CHAPTER V
The Janata Government ended in December 1979 facing the developments in the Indian sub-continent due to the Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan and its immediate impact on India's security by the US and Chinese arms supply to Pakistan. The Caretaker Government of Chowdhry Charan Singh disapproved of the Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan and also boldly reacted against the US move to rearm Pakistan. But the Janata Government was too brief to warrant a close examination of its foreign policy and to take a bold step to protect India's security. Nevertheless, it signed important economic agreement with the former Soviet Union to stabilize the economic position of the country. It was also credited with the softer policy towards India's immediate neighbours.

The Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, the Iran-Iraq War and the emergence of a new Cold War in the Indian sub-continent had worsened the security environment in the sub-continent. As soon as Pakistan affirmed its readiness to defend Afghanistan's 'Islamic Spirit', it became a "front line" state and began to receive massive arms assistance from USA. The USA also established Rapid Deployment Force in the Indian Ocean and installed nuclear weapons in Diego Gracia.

1. The Dawn (Karachi), 5 February 1980.
This intensified the super powers rivalry in the Indian Ocean and threatened India's security. Infact, USA wanted to help Pakistan against possible Soviet attack from Afghanistan, but this relationship threatened India as much as the presence of Soviet troops in Afghaniastan threatened Pakistan. There was further the fear that a US-Pakistan and China combination could seriously undermine Indian interests in South Asia and would bring the new Cold War, nearer to Indian borders. Washington claimed that its military assistance to Pakistan not threatened India and that it was not interested in tension and conflict between the two countries. Washington continued to pursue a policy of maintaining an artificial parity between India and Pakistan which inevitably led to tension between the two countries.² It was under such situation that Mrs. Indira Gandhi reassumed the office of the Prime Minister of India on 14 January 1980. Soon after assuming the office, she decided to frame up India's foreign policy in new dimensions. She began to understand the prevailing situation that was very dangerous to India's security and the peace of the entire region.

India strongly apposed the supply of sophisticated weapons like F-16 planes to Pakistan by USA because the US strategy has hampered the process of normalization of relations between India and Pakistan and introduced new levels of weapons in the region and disturbed the existing balance. India disapproved of the Soviet intervention in

² V.P. Dutt, India's Foreign Policy, Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi, 1992, p. 225.
Afghanistan. India's dilemma was not merely to bring about a vacccination of Soviet troops from Afghanistan but along with the cessation of foreign interference from other quarters too, like the supply of arms and materials to Afghan revolutionaries. India was equally insistent that all other forms of intervention from outside must also end.

China, too, supported Pakistan with the massive arms supply. In August 1980, China expressed its readiness to provide military equipments to Pakistan. According to a report, China equiped Pakistan with 120 mm and 160 mm mortars as well as 37 mm, 57 mm, 85 mm and 1000 mm anti-craft guns. China also installed ground and airmissiles in the Gilgit region. In this way, Pakistan enjoyed the support of China in matter of defence and there was no question of any chance in this policy.

The Hindu reported that China had supplied MIG-9 planes, T-52 tanks, artillery medium and small arms and ammunitions to Pakistan. China also built its naval bases in Pakistan. A High Level Chinese Defence Delegation visited Karachi and Islamabad for talk with Pakistani Defence Secretary Maj. General Rahim Khan for defence establishment in Pakistan.

Against the background of Chinese support to

Pakistan on Kashmir issue, the supply of weapons to Pakistan caused concern in India. It may be pointed out that since Chinese army's units established its control over the Karakoram Highway, China has been assisting Pakistan in one way or the other to strengthen its position vis-a-vis India. Special camps were setup in Pakistan to control this part of Kashmir and saboteurs were trained and despatched to India⁶ to disturb the peace in Indian territory. China also assisted Pakistan with $21,000 million for Pakistani nuclear programme and sent its experts.⁷ Thus China's directions of military penetration in Pakistan caused concern in India. China exploited the situation and raised its hostility towards India posing a grave threat to its security.

The supply of arms by USA to Pakistan was the matter of serious concern to India, and its small neighbouring states, as it would convert the entire region into a theatre of great power confrontation by reactivating the new Cold War and increasing the arms race in the region⁸. India was the most vociferous in its protest to the America efforts to resume its previous policy of rearming Pakistan; a policy which had proved disastrous in the past. The large scale arms induction in Pakistan by the USA and China during 1980-83, caused concern in India. India declared that the supply of large scale arms to Pakistan

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would virtually convert it into a military containment. It did its best to impress upon the US administration that arms supplied to the military junta in Pakistan so as to strengthen Pakistan against a Soviet backed Afghanistan would be used against India. Therefore, India's main objective was to prevent any threat to its security from the side of Pakistan.

Regarding the diplomatic dialogue the option before New Delhi was to convince Bhutan and Nepal which could provide a regional defence system against the Sino-American support to Islamabad. And India also needed to take a hard look at its nuclear policy. In the context of a grave threat to its security, India had to seriously weigh the compulsion of exercising its option in this field. Mrs. Indira Gandhi repeatedly voiced her concern on Pakistan's nuclearization programme because it was a threat to India's security.

India made various efforts to involve Pakistan in a political dialogue to prevent the creation of a new tension, and the beginning of a new arm-race in the region and to promote normalcy and harmony between the two countries. A number of steps were taken to stem the drift towards a new-war like situation. The visits of India's Foreign Secretary, Ram Sathe and Defence Minister, Swaran

Singh to Islamabad in February 1980 were strong steps in that direction.

The efforts to diffuse tensions went on. Pakistan's Foreign Minister, Agha Shahi visited New Delhi in mid-July 1980 and exchanged views with the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of India. Agha Shahi's speech at the banquet hosted by the Foreign Minister elicited a sharp reaction from India. He asked for a "just and amicable settlement" of the dispute over Jammu and Kashmir. He proposed the determination of a ratio in the armed forces of the two countries. And he also suggested that the acquisition of sophisticated weapons by India was causing concern among all neighbours of India. India objected to such public raking up of the Kashmir issue in this manner when the more appropriate forum of the confidential discussions that were taking place was available. New Delhi believed that the suggestion about armed forces was un-realistic as the size, population, and requirements of the two countries were so diverse. And India resented the gratuitous reference to the apprehensions of India's neighbours as Pakistan was not a spokesman of the neighbouring countries. 11

The process to diffuse tensions between the two countries was proved meaningless because Pakistan had approached USA to acquire F-16 planes, and opened 17 troop-divisions along with Indian border. Meanwhile, General

12. V.P. Dutt, n.2, p.226.
Zia offered to sign a no-war pact with India for the purpose of exchanging mutual guarantees of non-aggression and non-use of force and to resolve their disputes within the spirit of Simla Agreement. Although the offer of no-war pact was not accepted by India but the process to diffuse tensions and improve relations between the two countries continued both at bilateral and multilateral level.

On the bilateral level, following up on the Indian foreign Minister's, visit to Islamabad, the Pakistan foreign Minister, Agha Shahi, visited New Delhi in January 1982. In her meeting with Agha Shahi on 30 January, Mrs.Gandhi offered to sign a Treaty of Peace and Friendship with Pakistan as a more positive step than a mere no-war pact. Mrs.Gandhi also suggested to Agha Shahi the setting up of a joint commission to resolve bilateral issues which according to the communique was accepted immediately by the Pakistan Foreign Minister, with details to be worked out by the officials of the two countries.

Pakistan was unwilling to accept any such conditionality and put forward the view that although it was non-aligned, it would not dilute its sovereign right to decide such issues. India also wanted the two countries to keep to bilateralism in resolving outstanding issues, but Pakistan would not foreswear its option to take any dispute to international forums.

But the two sides continued their dialogue and General Zia and Mrs. Gandhi agreed on 1 November 1982 to establish a joint commission during the former's brief stop-over in India and issued instructions to their officials for the rapid conclusion of modalities and formalities in this regard. The communique issued stated that the two sides would consider the Pakistani draft for no-war pact, and Indian draft for the treaty of peace, friendship and cooperation. The two leaders also looked forward to continuing their talks at the time of the Non-aligned Summit held in New Delhi in March 1983.  

On the multi-lateral level India and Pakistan stood for mutual cooperation and development. India played a key-role to eradicate the suspicion among its small neighbours that it had no intention to harm them. The Foreign Secretaries of India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Maldives met in early 1981 in Colombo to promote mutual cooperation and to work for the upliftment of the entire region. They again met in Kathmandu in November 1981 for the same purpose.  

Foreign Ministers of the South Asian States assembled together in New Delhi in August 1983 to evolve a strategy for cooperation among the states of the region for social and economic upliftment of the people of the region. Mrs. Gandhi assured the neighbouring states that India's  

16. V.P.Dutt., n .2, pp 229-30.
policy was not to interfere in the affairs of other’s states but pointed out that "Ours is a troubled region. Most of our countries are multi-racial and multi-religious. It would be idle to pretend that we are not affected by what happens elsewhere. Even as we are meeting there are disturbing and tragic developments in our neighbourhood".  

The Soviet intervention in Afghanistan seemed likely to worsen the Sino-Indian relations. But tensions between the two countries began to reduce after the visit of Indian Foreign Ministry's team to Beijing in June 1980. Mrs. Gandhi also met with the Chinese leader Hug Kuo-Feng in Belgrade on 8 May 1980. This was the first meeting at the Prime Ministerial level between the two countries since Nehru—Chou-En-Lai's visit in 1961. The two sides agreed to persist with the process of resolving issues and improving relations.  

Another major step in this direction was the visit of China's Vice-Premier and Foreign Minister Huang Hua to India on 26 June 1981, in a bid to move more positively forward. It was not a coincidence that just before he embarked upon the journey to New Delhi the new Prime Minister Zhou Ziyang concluded his safari around India's neighbours—Pakistan, Nepal and Bangladesh. Beijing's new policy in this region had become more transparent then.  

17. The Hindustan Times, 2 August 1983.  
It wished to upgrade relations with India but without having to concede too many concessions and without impairing in any way the relationships, in some cases special and in some others if not special then very close and cordial, with Pakistan, Nepal and Bangladesh and other neighbours of India.  

No breakthrough on the border issue was realized during Huang Hua's visit. But some gains could be counted in this slow, serpentine movement of adjustment and accommodation. China agreed that the border issue was a vital problem that had to be resolved and could just not be shelved. The two sides also determined that the officials of the two countries should take up the problems and seek settlements through periodic and ongoing discussions. Huang Hua in a press conference at the end of his talks mentioned three principles: historical background, existing realities and national sentiments of the peoples of the two countries. These he said, should constitute the framework for addressing the border problem.

The boundary problem has been a major cause of dispute between India and China. The two sides have been giving divergent views regarding the boundary. The Indian side has been insisting on the MC Mohan Line as its boundary in the eastern sector while the Chinese claimed the foot of the hills as their boundary.

19. See V.P.Dutt, n.2, p.293.
India once again reiterated its position that China was illegally occupying Indian territory. India also protested against the signing of a protocol on 22 August 1981 between China and Pakistan on the opening of the Khunjerab pass on the Karakoram Highway for the establishment of border posts along the pass in the Pakistan's Occupied Kashmir. ²¹

India and China concluded three round of talks during 1981-83. The first three round of talks made little headway on the question of border settlement. Both sides restated their positions and they had yet to strikeout a joint strategy for tackling the border problem. It was at the fourth round of talks held on 24 October 1983 in New Delhi that an agreement was reached on the modalities for discussing the border issue. The Chinese agreed to the Indian proposal for a sector to sector examination of the boundary dispute for a comprehensive settlement. ²² It was also agreed that the two sides would refrain from the use of force for settlement of the boundary issue.

It was at the fifth round of talks held in Beijing in 1984 that differences between the two countries had been narrowed. Mr. Natwar Singh, the leader of the Indian delegation declared that India had tried its best for a solution of the border problem. At that time India suggested a "just and satisfactory" solution to take into account

²¹ The Times of India, 26 August 1981.
²² Ibid, 31 October 1983.
the "legitimate" interests of both sides, and China responded with "fair and reasonable" solution of the problem. 23

While India was trying to improve its relations with China, Beijing's policies have been designed to establish Chinese influence in South Asian region. The development of China's relations with South Asian countries have had an edge directed against India. From the late 50's to the 70's China encouraged India's neighbours in South Asia to adopt a hostile posture against New Delhi. A change has been noticed over the last few years and Beijing was then less strident about Indian "expansionism" and alleged bid at hegemony in South Asia, but the general thrust of its relations in this region remained somewhat anti-Indian. 24

However, persistent and patient diplomacy would be needed to bring about a real detente in their relations, to arrive at least limited political understanding and measure of adjustment of the problems, bilateral as well as principally about South Asia, but also in relation to South-east Asia and West Asia. It would require statesmanship of a high order from both sides to protect the fragile but hopeful beginning from being swamped again by the buffets of a hostile international environment.

24. V.P. Dutt, n.2, pp.297-98.
It was also reported that China in the mid 80's developed and built up its military strength in Tibet. China's attitude towards Bhutan and Nepal was seen as hegemonistic. India's concern was to protect its security interests in both these Himalayan Kingdoms.

The greatest threat to India's security was recorded from its northern borders by the persistent problem of instability in the region due to the super powers rivalry after the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. The growing involvement of external powers in the sub-continent posed a danger to India's northern security. India felt that solution to the problem was not possible merely by preparing the country's defence strength against the Sino-Pak axis, but also by coming close to the Himalayan Kingdoms as well as other small neighbours. India adopted the policy of good neighbourliness on the basis of mutual trust and cooperation.

India's policy towards Bhutan has been determined by the strategic considerations. By 1980, Indian policy makers had developed trust not only in Bhutan's friendship but also its diplomatic skill to deal with the Chinese attitude towards Bhutan. India was aware of Bhutanese attitude towards the border question and hence was sure that they could not be taken for a ride by the Chinese. India had surveyed Bhutan's border adjoining Tibet and also helped in the establishment of Bhutan's Survey Department in 1972. This led India to establish a Boundary Commission in 1981.
which, on the basis of survey reports and historical documents formulated definite Bhutanese claims. Therefore, India had full confidence in Bhutanese leaders and its position when the meeting was held in Beijing. In March 1981, a year later on Indira Gandhi’s re-assumption of power, Bhutan sent a diplomatic note to the Chinese Embassy in New Delhi expressing its willingness to enter into direct talks on the boundary problems with China.

India's policy towards Bhutan by 1981 could also be viewed in the context of the latter's pressure for more independence in conducting its international relations that was probably not possible for India to side track the issue any more. Since 1978 when ambassadorial relations were established between the two countries, the King of Bhutan has been pressurizing India for updating the treaty of 1949. The King also asserted that while Bhutan was to have the "guidance" of India in conducting its external affairs it was not obligatory on Bhutan's part to strictly abide by the guidance.

After the Summit Conference at Havana, Bhutan once again officially stated that it had decided to maintain a policy of not seeking diplomatic and trade ties with China. However, in February 1980 when King Jigmye Wangchuk paid an official visit to New Delhi, he affirmed that Bhutan would continue with its traditional policy within the

framework of the treaty of 1949\textsuperscript{27}. Thus Bhutan, like Nepal wished to play a role of balancer between India and China.

India's political leverage in Bhutan can be seen from the internal political crisis from ethnic and economic angle. Inspite of potential anti-India lobby in the royal family of Bhutan, India has always taken interest in the former's internal and external affairs because any kind of instability in the kingdom may directly affect India's interests. It is relevant to point out that if the stability of the Kingdom was threatened by pro-Chinese lobbies with the ruling elite the King might succumb to their pressure, and in such a situation, India might receive favourable response from the King of Bhutan.

It was also possible that there might be popular pressure against the King for the establishment of democracy controlled by the ethnic composition of Bhutan. It could occur only if pioneered by ethnic Nepalese and the Tibetan refugees. The Nepalis are Hindu and ethnically different community, while the Tibetan refugees, though ethnically akin to the Drukpas have a record of activities against the King and loyalty towards the Dalai Lama-exile in India.\textsuperscript{28}

India's record in the sub-continental politics has been one of the supporting democratic forces in its neighbourhood. Indian support to the Nepali Congress may be cited as

\textsuperscript{27} Indian Express, 26 February 1980.
\textsuperscript{28} Partha S.Ghosh, Cooperation and Conflict in South Asia, Manohar Publications, New Delhi, 1989, p.149.
example. The cessation of the activities of the Bhutan State Congress since 1964, however, has failed to end India's political leverage in Bhutan's politics. As the party was banned to operate its activities from bases in Indian soil (Assam and West Bengal) where there is a large concentration of ethnic Nepalis. With India's record of patronising them in Sikkim politics vis-a-vis the Bhutia-Lepcha communities led to the merger of the state into Indian Union, Bhutan was worried about the potentiality of India to politically destabilise Bhutan through these disgruntled Nepalese. It might be argued that in case of an ethnic conflict in Bhutan between the Drukpas and the Nepalese the latter were in a position to cripple the administration from within as they formed a sizeable section of the ruling elites i.e. 6 out of 20 state functionaries, were ethnic Nepalis till 1980's.  

Against the background of growing ethnic dissonance among Indian-Nepalese in Darjeeling Hill area coupled with problems and anxieties in India and the adversed Indo-Nepalese relations. So, Bhutan sought much sympathy from India on the question of ethnic Nepalese Community in Bhutan. But by the establishment of diplomatic relations between Nepal and Bhutan in 1983, Nepalese contributed their support to the national integration of Bhutan. It was felt by India that the close linkages between Nepal and Bhutan would certainly have an impact on Gorkha's movement in Darjeeling Hill area. Therefore, India

29. Ibid., p.150.
tried its best to eradicate the ethnic problem by supporting and encouraging Drukpa-Nepali marriages.

By following the above strategy, India was able to protect its interests both in Nepal and Bhutan. Mrs. Gandhi wisely took interest in their internal crises and tried to minimise the Chinese influence in these states in order to safeguard India's security, and closed the gateway to any eventuality in north-eastern part.

The perceived threat from Nepal in the 80's may be viewed in terms of its linkages with China and Pakistan. As it is mentioned earlier that the major outstanding issue between India and Nepal was "Zone of Peace" hence this issue strained the relations between the two countries because Nepal made vigorous diplomatic efforts to secure international support for its zone of peace proposal. King Birendra tried to get endorsement for his proposal when he claimed in October 1984 that some 44 countries had endorsed the proposal. 30 The United States of America was one of the staunch supporter of the King's proposal since 1983.

The most unqualified and enthusiastic support extended to the proposal had came from China and Pakistan. This is natural in view of the fact that the proposal in effect aimed at qualitatively changing the existing nature of Indo-Nepalese relations to India's disadvantage.

There were two notable aspects of the US support to Nepal on 'Zone of Peace' issue. First Reagan had emphasized that through this proposal Nepal would not use its scarce resources for military purposes. But Nepal has formulated the proposal more in terms of political stability, economic development and reduction in its defence expenditure. Secondly, Reagon had urged upon Nepal to "work closely with its neighbours to make the peace zone proposal a reality."31

India's initial response to the proposal was that of disapproval as being unnecessary because Nepal has treaties of peace and friendship with India and China. India also sought clarification from Nepal about what precisely it wanted to achieve through the proposal. After the formulation of seven point definition of the proposal, India's reaction was that the proposal would be studied. This was disclosed by Foreign Minister Narasimha Rao in Parliament on March 11, 1983. In November 1983, Mrs. Gandhi asked Nepal to clarify as to from which source it feared threat to its peace and security. This was an obvious indication of India's displeasure with the proposal.32

India seemed to have serious reservations about the substance of the proposal on three major counts. One is that India disgusts Nepal's stance of equidistance with its neighbours which is being sought to be achieved through the peace zone proposal. There has been an understanding and

31. Ibid., p.176.
32. Ibid., p.177.
appreciation in India for Nepal's desire not to get involved in regional conflicts. It was being argued that India respected Nepal's desire and accordingly, never wished Nepal to be directly involved in India's regional conflicts with China and Pakistan in the past. Nepal also cannot ignore its geo-political reality with India which has so destined the two countries that security of one can not be separated from the security of the other.  

In India's perception, Nepal's Zone of Peace proposal would negate or undermine mutual security arrangement between the two countries. This would be harmful not only to India but also to Nepal in the long run. It may be recalled that Nepal found such arrangements comforting when it experienced disturbances along its northern border in the past. For such reason, Narasimha Rao, the then Foreign Minister of India cautioned Nepal not to weaken India in the region.  

A three years agreement on trade and payments replacing the 1974 agreement between Nepal and China was signed on 22 November 1981. The trade turnover between Nepal and China during fiscal year ending July 1981 was worth Rs. 260.3 million with the balance of payments in favour of China.  

33. Ibid.  
34. Ibid, p.178.  
A Joint Economic Commission between Nepal and Pakistan was setup on 24 May 1983 to promote economic and technical cooperation for mutual benefit covering the various fields. This commission was described as an effective mechanism to promote bilateral economic cooperation between the two countries.  

As pointed out earlier that Nepal's linkages with Pakistan and China have undermined India's interests in the region. Thus India took serious notice of the Chinese and Pakistan economic linkages with Nepal because it was a challenge to India's old ties with Nepal and a threat to India's national interests as well as security.

Since 1974, the Nepalese immigration in the north-eastern states of India has created ethnic, economic and political problems raising an outcry for the expulsion of foreigners. The then Indian External Affairs Minister on the basis of a count made in 1980 put the figure of Indian settled in Nepal as 3.8 million, out of which 2,388 million have acquired Nepalese citizenship.

The development of Terai has had inevitable effect of forging strong bonds with India. The Terai, during the 80's was more integrated with India's market economy than with that of Nepal. Nepal's overwhelming dependence on India for its exports, imports, employment, capital and even

skilled labour is of decisive importance to its economy. 38

The declaration of South Asian Regional Cooperation on 2 August 1983 by the Foreign Ministers of seven South Asian countries including India and Nepal was a landmark in the beginning of an era of new multi-lateral relationship among the people of these countries. It would be mutually beneficial to all of them. This was an expression of mutual trust and belief or a strategy for the protection of their respective national interests.

Thus it may be concluded that India's immediate and sustained objective during the above mentioned period was to reduce the danger of super powers rivalry in its neighbourhood, and to protect its national interests in the area. India was in favour of a regional solution of the Afghan crisis and a consensus among the neighbouring states to prevent the possible threat to the peace of the region.

38. Nirmal Das, "Nepalese Migration to India-Search for an Identity", in Man and Development, Vol.IV, No.1, March 1984, Published by CRRID, Chandigarh, pp.177-78.