South Asia's seven states can be divided into four categories. India stands by itself as the largest and most populous nation, aspiring to be a major power and in a category by itself. India is followed by the region's two middle powers — Pakistan and Bangladesh, having approximately the same population, although differing in economic and military strength. Sri Lanka and Nepal qualify as the small powers of the region while Bhutan and Maldives may be described as the micro-states. Although each of these states play an important role in determining the prospects for peace and security in South Asia, the position of middle powers has been more important and that of India, clearly decisive.

The Soviet Union is generally perceived as the dominant external power in South Asia since the mid-50s. It was directly involved in the intraregional affairs in South Asia and this reached its high watermark in the Tashkent Declaration of 1966. In the post-war period the Soviet Union, jointly with young newly free states, stepped up its efforts to consolidate peace in Asia. The world knows the constructive role of the U.S.S.R. as the initiator and active participant in a number of major international conferences and agreements aimed at ensuring peace in various parts of the Asian continent. Among them are Geneva Conference of 1954 (on a settlement in Korea and Indo-China) and of 1962 (on Laos), the Tashkent Meeting of 1966 on Vietnam, the Geneva Peace Conference of 1973 on the Middle East etc. Both geographically and in terms of socio-cultural continuities and economic infrastructure, India
occupies a central place among all South Asian countries. The other countries of the region like Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, Bhutan and Sri Lanka have individually and separately more in common with India than with each other.

The Soviet presence in this Asian region has proved to be more effective and durable than those of its two rivals, the United States and China. The search for peace, stability, and security in South Asia is a subject of global importance in our independent world. The U.S. arms connection with Pakistan is said to be the prime cause of many of the problems of the subcontinent, reflecting the thesis that the security threats to the subcontinent come from outside powers and from the military build up of local states. Intrusion by outside powers (specially the U.S.) constitutes an interference in the natural order of things.

India's military reverses in its border clashes with China brought into sharp focus the limitation of the South Asia policy that the Soviet Union had followed till then and which was almost exclusively India-centred. China's growing role in Pakistan compelled Soviet Union to establish its presence in Pakistan and counter China's growing influence there.

There was a reshaping of Soviet policy towards the South Asia region in general and towards Pakistan in particular. President Ayub Khan's visit to Moscow in 1967 resulted not only in trade agreement, economic cooperation and cultural exchange, but also Soviet Union supplied arms to Pakistan. India protested against the Soviet decision. The Soviet Union had assured India that Pakistan would not use Soviet arms against India. Since 1970s the Soviet Union started getting more involved in the affairs of South Asia. The Indo-Soviet Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation was
signed in August 1971. The real purpose of the Treaty was to safeguard India's security and strengthen its defence capability.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s the Soviet Union advanced the idea of safeguarding security in Asia by its countries and peoples having relations based on the principles of peaceful coexistence. Important initiatives directly affecting various parts of Asia were set forth in the peace programmes for the 1980s approved by the 26th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

Peace and stability in India and Pakistan were essential for the success of Soviet policy of establishing its influence in South Asia. Therefore, the Soviet Union tried to bring the two nations closer to each other and for that it adopted policies that would maintain its relations with both the countries. Obviously the Soviet policy was to wean Pakistan away from U.S.A. and China so that it could build up both Pakistan and India as a stable peace area as a counterpoise to China. But Pakistan insisted that to improve its relations with Pakistan the Soviet Government is to stop military assistance to India. Thus, this period coincided with some alterations in the Soviet policy towards Pakistan. The Soviet Government concluded an agreement for Soviet military aid to Pakistan in July 1968. But the Soviet Union did not take any action to improve its relations with Pakistan at the cost of its relations with India. These gestures indicated that the Soviets were reappraising the power-position in the South Asian region in the light of their external requirements and their assessment of the domestic developments in India and Pakistan.

The Soviet Union's principled, internationalist approach to the national liberation struggles was demonstrated
convincingly during the events linked to the proclamation of the independence of the Republic of Bangladesh in 1971. Soviet Union was the only permanent member of the Security Council to support the liberation struggle of the people of Bangladesh. It was the first major power to recognize Bangladesh on 24 January 1972.

South Asia assumes a great significance for the superpowers because of the strategic importance of the Indian Ocean. There are inter-related connotations for the superpowers, in conventional and nuclear terms, in this region. The Soviet landmass is within easy range of the U.S. nuclear submarines operating in the Indian Ocean region. The reverse is not true, as the American landmass is far away from the Indian Ocean. But there has to be a defensive role for the Soviet forces in the Indian Ocean, and South Asian region, against the U.S. power. Since this region is well suited for the offensive deployment of U.S. strategic forces, the U.S.S.R. can play only a defensive role, a counter role in this region. An increased U.S. presence in this region will naturally attract increased Soviet presence heightening the tension in the region.

Such an increased Soviet presence in this region is not a potentiality that the Chinese would relish. They treat this phenomenon as a "hostile social imperialist encirclement" and want to curtail it.

Maldives, located in the centre of Indian Ocean, has also become a focal point of superpower rivalry during recent years. Soon after the British withdrawal in 1976 several countries showed interest in obtaining Gan, one of the islands of Maldives which is important strategically and militarily. The last such bid came from the Soviet Union in 1978 which offered $1 million for the ostensible purpose of using the base for maintenance of its fishing vessels. The Soviet Union is obviously
looking for a base in the Indian Ocean area to provide a strong counterbalance to the American base at Diego Garcia which is just 640 km South of Gan. President Gayoom has categorically stated that his country would pursue a policy of nonalignment and would not provide any base for the competing superpowers.

The Maldives has hardly the means to defend its maritime territory or even to keep out the fishing vessels that poach in its territorial waters. Maldivians are fully aware of this fact that the country is pursuing an astute diplomacy of maintaining cordial relationship with as many countries as possible from rival blocs. But how long the Maldives could continue this delicate balancing exercise in a conflict prone area is very difficult to perceive.

Nestled at the foot of the Himalaya Mountains, the tiny Kingdom of Bhutan occupies a strategic position in South Asia. The source of threat to Bhutan's territorial integrity in the present context is considered to be China. In no other country of the South Asian region Sino-Soviet rivalry is as apparent as in Nepal. In fact, China's share of economic aid to Nepal is massive in comparison to that of the Soviet Union. However, the Soviet Union supported Nepal's policy of positive nonalignment and of the King's desire not to allow Nepal to be an area of tension and a centre for hostilities against other countries.

Geopolitical factors have also played an important part in the definition of Soviet policy in South Asia over the past two decades. That the U.S.S.R. is separated from South Asia by only seventeen miles of Afghan territory is enough to ensure concern in Moscow over developments in the subcontinent. Probably, since the early 1960s, more important for Soviet Union is the long border South Asia shares with China
and occasionally violent competition between Peking and New Delhi for a hegemonic position in this difficult frontier area.

Soviet intervention in Afghanistan proved that the Soviet Union not only has the capability to intervene in conflicts outside its frontiers, but also has the political will to use that capability as an active instrument of foreign policy. Though the Soviet Union never touched the international boundary, but at a time, in 1980, the Soviet troops almost knocked at the Pakistan frontiers. For India, the threat came from America's arms supply to Pakistan. Thus in order to arrest the threat, it became essential for India to localise the Soviet intervention and to see it as a defensive action of limited geopolitical import.

II

One of the main objectives of the Soviet foreign policy is the development of relations of friendship and comprehensive cooperation with India. Despite the differences in their socio-economic systems, the two countries are united by a common loyalty to the cause of peace and detente and the ideals of developing relations between the two States on a just and democratic basis. India and the Soviet Union have no conflict of national interests because of geographical proximity. It is in their common interest to develop and strengthen peaceful cooperation and friendly relations.

Indo-Soviet relations started to be built up in the early 50s and have developed steadily after Jawaharlal Nehru's visit to the Soviet Union in 1955, followed by the visit of Soviet leaders Khrushchev to India and Bulganin in the
following year. The Soviet Union has stood by India in times of need and supported India's policy of nonalignment, peace and national independence. India has also supported the Soviet Union's policy of peace and cooperation. The open support to India by the Soviet Union on Kashmir issue was a landmark in Indo-Soviet relations. In 1957 and 1962 Soviet Union exercised its veto in the Security Council against the Western resolutions on Kashmir which supported Pakistan.

Since the Indo-Pak war of 1965, the Soviet Union has been enjoying a special position in the Indian subcontinent among the superpowers. The Bangladesh crisis and the Indo-Pak war of 1971 has further strengthened this position.

The Soviet Union and India cooperate effectively on the international scene, including in the U.N. and other international organisations. Both countries consistently support the strengthening of détente in international relations and its extension to all regions of the world, universal and complete disarmament under effective international control, the elimination of war from human existence and the affirmation in international relations of such principles as the right of each people to choose its own political system, the refusal to use force or the threat of force, respect for sovereignty and the inviolability of frontiers, noninterference in each other's internal affairs and cooperation in economic and other spheres on the basis of equality and mutual advantage.

On the economic front, the high momentum of Soviet aid to India, witnessed in the fifties and in the first half of the sixties, could not be maintained in the changed economic environment of the second half of the sixties and particularly in the seventies. Since the second half of the sixties, utilisation
of Soviet aid declined sharply. At the same time with the devaluation of the rupee in 1966, the debt repayments mounted up. In recent years, India also began to make repayments in advance. The combined effect of all these was that Soviet aid turned negative in most of the years except when the Soviet Union gave a wheat loan which was repaid in 1977 and 1978. Thus, in the 1970s, there was not only 'zero aid' but there was also a reverse flow of resources from India to the Soviet Union.

Similarly, the trade between India and the Soviet Union increased at a phenomenal rate in the fifties and sixties. Within a short period, the Soviet Union acquired a significant position in India's export and imports. However, the rate of growth of Indo-Soviet trade during the seventies slowed down considerably as compared to the growth in the first phase as well as in relation to the growth of India's trade with some other regions such as ECM, ESCAP, Latin America, and OPEC countries. And also there was no dramatic change in the composition of India's exports to the Soviet Union during the seventies.

The study has been divided into seven chapters. The first chapter deals with the importance of South Asia in international politics. The geographical location of South Asia, its strategic importance and its significance in world politics have been discussed in this chapter.

Soviet policy in South Asia is the subject matter of discussion in chapters II and III. The Soviet approach to various developments in the subcontinent and its role performance in South Asia has been thoroughly examined. An attempt has been made to study the Soviet foreign policy in this area in all its aspects.
Since the main thrust of this study is on Indo-Soviet relations, more space has been devoted to this subject. The whole gamut of Indo-Soviet relations has been taken up for a close study of actions and interactions of the two very important powers in world politics. Though the subject is too wide and broad, an attempt has been made to cover almost all crucial areas of a most friendly and cordial relationship. Areas, both of cooperation and misapprehensions, have been covered.

Chapter VI of this dissertation focusses on economic and cultural ties between India and Soviet Union without which the study would remain incomplete. Economic and cultural aspects of relations between two countries can be termed as catalyst for bringing the nations together.

The study ends with some concluding remarks. The conclusions drawn in this chapter are based on the totality of the pattern of Soviet policy in South Asia and the relations between India and the Soviet Union.

Source material, both primary and secondary, has been used for this study. Books, journals and newspapers have been of much help. A large number of authors have been quoted to make the study more meaningful and objective. If I have not been able to consult certain material, I accept the responsibility for such and other lapses on my part.

I have received help from many quarters and individuals for the completion of this study. I would be failing in my duty if I do not gratefully acknowledge the help and encouragement received from my research guide Dr. M.A. Kishore, Reader in the Department of Political Science, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh. He has been most cooperative and generously gave his time and attention. I sincerely thank Prof. A.F. Usmani,
Chairman, Department of Political Science, for his kindness and help. I must record my sincere appreciation of the constant supportive interest taken by Mr. Zain in my work.

From time to time the Faculty of Social Sciences, A.M.U., Aligarh, has been generous in awarding me small amounts of money which has been a great help to me since I did not receive any regular financial support for this study. I would also like to thank the ICSSR for awarding me the study grant for six weeks. I would like to make a special mention of the help that I had received from the Librarians of Sapru House, JNU Library, ICSSR Library and the House of Soviet Science, Culture and Art, New Delhi. I would also like to thank the Information Department of the Embassy of the USSR in India, for sending me necessary material. I received full cooperation from the staff of Maulana Azad Library, A.M.U., Aligarh and from Mr. Qasim of the Seminar Library, Department of Political Science, A.M.U., Aligarh.

Mr. Mashhood Alam Raz did the typing and I am thankful to him for his friendly attitude.

Department of Political Science
Aligarh Muslim University
Aligarh

April, 1989