CHAPTER - VIII

CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions emerged out of this study as outlined in the preceding chapters are summarised in this chapter. The period covered by the study was really a glorious decade of bi-lateral relations for India and Soviet Union as visualized in the Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Co-operation of 9 August 1971. The relations between the two countries since the signing of the Treaty appear to have improved significantly for the benefit of both countries. The friendship between the two countries stood the test of time and contributed to the fulfilment of major foreign policy interests of the two countries. The relationship between them followed the principles of reciprocity and fraternal help at all levels. After the signing of the Treaty the two countries announced their agreements on major national and international issues. The Treaty provided India with added strength to face threats from China and Pakistan who were trying to destabilize India. In fact the Treaty ended the isolation of India and protected her territorial integrity and independence against the potential threat from Sino-Pak-US alliance.

The Indo-Soviet Treaty was the culmination of India's diplomatic move in her international relations. The Chinese clearly
understood the implications of the treaty provisions. After the Treaty China was anxious to get an assurance from the Soviet Union and India that the Treaty was not directed against that country. The United States also reluctantly admitted the view that the Treaty would have an "effect for the good" and prevent war between India and Pakistan. In the diplomatic and security spheres both India and Soviet Union have gained substantial advantages and both held strong and integrated opinion on many international issues. The interest of both the countries, particularly, in economic, scientific and technical fields assumed a new dimension to include far more developmental fields. This approach showed political maturity and diplomatic flexibility of the leaders of the two countries though both have pursued different political ideologies and are passing through varying degrees of economic development. What they commonly shared was a sense of co-operation, mutual good-will and trust. The Treaty produced lasting impact on both the countries due to the proper understanding between the two peoples and extended co-operation on mutuality of interests.

Free India after a century and a half of imperialist domination and exploitation had to follow an independent path internally and externally, in order to reconstruct her shattered economy. At the same time she hated to bow before any more master for political help or economic gains. Soviet Union, on the other hand, wanted to strengthen her relations with the developing countries,
particularly India, to use them in her fight against imperialism, colonialism and neo-colonialism. The General-Secretaries of the CPSU, from Khruschev to Gorbachev upheld and endorsed the role played by the non-aligned movement which represented the ideas and aspirations of the newly emerged states in Asia, Africa and Latin America. When India assumed the Chairmanship of NAM(1983) Andropov said:

The importance of the group of states which created the Non-Aligned Movement is growing in international life. With many of them the Soviet Union has all-round friendly relations which benefit both sides and make greater stability in the world. One example of this is the Soviet Union’s relations with India. Solidarity with the states which have gained freedom from colonial oppression, with the peoples who are upholding their independence has been and remains one of the fundamental principles of Soviet Foreign Policy.

The interests of both the Soviet Union and India converged at several points, more particularly, in their approach to socialism as a means to render justice to the common people. Moreover, the enhanced friendliness in the relationship between the two countries was basically a product of perceptions held by each side to promote its own national interests. Whoever governs India has to be friendly with Soviet Union because the national interest of India is best served by the close friendship with the Soviet Union. Thus, Indo-Soviet relations are not based on mere sentiments but are deep rooted in the peculiar historical circumstances, economic, strategic and diplomatic compulsions of the two countries.
The whole gamut of Indo-Soviet relations can be analysed from the transformation of Moscow's initial indifference to friendliness for India's response to the Soviet approach to bi-lateral and international issues. It was the desire for the fulfilment of national aspirations of the peoples of both nations that changed the nature of their relationship. The relations started off well since 1955. After consolidating the gains of the revolution the Soviet Union turned her attention to the developing countries. Her interest in the affairs of the developing countries, particularly in South Asia is well-known. Soviet Union's concern for South Asia is mainly due to her realization of the importance of the Indian sub-continent as a region destined to play an important role in Asia and the world. The Western powers, especially United States, viewed the region only as an area for balance of power game under the cold war situations. The Soviet Union and the United States, therefore, approached the sub-continent with their own perceptions of international situations. Soviet Union viewed the people in the sub-continent ethnically, historically and culturally as one and the disagreement or conflict between them were attributed to the legacy of the colonial past. Contrary to the Western viewpoint was that Indo-Pakistan conflict was the result of religious differences.

India faced unprecedented challenges and crises during the year 1971 due to the strained relations with Pakistan and the huge influx of refugees from the East Pakistan. The cry of India for help from the international community to meet these challenges left unheard in a world divided mainly on ideological lines. But Soviet
Union was much concerned about the events in the sub-continent as the two warring nations were geographically near to the Soviet Union. She wanted to avoid an armed conflict between India and Pakistan which would weaken both the belligerents and cause the emergence of reactionary forces in the sub-continent. However, China who had border problem with India reacted strongly against India. China accused India of interfering in the internal affairs of Pakistan. The anti-Indian stand of the Chinese led them to take a double standard on the Kashmir issue and the developments in East Pakistan. China advocated the right of self-determination of the Kashmir people, while kept indifferent to the cause of the East Pakistanis. Again with the election Richard Nixon as US President and the 'tilt' in US policies in favour of Pakistan against India confirmed the fears regarding the emergence of a Sino-US axis. The axis strengthened the Pak position and Pakistan armies were massed along Indian borders to prevent a political settlement of the East Pakistan problem except by war.

Bhutto's determination to have an Islamic bomb for Pakistan seemed to have become true. The report that Pakistan is going to hold a secret explosion of nuclear device in a remote region of China was a matter of deep concern for the Indian Government. A nuclear Pakistan could disturb the military balance in South Asia. It would start an arms race in the Indian sub-continent and also the gulf area. In such a scenario the only rational choice for India
was to strengthen her relations with the Soviet Union by the Indo-Soviet Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Co-operation and build a joint peace strategy for defence against the Sino-Pak-US collusion in the South Asian sub-continent. Against Sino-Pak-US combine the Soviet Union stood with India on all crucial issues in accordance with the provisions of the treaty.

Ever since India became independent Pakistan has been at pains to exploit the Kashmir issue which posed a great threat to India's security interests to the detriment of India's national interests. The situation in the sub-continent continued to be tense. Troops were stationed in the Indo-Pak border and war cries were often heard. The attempts at solving the crisis through negotiation proved futile. There emerged imminent danger of an open war. Pakistan wanted to solve its dispute over Kashmir with India by acquiring foreign military and diplomatic support. In a world divided into antagonistic power blocs, a non-aligned India found herself in a difficult situation. India was forced to look for a steady friend in the United Nations. No one except the Soviet Union came to India's help. Later, whenever the Kashmir issue was sought to be raised, the Soviet Union foiled the attempt in the Security Council and in other international forums. Even now Kashmir continues to be a bone of contention between India and Pakistan. If experience is any guide, the Soviet Union can be relied upon in the future also in regard to the Kashmir issue.
In 1971 Pakistan attempted to project the Bangladesh crisis as a handiwork of India. The mass upsurge and exodus of millions of refugees to India from the erstwhile East Pakistan was the result of freedom of movement and it had all the features of a national liberation movement. The Soviet Union wanted immediate cessation of hostilities. The Soviet stand on the cessation of Indo-Pak hostilities was categoric and realistic to end bloodshed for ever. That is why she opposed the proposals for ceasefire. She wanted to save the sub-continent from bloodshed and violence through a negotiated and political settlement of the dispute. Soviet Union stood for peaceful solution of all disputes through bi-lateral negotiations, without outside interference. The approach of Soviet Union to Indo-Pak conflict amply demonstrated the genuine interest of the Soviet people to stand with India. Therefore, issues which had vital importance to Indian security considerations were pre-eminently valued in the Soviet Union. India thus occupied a pivotal position in the security system to checkmate the Sino-US-Pack combines regional and global influence.

Looking from the Soviet angle, during 1970's there developed a potential for establishing close relationship between India and Soviet Union. After a short period of co-operation Soviet-Pak relations were on the verge of braking. Sino-Soviet tension had escalated and Sino-Pak relations were growing closer. Even when Soviet Union had close relationship with Pakistan, she had no hesitation to establish good relations with India. Soviet
conflict with China, indeed enhanced India's importance to the Soviet Union. Though initially Soviet Union wanted a balance between India and Pakistan, she was prepared to re-assess her India policy. Leonid Brezhnev launched a major anti-Chinese drive in Asia by his scheme for Asian Collective Security by which he wanted to establish Soviet hegemony in South Asia. But India did not accept this scheme properly. India kept her non-aligned posture undisturbed. For the Soviet Union, the relationship with India offered a means of counter-balancing Chinese and American influence in the region as well as securing a diplomatically influential position within the Non-aligned Movement. Indians, likewise, appreciated the value of Soviet support precisely because she was convinced that Soviet help would realize India's own national goals. Soviet Union, therefore, wanted to establish and maintain Indo-Soviet ties on an enduring basis.

The most important factor that shaped the Indo-Soviet relations was that both the countries understood properly each other's policies. Both countries appreciated each other's stand on many international issues such as colonialism, imperialism, racism, peace and disarmament. Soviet Union appreciated the Indian position to recognise China and India strongly recommended the China case in the United Nations. On the Korean case and conflict in Indo-China, Soviet Union and India kept identical views. On several other international matters also Indo-Soviet understanding was clear. For example, both the countries held identical opinion

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on the world-wide extension of detente, use of atom for peace and nuclear disarmament. Soviet Union supported the stand of India to declare the Indian Ocean as a zone of peace.

In the light of the experience during the last decade of Indo-Soviet relations it appears that both sides benefitted considerably from their mutual co-operation. In the security and diplomatic spheres both sides gained. On the diplomatic level Soviet Union remained as a counter-weight to China's growing power in the region for Soviet Union. Indo-Soviet relations provided an opportunity to reduce tension on the Sino-Soviet border. On the other hand, during the Bangladesh crisis the Soviet support and assistance increased the prospects of India for success against Sino-Pak-US axis. This, to a great extent, increased the prestige of India in the international field.

In the Afghan crisis, Soviet Union derived substantial advantage from Indian support. One consequence of the Afghan crisis and the presence of Soviet forces up to the Durand Line, however, has been to call the continuing validity of the "Kautilyan logic" underlying this relationship in to question. During the period following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the Indira Gandhi Government through its diplomatic posture at the UN and other international forums increasingly conveyed the impression abroad of being close to the Soviet Union, yet without having any significant influence on Soviet policy. It is now clear that Indo-Soviet
differences over Afghanistan, on their own will not lead to a weakening of the bi-lateral relationship. Despite the subdued official response to the tenth anniversary of the Indo-Soviet Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Co-operation in August 1981, one need not have to be reminded that Mrs. Gandhi was the prime mover behind that policy and has successfully managed it to India's advantage. Soviet Union wanted to reduce Pak support to the Afghan rebels. At times, Soviet-Indian pressure on Pakistan nullified U.S. designs in Afghanistan. This was a diplomatic victory for Afghanistan acquired from India's pro-Soviet position.

More than any other factor, the economic factor brought India closer to the Soviet Union. For a country just liberated from the strangle-hold of colonialism and imperialism, foreign aid and trade are the principal means of fighting economic backwardness and poverty. The United States preferred a free market economy dominated by the private sector when India was making efforts to promote the public sector. The Soviet Union never put any pre-conditions, political or otherwise for assisting India. They were more sensitive to the trading patterns and requirements of India. They agreed to the rupee payment under which India paid for all imports from the Soviet Union through her exports on a long-term basis. The Soviet Union has always provided aid without strings while the United States has used aid as an instrument to protect her interest in the dependent countries. In short, the
credit terms of the Soviet Union have been, in most cases, advantageous to India. This does not mean that the Soviet Union never tried to rely on aid and trade to acquire political influence. However, their style and form are basically different from those of the USA. It must be remembered that the Bilal or Bokaro would not have been possible without the Soviet assistance. The most tangible bond that developed between India and the Soviet Union was economic.

The Indo-Soviet economic and technical co-operation since the signing of the Treaty has been one of the major factors which contributed to the strengthening of Indian economy. As Soviet assistance has given priority to the public sector large scale industrial developments with Soviet assistance played a decisive role in advancing and strengthening the public sector industries and enhanced India's general economic potential. Another important factor promoting the successful development of Indo-Soviet relations is the mutuality of interests. The Soviet Union purchased Indian goods which were difficult to sell in the capitalist countries markets because of free competition and the protectionist measures imposed by the developed market economies there. In the economic sphere, therefore, both countries had benefited from the aggregate flow of goods, services and aid and also from economic and technical co-operation. It was the accepted principle that parties involved in the agreement would benefit by participating fully in
the international division of labour and specializing in the production of goods and services where they hold a comparative advantage.

As time passed on Indo-Soviet relations had been expanded and strengthened in the light of new experiences. So far, Indian experience showed the need of further strengthening the Indo-Soviet ties as they were based on mutual benefit and co-operation. It has become a model of constructive co-operation for mutual advantages. The Soviet Union rendered unflinching support to India on ideological and political grounds for her economic development. It has become a classical example of how bi-lateral relations could be strengthened in a multi-dimensional world system. An underdeveloped country like India achieved rapid progress economically and technically within a short span of three decades largely with the assistance of Soviet Union. Soviet Union has become one of the biggest trading partners of India which illustrates the dynamism of Indo-Soviet relations.

Since the signing of the Treaty, the Indo-Soviet relations has reached its new heights. Soviet Union not only supported India economically to develop her basic industries but also strongly stood with her on every critical situations. The Treaty issued warning to the neighbouring countries - Pakistan and China - of India and their allies elsewhere. The development in Afghanistan provided the Soviet Union an opportunity for taking maximum advantage.
The pro-Soviet government in Afghanistan was continuously disturbed by Pakistan's support to the rebels. Soviet Union hoped to exercise pressure on Pakistan from two fronts with Indo-Soviet alignment. Anyhow Soviet Union succeeded in minimising the Pak threat to Afghanistan. India's help to the Soviet stand in the world context was invaluable because Soviet Union had gained much from India's support in the Non-aligned Movement, the UN and such other world bodies. India conveniently kept away from Western and Third world criticisms of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. India abstained from voting in the Afghan issue. India in this context, at least, adopted a quiet diplomacy in this regard because herein involved the Soviet interest to which India kept a soft corner, though India clearly stated in public its opposition to Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. However, India never wanted to come into conflict with the Soviet Union.

There was a strong Western criticism that the signing of the Indo-Soviet bi-lateral Treaty undermined the basic principles of non-alignment on which the foreign policy of India was founded. India's policy of non-alignment is not designed to put up one super-power against the other or to achieve equidistance between the two. The policy was meant to judge each international issue on its merit. As far as India was concerned its international relations, especially its ties with the super-powers, were not based on cold war calculations, but emerged as a product of convergence...
of national interests and principles of peaceful co-existence of
nations in a multi-dimensional world order. According to Mrs.
Gandhi it was wrong to interpret non-alignment as equidistance from
the super-powers. It may be pointed out that the policy of
non-alignment was evolved to serve India's national interest.

In fact, the signing of a bi-lateral treaty with Soviet Union
can never be regarded as a negation of non-aligned principles and
a reversal of our policy of non-alignment. We should take into
account the time and circumstances under which the policy of
non-alignment took shape. The world was getting divided into two
military power blocs, each headed by a super power. There
emerged a dangerous possibility of an imminent war which seemed
to be total that would consume the whole world or cause large-scale
devastation. Had India been a partner of either the Soviet or
American side the tension would have been further aggravated.
The non-alignment which encompassed a large body of third world
countries provided a cushioning effect on the conflicting bi-polar
international systems. The non-alignment group emerged to judge
each issue in the International field on its merit. There were
several occasions on which the decision of the super power found
incorrect and where the views of the non-aligned movement proved
valid and acceptable to all nations. The non-aligned movement
therefore, played a vital role in the crisis-ridden international
relations to ease tension and help to remove hatred and suspicion.
Bi-lateral relations of India with one super power can be justified on the ground of protection of national interests to which all the sovereign nations are justly entitled to. India did nothing uncommon but followed the strict principles of balancing of forces in international relations for mutual advantage. No international morality or international law forbids a nation to adopt the course of action conducive to protect its national interest and each nation is the best judge to decide what constitute its national interests.

In the ultimate analysis the Indo-Soviet Treaty of 1971 unmistakably served the purposes of its authors. In the cold war conditions the manœuvrability of the super powers - the USA and the Soviet Union - passed through ups and downs depending on the strength and weakness of the allies on each side. While the USA disregarding her ideological differences supported communist China with whom Soviet Union had long standing differences and border disputes the Soviet preference was to establish strong relations with India. She wanted to eliminate US influence in the sub-continent. India, on the other hand, faced with the grim realities of domestic and foreign problems, opted for a non aligned path that was conceived in practical statesmanship. The Treaty enhanced the prestige of India in the world particularly in the socialist camp. The strength and reputation of India, the largest democracy in the world, put constraints on the USA not to write off the Indian interests and priorities while the American foreign relations were formulated.
Thus US assistance to India was mainly in the agriculture and private sector. The Soviet Union, on the other hand, promoted India's policy of a mixed economy that received due attention from the socialist and capitalist camps. India realized that the Indo-Soviet relationship would be meaningful, enduring and beneficial if it were built on a strong economic base. At any rate, Soviet assistance to India was to serve the best interests of the Indian economy with no strings attached. The Indian administrators, by and large, expressed prudence in projecting India's genuine needs before the international community and succeeded in securing whatever assistance India needed without loss of her non-aligned position in international relations.

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