CHAPTER III

IMPLICATIONS OF THE INDO-SOVIET TREATY OF PEACE, FRIENDSHIP AND CO-OPERATION

THE INDO-SOVIET TREATY OF PEACE, FRIENDSHIP AND CO-OPERATION, was mainly a confluence of events as well as a coincidence of perceptions between the two countries which has brought them close together. After drafting the Treaty, the two countries decided to announce their agreement publicly. The purpose of doing this was to remove India's fears and difficulties arising out of the increasing conflictual relations between India and Pakistan on Kashmir issue and more specifically on the Bangladesh crisis. From India's point of view, dangers were in mounting heights and she was forced to take necessary precautionary measures to counter any threat to her territorial integrity and independence from external forces. The Indian Government claimed that the Treaty ended the isolation of India, safeguarded its independence and territorial integrity, and was a deterrent to aggression from any quarter1. In a statement in the Lok Sabha

the External Affairs Minister Swaran Singh stated that:

We shall not allow any other country or combination of countries to dominate us or to interfere in our internal affairs. We shall, to our maximum ability, help other countries to maintain their freedom from outside domination, and their sovereignty. We have no desire to interfere in the internal affairs of other countries, but this does not mean that we shall look on as silent spectators if third countries come and interfere in the internal affairs of other countries, particularly our neighbours, as our own national interest could be adversely affected.

There was every possibility of a war between India and Pakistan. President Yahya Khan was reported to have said that "if India made any attempt to seize any part of East Pakistan, he would declare war and Pakistan would not be alone". With the help of the United States, Pakistan seemed to be making progress in obtaining United Nations involvement in East Pakistan, which was regarded by India as an unnecessary interference in the internal affairs of India. The Treaty served a warning to Pakistan with whom India had been on confrontational relationship ever since its inception. In an editorial Pravda asserted that the Treaty had effectively "restrained" Pakistan and her allies from embarking on a course of "military adventurism" in the sub-continent and would continue to act as a "deterrent" against the "hegemonic goals" of


3. Ibid.
Communist China and the "open interference by the United States in Asia".  

In this respect it may be concluded that the Treaty issued a clear warning to Communist China. China gave her full support to Pakistan against India so that India would not interfere in the domestic affairs of Pakistan. During his July meeting with Henry Kissinger, Prime Minister Chou-En-lai informed US Secretary of State that in the event of an Indo-Pakistan war over East Bengal, Peking would militarily intervene on behalf of Islamabad. There was every likelihood of Chinese military intervention on behalf of the Islamabad in case of an Indo-Pakistan war. India wanted the Chinese intervention to be averted.

The rapprochement between China and the United States and President Nixon’s relaxation of trade and travel restrictions to China marked a turning point in the Sino-US relationship. In the light of improved Sino-US relations China kept unreceptive to Indian overtures. Thus the Treaty can be considered as a warning to USA not to interfere in the affairs of the sub-continent.


With the election of Richard Nixon as the President of USA in 1968, India's fears regarding the 'tilt' in US policy in favour of Pakistan and against India, gathered momentum. During 1969 and 1970, this 'tilt' was not open. But by 1971, the tilt was all too evident during the Bangladesh crisis. While stepping up arms supplies to Pakistan, Nixon blamed India for the tensions in the sub-continent. In the meantime, his National Security Adviser, Dr. Henry Kissinger, had made a secret visit to Peking in July 1971 through the assistance of Yahya Khan in the hope of using China against USSR. He later arranged for Nixon's visit to China in 1972. According to Kissinger Chou-En-lai told him that China would not remain indifferent if India attacked Pakistan.

The Indo-Soviet Treaty had produced considerable impact on the Chinese leaders. The Chinese understood very well the meaning of the Indo-Soviet Treaty and other references to "appropriate effective measures" to be taken in the event of an aggression against one of the contracting parties. Prime Minister Chou-En-lai's statement that he was "satisfied" with the assurances given by the Soviet and Indian leaders that the Treaty was not directed against his country underlined the Chinese fear of a Soviet retaliation in the event of a military threat against India. The US Secretary of

State, William Rogers, reluctantly expressed the view that the Treaty would have an "effect for the good" and prevent a war between India and Pakistan. But it was reported that President Nixon was bitter over the Indo-Soviet Treaty. In fact, the Treaty not only challenged President Nixon's dream of maintaining status quo in the Asian continent, but even increased Soviet influence in the Indian sub-continent. Consequently, the US had to reckon with the growing Soviet influence in the Indian sub-continent with all its implications.

The American policy towards India compelled her to move closer to the Soviet Union. American President Nixon's 'tilt' towards Pakistan was mainly to move towards China. To accomplish this, Yahya Khan had made some personal contributions. This was in accordance with an agreement reached between the Presidents of Pakistan and America in October 1970. In April and May 1971, secret exchanges had taken place through Agha Hilay, Yahya's emissary in United States and US leadership. Kissinger's visit to Peking (9-11 July) took place directly with the collaboration of American and Pakistan interests. It is true that Kissinger's visit to Peking was primarily motivated by common desire on the part of the USA and China to normalize their relations in the wake of serious Sino-Soviet dissensions. However, the time of his visit, the place of his departure for Peking, i.e., Islamabad and the discussions held between Kissinger and the Chinese Premier in the
context of Indo-Pak situation, increased India's apprehensions. Pakistan was very much in the mind of the Chinese Premier during his discussions with Henry Kissinger.

During his brief visit to New Delhi in July, Henry Kissinger gave the warning that in the event of Chinese action across the northern border, India could not expect US help. India saw Pakistan successfully co-ordinating its policies with Peking and Washington. India practically stood isolated in the Third World. Kissinger's visit to Peking proved a morale booster for Pakistan. But its impact on India was demoralising because she felt diplomatically humbled and militarily isolated, when the fighting forces of India and Pakistan were poised on the borders. In keeping with the spirit of the discussions held in Peking between Kissinger and Chou-En-lai, Washington took serious steps in July-August which augmented India's fears and added Pakistan's intransigence.

The Treaty was not only in India's own interest but in the interests of the sub-continent. These two countries had not been

9. Kuldip Nayar, Distant Neighbours: A Tale of the Sub-continent (New Delhi, 1972), p.163. According to Harcold C. Hinton, "Kissinger told the Indian Government that his Chinese hosts had expressed to him an intent to intervene in the event of an Indo-Pakistani conflict, such as then looked clearly on the horizon". This message was reportedly conveyed to New Delhi by Secretary Kissinger after his first visit to Peking. "The Soviet Campaign for Collective Security in Asia", Pacific Community (Tokyo) Vol.7, No.2 (January 1976).
moved by concern for the protection of India's security and acted "in flagrant disregard of all humanitarian principles"\(^{10}\), in giving arms to Pakistan for the suppression of the East Bengalis who "had been treated as hewers of wood and drawers of water". Under these circumstances Soviet Union was morally bound to lend support to India's case against Pakistan. The Times of India editorially remarked:

> The treaty will be judged, especially in view of the circumstances in which it has been signed, primarily by one yardstick. Whatever their reservations the peoples of India will welcome it if it permits New Delhi to extend all out support to the Mukti Bahini undeterred by fear of aggression by Pakistan with or without China's connivance, encouragement and support \(^{11}\).

In the cold war perspective, Soviet Union sided with the developing countries because these countries remained for several centuries under colonialism and imperialism. Later when these nations became independent they adopted generally a socialistic pattern of economic development. Still there were several peoples remaining under colonial rule. For example, Namibia under South Africa. There developed identity of interests between Soviet Union and the newly independent nations. In this context, the Soviet Union described the treaty with India as a "logical conclusion"

\(^{10}\) Link (New Delhi), 22 August 1971, editorial.

\(^{11}\) Times of India (New Delhi), 10 August 1971, editorial.
of the developments of friendly relations between the two countries.

In a joint statement issued in New Delhi, on 11 August 1971 the Foreign Ministers of both countries stated:

The Treaty is a logical outcome of the relations of sincere friendship, respect, mutual trust and the varied ties which have been established between the Soviet Union and India in the course of many years and have stood the test of time. It corresponds to the basic interests of the Indian and Soviet peoples and opens up wide prospects for raising the fruitful co-operation between the USSR and India to a higher level. Alongside other provisions concerning bilateral Soviet-Indian relations, the Treaty provides for the two sides maintaining regular contacts with each other on major international problems and holding mutual consultations with a view to taking appropriate effective measures to safeguard the peace and security of their countries.

The treaty with India is by no means the first treaty of the Soviet Union in the Asian continent. Soviet Union had already entered into treaties with its neighbouring Asian countries like Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan, Mangolia and China. In order to achieve collective and regional security Soviet diplomacy was used to sign non-aggression and neutrality treaties with its neighbours.

Since the end of World War II, the Soviet Union had signed treaties or agreements with more than 50 Third World Countries. Of these the most significant treaties are those which are titled as

"Friendship and Co-operation Treaties". For example, Treaty of Friendship and Co-operation between the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the Republic of Iraq (10 April, 1972) and the Treaty of Friendship, Good Neighbourliness and Co-operation between the USSR and Afghanistan (5 December, 1978). Soviet Union has signed a total of 13 such treaties till 1980. The first treaty was with China, signed on 14 February 1950 and the last one concluded was with Syria on 8 October 1980. In the sixties it signed only one such treaty with North Korea on 6 July 1961. But it was during the seventies that most of these treaties, were signed. Besides, the Treaty with Persia (Iran), though signed in 1921 is still formally valid.

Between 1971 and 1980 Soviet Union signed Treaties with eleven Third World countries. There were certain common features in all these Treaties. The signatories tried to identify the common and convergent interests of Soviet Union and her Treaty partners. For example, the Preamble of each Treaty emphasized a general identity of common outlook among the signatories on important global issues such as decolonisation, freedom and independence, racism, disarmament, international co-operation for solving international problems and so on. Moreover, the signatories expressed an abiding faith in the principles of peaceful co-existence and co-operation among all the states.

13. Zafar Imam, Towards a Model Relationship: A Study of Soviet treaties with India and other third world countries (New Delhi, 1983, p.79.)
The signatories uphold the famous five principles of peaceful co-existence as the basis of their bi-lateral relations. All parties in the treaties commit themselves against colonialism and racism. But with the exception of North Korea all the signatories supported the "just struggle of the peoples for freedom, independence and social progress". The treaties commit the Soviet Union to support and encourage non-alignment as "an important factor for peace", while its Treaty partners express their conviction in the "peace loving policy of the USSR aimed at strengthening of friendship and co-operation with all nations". However, it should be noted that the treaties with the UAR, Iraq and North Korea do not make any reference to non-alignment. But invariably all the treaties commit the Soviet Union and its Treaty partners to uphold the principles and purposes of the United Nations. With regard to the regional security the treaties commit the Soviet Union to uphold and support the interests of its Treaty partners in their respective regions. Yet Soviet Union was very particular to avoid direct involvement in local disputes and clashes which are completely divorced from global issues of Soviet interest.

Marked by the coincidence of vital national interests of the two countries, Indo-Soviet Treaty contained certain specific aims

14. Ibid.
and objectives in regard to the struggle against imperialism and colonialism and the striving for peace, disarmament and international security. The Indian approach to inter-state relations has likewise been opposed to the creation of rival military power blocs. As such the Indo-Soviet Treaty is not directed against any other states and sets before itself the object of attaining security through friendship and co-operation, an idea which Jawaharlal Nehru advanced as far back as December 1958. In his reply to debate on foreign affairs in the Lok Sabha, Nehru said: Security can be obtained in many ways. The normal idea is that security is protected by armies. That is only partly true; it is equally true that security is protected by policies. A deliberate policy of friendship with other countries goes further in gaining security than almost anything else. Soviet Union rightly underscored the significance of the Indo-Soviet relations as the bedrock of the Treaty. In a speech at the signing ceremony in New Delhi, Gromyko said:

> These are momentous events in relations between states which come as fruits of dozens of years prepared by the previous development of these relations .... It (the Treaty) crowns the principles and consistent policy of our two countries aimed at co-operation and friendship.\(^{15}\)

> In the Indian Parliament, Foreign Minister described the Treaty as "in essence a Treaty of peace against war". The Joint Indo-Soviet Statement on Gromyko's visit stressed that the treaty

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was "a real act of peace expressing the community of policy and aspirations of the USSR and India in the struggle to strengthen peace in Asia and throughout the world and for safeguarding international security. All provisions of the Treaty serve those purposes". It categorically denied that the Treaty was directed "against anyone" and asserted that "it is meant to be a factor in developing friendship and good neighbourliness, in keeping with the principles of the UN Charter". The Indo-Soviet Joint Statement expressed the firm conviction of both sides that there could be "no military solution" for the dispute between India and Pakistan and considered it necessary that urgent steps to be taken in East Pakistan for the achievement of a political solution and for the creation of conditions of safety for the return of the refugees to their homes which alone would answer the interests of the entire people of Pakistan and the cause of the preservation of peace in the area.

According to Mrs. Gandhi the Indo-Soviet Treaty "gives formal expression to the firm friendship and growing co-operation between the two nations" and "enshrines our positive attitudes and

17. Ibid.
policies to promote peace". She pointed out that the Treaty was signed at a time when our nation faced a major challenge. With that challenge successfully overcome, we are in a position to devote our energies to the task of national construction.

The co-operation between India and the Soviet Union rests on common allegiance to peace and peaceful co-existence, similarity of outlook in regard to colonialism, neo-colonialism and racialism and the conviction that working together we can derive mutual benefit and also powerfully contribute to enlarge the climate of peace and friendship in the world.¹⁹

Provisions of the Treaty

The Indo-Soviet Treaty put a stamp of legality on the rapidly developing friendship and co-operation between the two countries over the years and elevated their mutual relations to a new and higher stage of development. The Treaty contains about 1,300 words in 12 Articles. It is stated in the Preamble that both the countries are desirous of expanding and consolidating the existing relations of sincere friendship between them. They believe that further development of friendship and co-operation meets the basic national interests of both the states, as well as the interests of lasting peace in Asia and the world. They are determined

¹⁹. The Hindustan Times (New Delhi), 5 August 1972.
to promote the consolidation of universal peace and security and to make constant efforts for the relaxation of international tensions and the final elimination of remnants of colonialism. They uphold their firm faith in the principles of peaceful co-existence and co-operation between the states with different political and social systems. They are convinced that in the world of today, international problems can only be solved by co-operation and not by conflict. They reaffirm their determination to abide by the purposes and principles of the UN Charter. The introductory part and the first seven articles are in line with the Indo-Soviet relations that had developed over the years.

The first Article of the Treaty declares lasting friendship, respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity and non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries. Article II is concerned with the determination of the contracting parties to continue their efforts to preserve and to strengthen peace in Asia and throughout the world, to halt the arms race and to achieve general and complete disarmament, including both nuclear and conventional, under effective international control and Article III condemns colonialism and racialism in all forms and manifestations. Under Article IV India expressed respect for the peace loving policy

of non-alignment, reaffirming that "this policy constitutes an important factor in the maintenance of universal peace and international security and in the lessening of tensions in the world".

The next three Articles that follow highlight mutual co-operation in economic, scientific and technological fields. The following three articles VIII, IX, and X are dealing with the security problems. Article VIII declares that neither state shall "enter into or participate in any military alliance directed against the other party", and that each shall "undertake to abstain from any aggression against the other party and to prevent the use of its territory for the commission of any act which might inflict military damage" on the other state. The first part of the Article IX goes a step further—and seems directly related to Indian concerns about Soviet behaviour in the growing conflict with Pakistan—by stating that each party to abstain from giving any assistance to a third party engaged in a war with the other party. This is applicable only when either of the party is engaged in an armed conflict. Moreover, the high contracting parties would enter into mutual consultations when either of the parties is subjected to an attack so as to remove the threat and to take measures to maintain the security of the region. In Article X each state promises that it shall 'not enter into any obligation, secret or public, with one or more states, which is incompatible with this Treaty', and that 'no obligation exists, nor shall any obligation be entered into, between itself and any other state or states, which
might cause military damage to the other party'.

The Second part of the Article IX constitutes the other half of the core of the Treaty relationship. It guarantees that if either of the parties is attacked or threatened with attack then India and the Soviet Union "will immediately start mutual consultations with a view to eliminating this threat and taking appropriate effective measures to ensure peace and security for their countries". Thus, New Delhi and Moscow had agreed not to undertake any agreement with or give any assistance to a state if the other is in conflict with any other state or states and to undertake "immediate consultations" with one another if either becomes involved in a conflict. The message to Pakistan and China, as well as to the United States, seemed clear.

Articles VIII and IX are the most important sections of the Treaty when they are considered in the context of the 1971 crisis, for they make clear by implications that if China should attempt to intervene in an Indo-Pakistan war, the Soviet Union would do whatever required to deal with the matter. Moreover, the issue of right or wrong was no longer necessarily connected to the help India could obtain from the Soviet Union, so long as India was against China.

Article XI envisages that the Treaty would be signed for a period of twenty years and that it would be extended subsequently for periods of five years at a time, if both partners agree with
that effect. And lastly, Article XII states that if there is any difference in the interpretation of any of the provisions it would be settled by peaceful means.

According to a Government of India statement placed before Parliament in 1971, the signing of the Treaty was prompted by the need to provide a "credible assurance that in the event of an attack, or a threat thereof, the high contracting parties shall immediately enter into mutual consultations in order to remove such a threat and to take appropriate measures to ensure peace and security of their countries." The Treaty came into force in 18 August 1971, after having been ratified by the rule-making bodies of the two countries, i.e., Parliament in India and the Supreme Soviet in the USSR.

Conformity with the UN Charter

The Indo-Soviet Treaty emerged primarily from security considerations, to preserve peace when external developments were preventing India from developing into an independent power. The most notable feature of the Treaty was that it was not aimed at any third party, but was in full conformity with the UN Charter.


It may be observed in this context that Article 52 of the UN Charter allows the existence of "regional arrangements or agencies dealing with such matters relating to the maintenance of international peace and security, as are appropriate for regional action, provided that such agreements or agencies and their activities are consistent with the purposes and principles of the United Nations." In any sense Indo-Soviet Treaty does not contradict the UN Charter. The Treaty was signed by the two nations out of their own will, both sides having equal rights and duties.

The provisions pertaining to the military and security aspects, Indo-Soviet Treaty has been subjected to severe criticism from many quarters. But the Treaty does not make it obligatory on the part of India to align with the USSR in the cause of a war. But the provisions of the Treaty provided for mutual consultations in the event of a threat to the security of either of the parties. On the other hand, typical examples of a military pact such as the Warsaw Treaty Organization and the NATO provided for mutual consultations in the event of the members at war with other countries. The Warsaw Treaty Organizations further maintained that "each party will render immediate assistance by all means it


may consider necessary, including the use of armed forces. On the other hand, the NATO implies that an attack on one means an attack on all. It is in this sense that the Indo-Soviet Treaty has been defended by India on the ground that it had never maintained military implications.

The Highlights of the Treaty

The diplomatic circle in New Delhi was surprised by the announcement of the Treaty between India and Soviet Union that had been signed by the two Foreign Ministers, Swaran Singh and Gromyko. The announcement was made at the very beginning of the Indo-Soviet talks on bi-lateral relations between the two countries. It showed the magnitude of the secrecy with which the treaty was negotiated between the two countries. According to K.P.S. Menon, "the Treaty was remarkable for the secrecy with which it was negotiated .... No one, however, suspected that within a few hours of Gromyko's arrival the world would be presented with the accompli of an Indo-Soviet Treaty. In fact, the Treaty was not the outcome of a sudden decision. The diplomats from both the countries were working for this Treaty for the past two years. Therefore, the Treaty had nothing to do with developments in East

Bengal or the attitude of the USA. When in May 1969, Kosygin visited India for President Zakir Hussain's funeral, Mrs. Gandhi held meeting with him in which no other Indians were present. However, it was alleged that Mrs. Gandhi being aware of the approaching clash with the right wing of the Congress Party, thought that the Treaty would bolster up her left-leaning image. At the same time Soviet Union held that the USSR offered India a draft Treaty in 1969 and the Ministry of External Affairs in India examined it closely and concluded that it was not a military pact directed against any nation. It was fully in conformity with the basic interests of the neighbouring countries to foster India's security interests and it did not violate Indian non-alignment.

The work of the Treaty was completed by the end of 1970. The negotiations to this effect were held in conditions of tight secrecy, with very limited number of people on the Indian side. But even after the Treaty had been agreed in draft form between the two countries, it could not yet be signed, because it was not easy to be sure of getting agreement for this is India. In the words of T.N.Kaul, who at that time was Indian Foreign Secretary, "the main question however, was how and when to persuade over

Government to sign it" but it was evident that the crisis in the summer of 1971 provided the opportunity for the Treaty to be made acceptable. Indian Foreign Minister, Swaran Singh said in the Lok Sabha that the Treaty had nothing to do with Kissinger's visit to Beijing but the timing of it had been such that it was very well received by practically all sections of the people. Thus it became clear that the two countries had been negotiating the Treaty for quite sometime and the governments had to wait for the most opportune time to announce the signing of the Treaty with the Soviet Union, one of the Super Powers in the cold war international politics. India wanted to maintain her non-aligned posture and wished to avoid criticism of the Treaty from whatever sources. Gromyko had come to New Delhi only to sign it. Here the question may be asked why was such secrecy maintained regarding the new Indo-Soviet relationship? Just as the desire for an agreement or the Treaty seems to have been mutual, so may the desire to keep it secret have been mutual. It may generally have been felt that the agreement ought not to be made public unless Sino-Soviet and Indo-Pakistan confrontations over a common issue proved unavoidable.


India would seem to have had the strongest reasons for secrecy. One of the factors was the desire to maintain her non-aligned position. Another is that domestic political conditions probably would not have permitted the kind of Indian commitment that was implied in a Treaty. More positively, India wanted to keep its option in case of the possibility of improved relations with Pakistan and China. For the Soviet Union, it seemed that they wished to continue trying to wean Pakistan away from China. The Soviet Union was willing to make necessary concessions to India like the stopping of arms supplies or delaying Yahya Khan's visit to Soviet Union. Even then they were not willing to give up completely the long established cordial relationship with Pakistan on behalf of improved Indo-Soviet relations. This seems to be supported by the fact that the Soviet Union used the Treaty in the fall of 1971 as a means of encouraging restraint and caution in India's policy towards Pakistan 32.

The language used in the Indo-Soviet Treaty was flexible. It had a provision for mutual consultation in the event either party feared aggression. The Soviet Union, on its part, respected India's policy of non-alignment. Gromyko said at the signing ceremony: "The Treaty provides an even stronger political and legal basis" for Indo-Soviet co-operation 33. But the Indian Foreign

32. Robert C. Horn, n.6, p.41.

33. FAR, Vol.XVII, No.8, August 1971, p.163.
Minister, chose to be more specific in his address to the Lok Sabha the same day. He said that the Treaty "should act as a deterrent to any powers that may have aggressive designs on our territorial integrity and sovereignty".

The Treaty was drafted very carefully. While India retained its freedom of action and its traditional foreign policy positions it gained useful commitments from Moscow. In contrast to the Soviet-Egyptian Treaty signed the same year or the Soviet-Iraqi Treaty signed later, the Indo-Soviet Treaty provided for no automatic Soviet military response to a crisis situation in the sub-continent. It provided for only consultation.

Though the Treaty was primarily political, it also provided a framework for other forms of co-operation. Basically, the Treaty gave an institutional infrastructure to their diplomatic and economic relations and stressed that these relations would continue during the next two decades. The treaty was not meant for promoting ideological or political relations between the two countries. It clearly does not constitute a military alliance nor does it even seek collaboration in the military sphere. It was founded upon mutual interest and in its security dimension it primarily represented a non-aggression pact.

34. Ibid., p.159.
Domestic Reactions

The Treaty was enthusiastically welcomed in India. No other event in the post-independence period was hailed with such great enthusiasm by the Indian people as the signing of the Treaty with the Soviet Union. The unanimity with which the Indian public welcomed the Treaty reflected the fear with which they viewed another war with China or Pakistan. However, the unanimity shown by the Indian people did not reflect an agreement on the struggle in Bangladesh or the policies towards Pakistan. But an acute sense of insecurity haunted all sections of the Indian society. The Treaty, to a certain extent, was an answer to the problem of insecurity among the Indians.

The Treaty was generally welcomed by almost all political parties in India. When the Treaty was signed the Indian Parliament was in session. There emerged support from all sections of the Indian people. Even the Janasangh which kept a pro-US attitude could not go against the tide in the country in favour of the Treaty. A.B. Vajpayee, the Bharathiya Jansangh leader, welcomed the Treaty and said that "It provides us a friend in whom


we can repose our confidence and who can be helpful to us in times of crisis." For the ruling Congress party, and its leader Mrs. Gandhi the Treaty was an important step in the diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union. The Socialist Parties like CPI and PSP rendered unequivocal support to the Treaty. There was an almost audible sigh of relief from the members, when the news was announced in Parliament. For one brief moment, the opposition in Parliament forgot its business to oppose any provisions of the Treaty.

However, from outside the Parliament, Piloo Mody, the Swatantra Party leader sharply criticised the Treaty as totally disadvantageous to the interests of India. He criticised the Treaty as India's steady drift into the Soviet camp as a result of its past economic and military policies. From the Treaty India could expect, "many dangers" and "no benefits." He 'recalled' that the Soviet Union was 'pressurising' India from 1969 onwards for a Treaty like this and this Soviet anxiety stemmed from her own isolation as a result of the Washington-Beijing axis.

Certain leaders and political parties preferred a cautious

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approach. In the words of K. Kamaraj "It would not only consolidate the friendship between the two countries but help the cause of peace in Asia and the world." Veteran Swatantra Party leader C. Rajagopalachary welcomed the Treaty believing that the President Yahya Khan could not fail to be impressed by the development. The Communist Party of India (Marxist) while welcoming the Treaty, expressed the "firm" opinion that in order to consolidate the gains of the Treaty and to strengthen our independence and economic strength, it was urgently necessary to take all required steps to improve relations with the Peoples Republic of China. The CPI (M) did not want the Treaty to be directed against China and stressed the need for internal reforms in tune with the alliance with the Soviet power.

The Press in India reflecting the Indian public opinion reacted sharply on the Treaty. In its editorial, Indian Express, observed that "... in signing the Treaty India ... departed from its policy of non-alignment." The Statesman, an independent daily strongly criticised the Treaty. It was firmly of the view that there was no compelling reason for New Delhi to accept


42. Indian Express (New Delhi), 10 August 1971.
commitments that could have far reaching consequences in the future. It was pointed out that the Soviet veto in Security Council and Soviet aid in a crisis would surely have been secured without the cost of so comprehensive a Treaty. The Hindustan Times observed:

We would welcome a strengthening of the close and cordial economic and political ties that exist between the two countries. But we do regard India as a potentially great power and certainly a major factor in Asia which is neither so weak nor even so lonely as to accept any arrangement that might reduce it to the status of being anything less than equal in its relations with any other country. The Soviet Union needs, India as much as India needs the Soviet Union. There is also no reason to suppose that this country cannot secure an honourable resolution of its differences with China or place its relations with the US on a more rational and mature footing. These objectives must still be pursued so that India's foreign and domestic policies should remain completely independent and should be guided by the national interests which were not over shadowed by the global interests of either super power.

While the general response to the Treaty was in the context of the East Bengal crisis, many official spokesmen tried to relate it to the natural development of Indo-Soviet relations. In support to this contention they cited the fact that the Treaty had been under consideration for a long time. They failed to explain, however, why if the Treaty was on the block for such a long time


44. The Hindustan Times, 10 August 1971.
it did not see the light of the day earlier. The Government's concern, perhaps, was to forestall the inevitable propaganda that India had abandoned non-alignment. Such an allegation or a perception was bound to be widespread. The Indian officials hoped to meet this criticism through casual link of the Treaty with the general development of Indo-Soviet relationship so that the critics should not read anything sinister into it. But public opinion in these countries was far more likely to be impressed by a frank statement of the compulsions of the critical situation in which India was placed and consequent requirements of national security, rather than in what would inevitably be nebulous explanations more likely to reinforce suspicions.45

A common criticism levelled against the Treaty was that it did away with the concept of non-alignment which was the basic element in Indian foreign policy. The Treaty was also characterised by some critics as a military pact and did not in any way infringe on our freedom of action.

Prime Minister Mrs. Gandhi declared that the new Indo-Soviet Treaty was not a reversal of India's policy of non-alignment. She said that the Treaty was "an important step" and denied the charge that India had shifted its policy towards the super powers.46 In an interview Prime Minister Mrs. Gandhi said:

45. For details see N.M. Ghatate, n.41, pp.167-73.

46. The Hindu (Madras), 10 August 1971.
The Treaty does not compromise our non-aligned posture. The word non-alignment has been mis-interpreted; that is why such doubts arise. The national interests of non-aligned countries have to be safeguarded from threats of military adventurism. Security must be achieved in a manner which eschews hegemony or confrontation and ensures lasting peace. This is precisely what the Treaty does. And the Soviet Union has extended unreserved respect and support to our policy of non-alignment. This has been incorporated in the Treaty itself.  

Foreign Reactions

Response from the domestic sources to the Treaty was mixed but concerned about the positive aspects of Indo-Soviet relations. But reactions from the international community, especially from the Western capitalist countries, were highly critical of the Treaty. The main criticism in the West was that the Treaty had deprived India of all manoeuvrability in foreign policy binding it to the Soviet Union's whims and to that extent it was going to be estranged from the democratic world. Though the Treaty was widely acclaimed both in India and the Soviet Union, it was an unpleasant fact to the vast majority of the American people. The Secretary of State, William Rogers said that the Treaty would have a beneficial effect. But this did not mean that the United States had accepted the Treaty.


The New York Times described the Treaty as a 'Major Foreign Policy Coup'. It said: The Soviet-Indian Friendship accord signed in New Delhi yesterday strengthens the Soviet influence in the Second most populous nation in Asia—and the world—at the expense of the US 49.

The Christian Science Monitor described the Treaty as marking a major turn in Soviet diplomacy on the sub-continent since its successful mediation of the 1965 Indo-Pakistan war at Tashkent, when the Soviet Union had sought to maintain neutrality in its dealings with New Delhi and Islamabad50.

The Washington Post warned that in the context of the new polarisation of forces in Asia as a result of the Indo-Soviet Treaty the US attempt to move toward co-existence with China would produce unintended consequences 51.

The British official circles were veering to the view that the Treaty did not materially affect India's non-alignment policy and that its defence co-operation clauses were limited to meeting a particular situation namely, the threat from Pakistan by China 52.

52. N.M. Ghatate, n.40, p.248.
The diplomatic observers in Japan said that the Treaty had added to the growing feelings of isolation in Tokyo. According to the Japanese official spokesmen, the Treaty, in effect, brought the Soviet Union firmly into Asia allied with a major Asian nation to counter another powerful alliance growing between China and Pakistan.\(^{53}\)

Strangely enough, no immediate and direct official comments on the Indo-Soviet Treaty were offered by the USA, the People's Republic of China and Pakistan. The US Secretary of State, William Rogers, expressed the hope that the Indo-Soviet Treaty would have a good effect.\(^{54}\) Semi-official Pakistan Times observed that the Treaty threatened both China and Pakistan. If further added, "The Treaty amounts to a deliberate move to create a situation in which India may feel free to attack Pakistan with the assurance that the Soviet commitment to aid India provide a deterrent to Chinese intervention on our behalf.\(^{55}\) Z.A. Bhutto repeated similar views.\(^{56}\) The People's Republic of China remained silent for some time.\(^{57}\)

\(^{53}\) Ibid., pp.262-63.

\(^{54}\) Times of India, 11 August 1971.

\(^{55}\) Pakistan Times, 11 August 1971.

\(^{56}\) Times of India, 12 August 1971.

The Treaty has not dragged India into the Sino-Soviet dispute. While expressing the hope that "this Treaty will provide a pattern for similar treaties between countries in this region", Foreign Minister Sardar Swaran Singh rightly observed in the course of his Lok Sabha statement on the discussion of the Treaty on 9 August 1971 that "such treaties between countries of this region would stabilise peace and strengthen their independence and sovereignty". This was an open call to willing nations, including China and Pakistan, to sign similar documents.

The Soviet leaders also welcomed the Treaty as an "epoch making event". Leonid Brezhnev, General Secretary of the CPSU said that the Indo-Soviet Treaty was "a brilliant illustration of the community of interests" between the two countries. Boris Ponomarev, Secretary of the CPSU and Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Commission of the Soviet of Nationalities of the Supreme Soviet, held the view that the Treaty would "exert an appreciable influence on the development of political relations in Asia and in the world as a whole". He also implied that the Indo-Soviet Treaty had guaranteed Soviet support to India in the event of aggression by her hostile neighbours. "In the event of an attack on one of our countries or the threat of such an attack" he explained, "the Treaty provides for effective measures to be urgently taken by both contracting parties to guarantee peace and security. This commitment is aimed at serving the cause of defending peace and
preventing the unleashing of aggressive acts". Other Soviet spokesmen emphasized that the Treaty had guaranteed peace in South Asia against "any potential aggressor".

The authoritative Soviet interpretation of the Treaty came out from the Soviet Embassy in New Delhi stating what the Soviet Union had already done to strengthen the economic, defence and cultural base of the Indian democracy and how Indo-Soviet collaboration within the framework of the Treaty would further accelerate India's social transformation. In dealing with the international implications of the Treaty, the document played down its security aspects. The Treaty was not a military alliance, it did not draw India into a military bloc, and therefore it did not injure or limit India's policy of non-alignment.

The Treaty has gained India a powerful friend - a super power. It has also given impetus to New Delhi's prestige among her friends and foes and strengthened India's position to deal effectively with Pakistan's aggressive acts as well as to support the liberation movement of East Bengal. In a word, the Indo-Soviet Treaty is an insurance cover for India. India's adversaries would now have to reckon with the Treaty with all its implications. From now on, commented Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko, no one would make policy "in relations to the Soviet Union
and India without taking this into account. The Treaty has also unfolded an immense opportunity for India in her attempt to commit the Soviet Union more fully to her advantage. Further, it has opened vast possibilities for greater economic co-operation between the two countries.