victory was a surprise to the Soviet Union. However, it adjusted itself to the new realities and decided to accept the verdict of the people of India in its proper spirit.

The departure of Mrs. Gandhi marked the end of an era. Radical changes were expected in domestic and foreign policy spheres. The new Prime Minister, Morarji Desai was reported to be averse to the Indo-Soviet treaty and initially sought to have it abrogated. External Affairs Minister A.B. Vajpayee, a leader of the former Jan Sangh, spared no opportunity in the past to criticise the Indira Gandhi Government's orientation towards the Soviet Union. Eventhough, he welcomed the Indo-Soviet Treaty of 1971, he did that with reservations. In his speech in the Lok Sabha, at that time, he had taken strong exception to the Soviet attitude towards the opposition and protested against what he considered as the Soviet media's 'interference' in India's internal affairs.

Within five weeks of the election results, Soviet Foreign Minister, A.A. Gromyko arrived in New Delhi for talks. Pravda of 10 May 1977 described the Janata's decision to welcome the Soviet Minister "as a practical step affirming continuity of friendly policy of India towards the Soviet Union". The joint Indo-Soviet communique, issued before the Soviet Foreign Minister left on 27 April, reaffirmed the faith in the spirit of the 1971 Treaty and noted with "satisfaction" their "identical or close" position on many important world problems. Speaking at a luncheon held in honour of the visiting delegation, A.B. Vajpayee assured that:

... the bonds of friendship between our two countries are strong enough to survive the demands of divergent systems, the fate of an individual or the fortunes of a political party.

The visit of Gromyko removed the apprehensions of many people that the Janata would have a new look at India's foreign policy especially the country's 'special relationship' with the Soviet Union. The Janata Government surprised and disappointed both those who hoped and feared radical changes in the country's foreign policy. However, there was no denying the fact that the Janata

60. For the full text of the Joint-Communique, See FAR, Vol.23, No.4, April 1977, pp.71-74.
61. Ibid., p.70.
government wanted to remove the impression that India was too much dependent on the Soviet Union. It liked to give a new thrust to India's credibility as a non-aligned country. This status, the Janata felt, India lost after signing the treaty of friendship with the Soviet Union in 1971.

On 14 July 1977, Lok Sabha debated Indo-Soviet relations against the background of the Asian Collective Security Proposal. This time, Prime Minister, Morarji Desai spelt out an equi-distant approach towards the super powers. He expressed himself against the militarisation of the Indian Ocean. He also sought clarification from the Soviet Union about the envisaged security plan. "If the plan meant the formation of another bloc or alliance, India would not be interested in it", the Prime Minister said. On 16 July, Vajpayee talking newsmen, reserved comments on the Asian Security Plan. However, he emphatically said that India was not interested in military alliances.

With all his commitment to "genuine" non-alignment, Morarji Desai made it a point to continue good relations with the Soviet Union. It must also be stated that he attached a special significance to it. Morarji Desai's visit to the Soviet Union even in the winter (October 21-26) of 1977, his second foreign visit as Prime


64. Times of India, 17 July 1977.
Minister indicated the priority the new government gave the Soviet Union in its foreign policy. In his speeches at Moscow, Desai said

... this relationship is not based on personalities or ideologies but on equality, national interest and common purpose. Both our nations have recognised that we have a firm interest in peace in the world and seek to work for international stability and co-operation.

He also assured the Soviet leaders that India's initiatives for improving relations with Beijing would not be at the expense of friendship with the Soviet Union. The Prime Minister claimed that he had established 'a personal understanding with the Soviet leadership' that "will surely reinforce the friendship between our nations". The joint declaration signed at the conclusion of the visit, made mention of the 'common purposes' which the two countries shared. It noted that

the Indo-Soviet friendship has stood the test of time, it is not subjected to transient considerations and serves as an important factor of peace and stability in Asia and in the world.


69. FAR, n.65, p.204.
Desai's visit helped to underscore the continuity of Indo-Soviet relations. But an unmistakable change of emphasis as regards the role or influence of the Indo-Soviet treaty relations should not be lost sight of. This related to the manner in which a reference to the Treaty was made in the joint communique. On similar occasions in the past, the two sides used to speak about strengthening their ties on the basis of the 1971 Treaty. In the joint communique at the end of Morarji's visit, the two parties agreed to carry forward their relations in the spirit of the Indo-Soviet Treaty and not the basis of it only. To justify the change the argument was advanced that the Indo-Soviet friendship was much older than the Treaty and that it was likely to survive the Treaty's 20 year period.

Soviet Premier, Kosygin arrived in New Delhi on 9 March 1979. The talks covered a wide range especially the situation in Vietnam. The joint communique of Kosygin's talks in India called for immediate, unconditional and total withdrawal of Chinese troops from the Vietnamese territory. Reviewing the situation in South East Asia following the Chinese aggression on Vietnam, Desai and Kosygin "considered it necessary to exert further efforts in the interest of strengthening peace in Asia, developing co-operation among all Asian

countries on principles of sovereign equality and independence, non-use of force, inviolability of frontiers and territorial integrity of states.\textsuperscript{71}

The visit of the Soviet Premier was a success in the sense that it paved the way for a much clearer mutual understanding of Soviet and Indian position on international issues. The two sides found much in common and India was offered a good package of assistance. Morarji Desai again visited Moscow in June 1979, to discuss the strengthening of bi-lateral relations with the Soviet leader. The two leaders expressed concern over the happenings in Afghanistan and Cambodia. The joint statement at the end of the talks found both leaders agreed on the question of opposing 'any interference by outside forces in the internal affairs of Afghanistan'.\textsuperscript{72} That was the last of the Indo-Soviet summits during the Janatha period.

When an analysis of the Indo-Soviet relations during the Janatha phase is made, it becomes clear that the relations between the two countries were based not on emotional groundings, but on reasons of national interest. The Janatha administration observed the principle of continuity in external policy where it was

\textsuperscript{71} Sumith Chakravarthy, "Indo-Soviet Summits, Vinod Bhatia" (ed.), n.69, p.32.

\textsuperscript{72} Ibid.
desirable, and, was founded upon national consensus. Where the national opinion was in favour of change, or a change in emphasis, the Janatha Government did not hesitate to bring that about.\(^{73}\)

Whatever the opinions expressed by the Janata leaders before coming to power towards the Soviet Union, they had realised the fact that the Soviet Union is an important factor in India's external policy. The Indo-Soviet relations have always had a popular character and that they are based on a general consensus of the people, also came to be fully recognised by the Janata leaders.\(^{74}\)

The Return of Mrs. Gandhi.

The Janata Government's fall in 1979 was followed by a period of uncertainty. Lok Dal leader, Charan Singh who led a caretaker Government before Mrs. Gandhi's return to power in January 1980, took no significant foreign policy initiatives. However, he remained critical of the Soviet action in Afghanistan in December 1979, and demanded that Soviet soldiers should withdraw from Afghan territory as their continued presence would have extensive negative consequences for the entire region.

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73. A.B. Vajpayee, "India's Foreign Policy Today", in Bimal Prasad (ed.), *India's Foreign Policy: Continuity and Change* (New Delhi, 1979), p.3.

In January 1980, however, Mrs. Gandhi returned to power following the victory of the Congress Party in general elections. She got two-thirds of the seats in the Lok Sabha and 42.6 percent of votes. Mrs. Gandhi's frequently split party was now re-established in almost as strong a position as in 1971. With Mrs. Gandhi as Prime Minister once again, the situation in India and in Indo-Soviet relations seemed ready to return normal. As Mrs. Gandhi re-established herself in a strong position, the Soviets declared that the results of the elections had shown that the Indian National Congress "is still in the eyes of the masses of Indian voters the same party that Gandhi and Nehru led". Moscow had earlier welcomed her election promise to recognise the Heng Samrin regime in Cambodia and had praised her personal contribution to the expansion and deepening of Indo-Soviet relations.

However, Indira Gandhi was soon faced with a new problem—the Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan in December 1979. Moscow's growing concern on the spell of political instability in India came to an end with the installation of a strong government at the centre. But it was precisely by this time that the conditions prevailing in Afghanistan assumed alarming proportions. Both India and the Soviet Union felt, impelled by the circumstances to deal with the events taking place in their immediate neighbourhood at a very critical time.

75. For Election data, See Norman D. Palmer, The Indian Political System (Boston, 1971), p.10.
Even before the elections, however, the context within which any party would be operating was drastically altered by Moscow's invasion of Afghanistan in late December. New Delhi was faced with a dilemma. On the one hand, the Soviet Union was India's most important ally and the relationship had seemed likely to get closer with a more sympathetic Prime Minister in power. To the extent that Moscow's action had crushed the possibility of a fanatic Islamic state in Afghanistan's internal situation, India could be well pleased.

The Indo-Soviet treaty was subjected to severe criticism from both the Western sources and the right wing forces in India. The Treaty was regarded by some rightist leaders as a surrender of Indian independence to the Soviet socialist system. But when the Janata Government under Morarji Desai came to power at the centre, the Indo-Soviet relations went on uninterruptedly. The Janata leaders who wanted to abrogate the Treaty scrupulously followed its provisions to make better the relations of the two countries. This shows the legitimacy and prudence with which the previous government signed the Treaty in the teeth of opposition from several quarters. This further proved that the Indo-Soviet relations were founded on strong national sentiments entertained by leaders of experience and mutual understanding.