(A) Soviet Stand on Bangladesh

Soviet Union's attitude to the events in East Pakistan in 1970 was cautious and restrained. The Soviet Union wanted the settlement of the problem in Eastern Wing of Pakistan without outside interference. However, with the aggravation of the crisis and the inability of military regime of Gen. Yahya Khan to find an amicable solution, Soviet Union became alarmed at the possibility of western powers fishing in troubled waters. Soviet Union wanted a political solution to the problem in Bangladesh which meant the transfer of power to the elected representatives of the Bengali people without which there could be no hope of peace in the region. The Soviet attitude should be seen in the context of the appearance of the U.S.Sixth Fleet in the Bay of Bengal in December 1971 and also the aggressive postures of the Maoist-China.¹

The supply of arms by the Soviet Union to Pakistan which began in 1968 at the expense of considerable heart burning and pique in New Delhi, was stopped in April 1970. And when the Bangladesh crisis erupted in March 1971, even the sale of spares and other components to Pakistan was stopped.² By coincidence or by design, Indian and Soviet policy concerning the grave

² The Times of India, Delhi, 8 July 1971; also see The Hindustan Times of the same date.
crisis in Pakistan ran parallel through the summer of 1971 until they converged in the autumn. Indira Gandhi was under heavy public opinion pressure to intervene in the Bangladesh struggle, to recognize the government-in-exile, and to help it raise a "liberation army".

The Soviet Union was the first major power to intervene openly in the Pakistan crisis. Since 1968 Soviet relations with Pakistan had produced more frustration than friendship. The Soviet leaders had risked Indian displeasure by transferring military aid to Pakistan, but they had not been able to loosen the ties of Pakistan with China nor win the support of Pakistan for the regional economic grouping that Moscow had been wanting to create.

The Soviet Union was the first big power to realize the gravity of the situation and to see in it a major threat to peace and security in South Asia. At a time when both Peking and Washington were trying to condone the blood bath in East Bengal as an internal affair of Pakistan, the Soviet President Nikolas Podgorny in his letter of 2 April 1971 to the Pakistan President Yahya Khan, appealed to "stop the bloodshed and represions against the population in East Pakistan", and restore methods of peaceful political development.3

The joint Indo-Soviet statement on Gromyko's visit to New Delhi to sign the Indo-Soviet Treaty also called for urgent steps to be taken in East Pakistan for the achievement of a political solution and for the creation of conditions for the safe return of the refugees to their houses.4

On 7 October 1971, the spokesman of the Pakistani Foreign Office objected to Kosygin's criticism of the Yahya regime's

3 Pravda, 4 April 1971
4 The Times of India, New Delhi, 13 Aug 1971
action. He also alleged that the recent Indo-Soviet Treaty had "encouraged India to step up provocative activities against Pakistan". He asked Moscow to take notice of the aggressive disposition of the Indian armed forces against the Pakistan borders in both the wings." On October 8, 1971, a joint statement of the U.S.S.R. and Algeria declared their "respect for the national unity and territorial integrity of Pakistan and India". The two states appealed to both New Delhi and Islamabad to find a peaceful solution to the problem confronting them "according with the principles of non-interference, mutual respect, good neighbour relations and the spirit of the Tashkent meeting."  

When a full scale war broke out between India and Pakistan as a result of surprise Pakistani air attacks on Indian air fields on the evening of 3 December 1971, the Soviet Premier A.N. Kosygin declared in his press conference in Denmark that the Soviet Union was "quite resolutely" in favour of ending the war and bringing about a peaceful settlement between the forces of Bangladesh and Pakistan. President Yahya Khan visited the Soviet Union in June 1970. Speaking at the state banquet given by him in honour of Yahya Khan, President Podgorny of Soviet Union said that the two countries had no dispute between them and that they valued each other's friendship. According to him, therefore, there was every reason for the two countries to strengthen and cement their friendship further. In the joint communique issued at the end of the visit, the two countries expressed identity of views on such international issues as the situation in the Middle East, the Vietnam War, and disarmament. It reaffirmed their common desire "to strengthen further the existing contacts". It also recorded the usefulness of periodical consultations.

5 New Times, No. 42, Oct 1971
6 The Hindustan Times, Delhi, 6 Dec 1971
7 Dawn, 23 June 1970
between them "along with lines of Foreign Ministers". As regards Indo-Pakistani relations, the communiqué expressed the firm belief of the Soviet Union that a settlement of disputable question, by means of bilateral negotiations in the spirit of the Tashkent Declaration would accord with the vital interest of both India and Pakistan as well as the interests of the peoples of the region as a whole.

However, Soviet displeasure over the policy of military terror in East Bengal was duly conveyed to the rulers of Pakistan through Podgorny's note sent to Yahna Khan on the April 1971.

Having once conveyed to the Pakistani rulers its disapproval of military methods, Moscow refrained from criticising them further throughout the month of April. The Soviet press published brief reports but without any comments, regarding the events in East Pakistan, in which it quoted mainly western and Pakistani sources. Indian sources reporting and commenting on the situation, in sharp contrast, were referred to only four times in the same month, April 1971 by Pravda. The official organ of the communist party of the Soviet Union and just twice by Izvestia the mouth piece of the Soviet Government.

In the weeks immediately following the 25 March 1971 military crackdown Pakistan army appeared to be succeeding in crushing the spontaneous, sporadic, and almost entirely unorganised resistance offered largely by the Bengali personnel of the East Bengal Rifles, and East Bengal Regiment.

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8 Ibid., 27 June 1970
9 Ibid.
11 Pravda, 1,5,29 and 30 April 1971; also see Izvestia 7 and 19 April 1971
author of an article in the 14 April 1971, issue of the New Times seemed to have clearly been influenced by such an assessment of the situation.¹²

For nearly three months the Soviet press followed a policy of strict neutrality between India and Pakistan in that it published parallel reports from India and Pakistani sources without comments. Thus both India and Pakistan versions of violation of borders by the other side were carried side by side in the columns of Pravda. The paper, while reproducing Pakistani claims of growing normalisation of the situation in East Bengal, quoted at the same time the Indian reports of mounting figures of refugees fleeing into India from East Bengal.

The Indian Foreign Minister, Swaran Singh paid an unofficial visit to Moscow in June 1971. During his stay, he had high level talks. In the joint communique issued Foreign Ministers of both the countries significantly stated the decision of the two sides to remain in touch with each other in view of "the seriousness of the situation". It also called for immediate measures in East Bengal to ensure the cessation of refugee outflow to India and steps for the creation of conditions of security for the return of the refugees to their homes. It reiterated Soviet President Podgorny's appeal of April last to Yahya Khan for a political settlement in East Bengal.¹³

Premier Kosygin was quite sympathetic for the prevailing conditions in East Bengal. He took an unequivocal stand on the question of refugees and said in an election speech to his voters:

"All who value the principles of humanism must demand the

¹² New Times, 14 April 1971, No.15, p.9
¹³ National Herald, Delhi, 10 June 1971
creation of necessary condition for the return of refugees to their homes, giving to them guarantee of personal security and possibility of peacefully living and working in East Pakistan. According to our opinion he further said, such measures should be taken by the Pakistani authorities without delay."^{14}

It must be appreciated that in the problem of refugees the Soviet Union saw not only a humanitarian but also a political problem. The Soviet Union was keen that a precedent that refugees be allowed to return to their homes is firmly established, since Soviet Union itself faced a similar problem. The fairly substantial influx of refugees from China, especially the Chinese Sinkiang though admittedly modest in comparison with that in India for the time being could well assume the territorial proportions it had in India.

In August 1971, the Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko came to New Delhi, India, and the U.S.S.R. signed a 20-year Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation, designed both to stay China's hand and to deter Pakistan from unleashing a war on India. This treaty had marked an extension and formalisation of the Soviet Union's role in South Asia.\(^15\)

Signing the Treaty should not be taken to mean, of course, that with its signing Soviet Union came all out in support of the struggle for Bangladesh, though there was, indeed, a noticeable tilt in the Soviet policy in favour of the struggle. For instance, Soviet Union backed India in the latter's opposition to the posting of U.N. observers on the Indian side of the border with East Bengal.\(^16\)

\(^{14}\) Pravda, 10 June 1971


\(^{16}\) The Times of India, Delhi, 1 Aug 1971
The Indo-Soviet statement of 11 August 1971, which reflected perhaps the Soviet line more than the Indian position, categorically declared that "there can be no military solution of the (Bangladesh nationalism) problem". The Soviet press, while criticising reactionary and chauvinistic elements in India and Pakistan for advocating war as a means of solving disputes stressed the need of maintaining peace in the subcontinent.\(^{17}\)

India, however, wanted the Soviet Union to demonstrate its friendship with it by taking certain positive steps to solve the refugee problem and to use its influence with Pakistan to secure a political settlement. This was highlighted by Indira Gandhi when she conferred with the Soviet leaders on the Bangladesh crisis during her first visit to Moscow on 27-29 September, 1971.\(^{18}\) A joint statement issued at the end of her visit: "The Soviet side", read the statement,\(^{19}\) "took into account the statement by the Prime Minister that the government of India is fully determined to take all necessary measures to stop the inflow of refugees from East Bengal to India and to ensure that those refugees who are already in India return to their homeland without delay... Both sides consider that the interests of the presentation of peace demand that urgent measures should be taken to reach a political solution of the problems which have arisen there paying due regards to the wishes, the inalienable rights and lawful interests of the people of East Bengal..."

It was perhaps this welcome turn in the Soviet opinion which made India's Foreign Minister, S. Swaran Singh, bold to declare that India could count upon the U.S.S.R. for full

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18 Soviet Review, New Delhi, 12 Oct 1971, p.36
19 Full text of the Statement in Pran Chopra, Before and After In Soviet Treaty, New Delhi, S. Chand & Co., 1971, Appendix III
support in the event of a conflict with Pakistan, and that then all the relevant provisions of the Indo-Soviet Treaty shall be duly invoked to deal with the aggression.\textsuperscript{20}

Thus, from October onwards, the Soviet Union seemed to be following a cautious policy towards the Bangladesh issue. It hesitated to identify itself with any particular type of political solution; clearly it was not willing to give up all its options vis-a-vis Pakistan. It had often stated that its friendship with either India or Pakistan was not to be at the expense of the other. But a certain shift in the Soviet stand was nevertheless evident following Indira Gandhi's visit to the Soviet Union. There was a marked upswing in the criticism of Pakistan in the Soviet press. The Soviet media started playing up the anti-Pakistani resolutions that were being passed by various bodies in the Soviet Union. Deputy Foreign Minister Nikolai Firyubin, who came to India in the fall of October 1971, expressed his full agreement with India's assessment of the tense situation in India, which as he put it, "endangers the course of peace in the area."\textsuperscript{21}

When on 3 December 1971 Pakistan launched a massive attack on several Indian cities, the Soviet Union stood firmly behind India. Apart from extending its military support the Soviet Union used its diplomacy to help the conflict localized. It sensed the danger that might flow from a possible Chinese involvement in the conflict. Hence as early as 5 December, it came out strongly in support of India and issued a warning to all powers to keep out of the conflict.\textsuperscript{22}

At the U.N. also the Soviet support of India's position

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{20} \textit{The Statesman}, Delhi, 29 Oct 1971
\item \textsuperscript{21} \textit{The Times of India}, New Delhi, 27 Oct 1971
\item \textsuperscript{22} \textit{The Hindustan Times}, New Delhi, 6 Dec 1971
\end{itemize}
and of the Bangladesh aspirations came loud and clear. The U.S. sponsored proposal calling simply for a ceasefire and unconditional withdrawal of Indian troops from East Bengal was vetoed and resolutely countered by the Soviet Union with the insistence that without a political settlement in East Bengal which is based on the "lawful rights and interests of its people" no permanent peace in the area could be achieved. It became clear thus that the Soviet Union was determined to prevent interference by outside powers in the affairs of the subcontinent which would inevitably materialise, had the tensions of the type seen in 1971 continued to prevail there.  

The emergence of Bangladesh was an event of major importance in the subcontinent. For India it was a major victory of democratic socialism. The importance of Bangladesh to the U.S.S.R. lies mainly in its impact on the balance of political and military power in the subcontinent. Since the 1971 war, the objective of Soviet diplomacy in the subcontinent, according to Bhabani Sen Gupta, have been (1) to restore stability in the context of a balance of power based on Indian primacy; (2) to promote normalization of relations towards this end, with India and Bangladesh coordinating their negotiating positions with regard to Pakistan; and (3) to deny China and the United States any role, negative or positive, in the process of normalization. These objectives imposed on Moscow the quite formidable task of helping the new Republic of Bangladesh to its feet, while simultaneously promoting the primacy of India and endeavoring to mend fences with Pakistan.

Moscow recognized Bangladesh on January 24, 1972, the first

23 Izvestia, 11 Dec 1971
24 V.P. Dutt, India's Foreign Policy, Vikas, New Delhi.
major power, and one of the first nations to do so. Within two weeks Pravda announced that Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had been invited to pay an official visit to the Soviet Union.26

A trade deal was concluded with Bangladesh in March 1972 involving the exchange of Soviet equipment and material for the traditional exports of the area. Subsequent trade-and-aid negotiations resulted in a three year pact for a yearly trade worth $435 million and a modest Soviet commitment to provide the equivalent of $3 million to finance projects in the public sector. Almost overnight some 400 industrial units were created by nationalisation, including jute and textile owned by Pakistani capitalists.27

The most expensive and important service the Soviet Union gave Bangladesh was the clearing of the heavily mined shipping channels of Chittagong and Cox's Bazar, free of cost. Operating with a 2 unit Soviet fleet, the Russians completed the operation in two years, salvaging 17 ships ranging from a 15,000 ton freighter to small coastal ships and barges.28

The Soviet Union also welcomed Mujibur Rahman's initiative to conclude a 15 year treaty with India, signed on 19 March 1972 during the Indian Prime Minister Mrs. Gandhi's visit to Bangladesh. The treaty was claimed to be inspired by common ideals of peace, secularism, democracy, socialism and nationalism.

26 Pravda, 6 Feb 1972
27 Bhabani Sen Gupta, Soviet South Asian Relations in 1970 and Beyond, op.cit.
28 Ibid., p.158
(B) **Indian Ocean**

(i) **The Soviet Strategy**: Until the advent of the 1970s the overriding external force in the Indian Ocean had been British, and to a considerably lesser extent Portugese, Dutch and French. In 1968 the British Government announced the phased withdrawal of its military presence east of Suez. The British decision to withdraw and the concomitant appearance of a few Soviet naval vessels in the area shot the once neglected Indian Ocean into prominence. It has focused much more on the political, economic and military competition between the great powers rather than on the aspirations of the littoral states, particularly their cooperative endeavours. The vacuum created by the British withdrawal was regarded by the superpowers as to significant and too dangerous to be left to the littorals, since the naval powers of the nations bordering the Indian Ocean were regarded as too weak to dominate the Ocean.  

   Justifying their naval presence as the continuation of traditional policies of securing their vital interests, both the United States and the Soviet Union began to increase and continued to increase their naval strength in the Indian Ocean. Thus the decade of the 1970s witnessed the emergence of the Indian Ocean as another theatre of big power rivalry.

   The British decision to withdraw from the area alarmed the American and Chinese alike, both believing that the resulting power vacuum would be exploited by the Soviet Union. The appearance of a few Soviet vessels in the Ocean was immediately interpreted as Soviet efforts to step up its naval activities in order to fill the vacuum. Not much

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29 Alvin J. Cottrell, and R.M. Burrell, "No Power can Hope to Dominate the Indian Ocean", *New Middle East*, No.36, September 1971, p.35

30 *New York Times*, 12 Jan 1968
weight was accorded at the time to the argument that the Soviet naval entry into the Indian Ocean could have been a reaction to America's introduction into the region of the Polaris-Poseidon nuclear submarine fleet. Neither was it considered that the appearance of the Soviet vessels merely coincided with Britain's decision to withdraw. Available evidence makes it quite clear that the Soviet entry was strongly influenced by its determination to achieve seaborne nuclear parity with the United States on the one hand, and the ongoing competition between the superpowers for political influence and economic gains on the other.31

Although the General Assembly passed various resolutions regarding the implementation of the Declaration of the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace in 1974 and in 1975 progress towards the establishment of peace zone was not impressive mainly because of the lack of interest shown by the superpowers.32

In the past, superpower capabilities to respond militarily to crisis situations in a swift and decisive manner were rather limited. Building such a capability was considered in the mid-sixties and the proposal was vetoed by a U.S. Congress suspicious of wars of intervention in the wake of the Vietnam experience. But now both the superpowers have demonstrated their capabilities to intervene effectively in the Indian Ocean area and also sustain interventionary operations for long periods. The Taboz incident in which U.S. ships and aircraft operating from Diego Gracia and Egypt in a combined operation tried to rescue the American hostages in Iran in the summer of 1980, is a case in point. Though the mission

failed, it did expose the vulnerabilities of littoral states to a combined assault by the U.S. forces.

U.S. interest in the Indian Ocean is part of its overall stake in the Asia-Pacific region. U.S. trade with this region has overtaken its economic interactions with the EEC and accounts for more than one-fourth of all U.S. foreign commerce. In 1977 this amounted to $62 billion. U.S. exports in the same year to ASEAN nations amounted to $24 billion. Arguing the case for an increase role for the U.S. navy in the region, Admiral Maurice F. Weisner of the U.S. navy had pointed out that the "Asia-Pacific region is a major reservoir of strategic raw materials, the significance of which has sharpened substantially in an era of heightened global competition for increasingly scarce resources." 33

In a Rand Corporation Study 1977, Prof Guy J. Pauker argued forcefully for additional U.S. military capability to deal with what he considered the rising third world trade unionism. His thesis that the U.S. should be ready to respond militarily to instabilities in the third world before the establishment of a new international economic order, which he interpreted as a demand for redistribution of power at the international level, was widely discussed in the western strategic circles. Significantly, the Guy Pauker thesis appeared at a time when the Carter administration was having under consideration the proposal to set up the RDF. The RDF was advertised as a deterrent force against Soviet incursions into the Gulf region. 34

The global strategy of the Western Alliance, spearheaded

34 Ibid., p.62
by the United States is undergoing very significant changes. These changes are structured on three fundamental factors where the U.S. enjoys a lead and superiority over the Soviet Union: technology, strategic mobility especially of the naval air military forces, and control of natural resources. Soviet global strategy exhibits a degree of parallelism though inhibited in a large measure by the limitations of its capabilities, and thus appears to be more reactive rather than initiative. Western global strategy, according to Jasjit Singh, manifests itself in three interrelated main areas: (1) Maintaining a favourable strategic balance vis-à-vis the Soviet Union; (ii) Extending control and influence over the world's resources which mostly lie in the "third world" under-developed/developing countries; and (iii) Harnessing advanced and emerging technologies to exploit resource base and upgrade capabilities for power projection ranging from the deep oceans, through triple-canopy tropical jungles to outer space.35

From the global perspective, the entry of the Soviet Navy in the Indian Ocean is part of the determined efforts of the Soviet Union during the past decade to emerge as the dominant naval power of the world. The Soviet Navy has entered the Indian Ocean after making its presence felt at important check points of sea communication like the Dardanelles, the Skagerrah Strait, and the Tushima Strait. To make its activities more effective the Soviets want to set up full-fledged naval bases in the region. Although they have not succeeded in setting up such bases so far, the treaties they have concluded in recent years with a number of countries in the region and the fleet port facilities they

have acquired in places like Aden, Iraq, Mauritius, the Seychelles Islands, Somalia, the Socotra Island, Sri Lanka, etc. 36

Though India and the Soviet Union have often voiced their opposition to the U.S. naval base in Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean Soviets too have expanded their naval presence in the Indian Ocean since 1968. This explains why, during Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's visit to Moscow in September 1971, the Soviets merely agreed "to study" the question of making the Indian Ocean a Zone of Peace and "to solve it together with other powers on an equal basis". 37

The Soviet strategy in the Indian Ocean region is guided, in a large measure, by parameters and objectives similar to that of the United States; and may also be seen to operate in bi-planar dimensions. Perhaps the strongest incentive flows from the function of securing a role for the Soviet Navy to support the status of the Soviet Union as a global 'super' power. However, since the Soviet Union is lagging behind the U.S. in many spheres, especially strategic mobility, technology and naval-air capability, its strategy is a reactive one, and its policy options based more on responses to U.S. initiatives. 38

The Indian Ocean and its littoral is of special interest to the Soviet Union because of their geographic proximity with each other, and in more ways than one, the Indian Ocean and its littoral constitutes the soft, vulnerable underbelly of the Soviet Union in strategic terms. Any U.S. move in this

36 See B. Vivekananda, 'India and Britain' in Bimal Prasad, ed., India's Foreign Policy: Studies in Continuity and Change, Vikas, New Delhi, 1979, p.38
38 Jasjit Singh, op.cit., p.152
region, feels Jasjit Singh, must be seen by the Soviets as hostile and threatening to Soviet security, a subject on which the Soviets harbour sensitivities bordering on paranoia. The "Choke points" of Suez Canal, Horn of Africa and the Malacca Straits region, and the larger "getways" to the Indian Ocean dominated by pro-U.S. Australia and South Africa not only place severe limitations on Soviet ability to project power and influence in the Indian Ocean but impose an even greater strategic limitation on its ability to redeploy and reinforce its naval capabilities in the Pacific and Atlantic Ocean. 39

It is pertinent to mention that the Soviet Union has supplied economic and military hardware including missiles, naval ships and aircraft to a number of Indian Ocean nations including Egypt, Ethiopia, Somalia, Mozambique, South Yemen, Iraq, Afghanistan, India, Vietnam and Indonesia. 40

In 1976, during Mrs. Gandhi's visit to Moscow there appeared to be some change in the Indian Ocean policy of the Soviet Union, for the Soviets stated that they were ready "to participate" with the other countries concerned in any move to make the Indian Ocean a zone of peace. They also supported the desire of the peoples of the Indian Ocean region to prevent this Ocean "from becoming an arena for (the) setting up of foreign military bases." 41

Presumably they calculated that the increase in their naval activity between 1971 and 1976 and their acquisition of military bases in Somaliland (which they were forced to

39 Jasjit Singh, op.cit.
41 "Joint Declaration...", Soviet Review, 21 June, 1975 p.37
to abandon subsequently) had made it possible for them to negotiate with the United States, on this issue as equals. However, during Prime Minister Morarji Desai's visit, the Soviets expressed their support "for the striving of the peoples of the area to make the Ocean a zone of peace". And in the joint Indo-Soviet declaration, the two countries urged the removal of all the foreign military bases existing in the Indian Ocean and prevention of establishment of the new ones. 42

Evidently, the Soviet position on the issue of foreign military bases in the Indian Ocean, is definitely quite close to that of India. It can be argued that in the age of the international ballistic missile, the Soviets do not need military bases in the Indian Ocean. By the same logic the United States and its allies too do not need such bases in the Indian Ocean, especially when it is claimed that "the Soviet Union is perfectly well targeted by second strike U.S. missiles and submarines stationed in the Pacific and the North Atlantic." 43

The western powers also hold that the expansion of the Soviet fleet in the Indian Ocean 'endangers the security of the United States, Britain, Australia and of the West as a whole. 44 This explains why the oil fields around the shores of the Persian Gulf are among the few pieces of real estates the West might use nuclear weapons to defend. 45 From this it

42 Ibid., 3 Nov 1977, pp. 21-22
43 Russell Spurr, "World War in the Indian Ocean: Prospect of Super Power Deal", The Times of India, New Delhi, 9 Dec 1977
follows that for the security of their tanker routes through the Persian Gulf and across the Western Indian Ocean to Europe, Australia and Japan, the Western Powers must maintain and strengthen their military presence in the Indian Ocean. It also follows that since in this region Saudi Arabia and Iran together control 48 per cent of OPEC (Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries) output, the security of these countries and the continuance of the existing pro-western governments in them should be "the prime objective of U.S. foreign policy."46

This was why, in the wake of the break-up of Pakistan (i.e., much before the oil crisis of 1973), when India appeared to have become the preeminent power in South Asia, Iran started getting from the United States virtually any weapons system it wanted. Whereas from 1950 to 1971 Iran was allowed to purchase from the United States weapons worth $1.2 billion, it spent between 1971 and 1976 as much as $11.8 billion in the United States on military equipment, with smaller purchases elsewhere. And U.S. arms sales to Saudi Arabia totalled $5.8 billion during the period 1974-76.47

It is not without significance that these massive arms transfers took place after the liberation of Bangladesh. The United States realized that Pakistan could no longer serve as a counterweight to India. It, therefore, presumably decided to build up Iran's military capability and make it as strong as India. Obviously, it wanted Iran to play the role it had believed Pakistan capable of playing in this region.

46 Ibid.
till 1971. It also wanted Iran to protect its interests (i.e., U.S. interests) in the Persian Gulf and in the Arab lands south of it. Besides, the huge purchases of modern arms by Iran and Saudi Arabia in the United States was a profitable business for the U.S. war industry and arms dealers. 48

Though India has friendly relations with most Gulf States, Iran and Saudi Arabia are likely to endanger India's security at least indirectly in view of the fact that in most Indo-Pakistani conflicts in the past Pakistan had received support from both Iran and Saudi Arabia. It may be recalled that during the last armed conflict between India and Pakistan (Dec. 1971), Pakistani aircraft not only sought shelter in Iran but also used Iran as a base to fly essential supplies to Pakistan. Iranian experts using Iranian materials controlled the fire when oil and gas tanks were hit in Karachi. Medical facilities and supplies, especially oil, ammunition and spare parts, were provided to Pakistan, and Iran shared maritime air reconnaissance with Pakistan after the Indian Navy had blocked the Pakistan coast. 49

India has, of course, desisted from criticising U.S. arms sales to Iran and Saudi Arabia openly and strongly. Its dependence on West Asian oil — the Gulf States supply almost two thirds of its oil requirements — and some other considerations prevent it from doing so. Yet is is evident that China, Iran, Pakistan and the United States are engaged in an effort to contain India.

The geopolitical imperatives affecting the Pacific-Indian Ocean may also be affected by another dimension — the naval power of the People's Republic of China (PRC). It is believed

that PRC plans to create a force of at least 12 nuclear-missile armed submarines to provide it a nuclear second-strike capability. The limited range of its SLMBs may dictate a deployment in the north-west Arabian Sea region to provide a serious and credible threat against important and critical targets in the Soviet Union. This in turn would generate the need for home-port facilities in the Indian Ocean. Thus, it may be reasonable to expect a revival of Chinese interests and activities in the Indian Ocean region in the years ahead. PRC's quest for attaining a major world power status would also point towards an expansion of its sea power, qualitatively, quantitatively, and geographically. Chinese relationships and sale of naval ships, submarines and equipment to countries of the Indian Ocean littoral may be seen as the early (and necessary) foundations on which to build the thrust of this expansion of its sea power, both in its search for greater role and status in this part of the world as well as a specific requirement of nuclear and military strategy against the Soviet Union, a country perceived as its major adversary.  

(ii) India's Importance in The Region: The importance of India in the Indian Ocean is enhanced by its north western coast which is very close to the Persian Gulf area. Further south, a future Indian navy might gain control over sea lanes leading in and out of the Gulf in the direction of the Pacific if the Maldives is also included in India's security perimeter. Towards South-East Asia, India possesses the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, close to Burma, Malaysia, and Indonesia, India's North-Eastern coast forms part of the Gulf of Bengal. Thus, India has enormous significance for the world power blocks on the one hand, and the two rival communist systems on the

50 Jasjit Singh, op.cit., pp. 152-53
other. In the power triangle — the U.S.A., the U.S.S.R., and China — India's geopolitical position, and resources could be a balancing factor. Thus, geographically, India, as the map would show, is of greater significance to the U.S.S.R. than to U.S.A. or to Europe.

Moreover, Indian Ocean is assuming greater importance for the Soviet Union from economic, political and strategic point of view. Through the Ocean flows a considerable part of Soviet East-West internal trade, and its importance for Soviet domestic trade will increase in the 1980s when larger quantities of Siberian oil will have to be transported across the seas to European Russia. This trade route for Soviet Union is the only round the year open marine communication link between western Soviet Union, which is the centre of political activity, greater population density as compared to the eastern part and industry, with its Far-Eastern ports. The Trans-Siberian Railways is the only link between the two parts, which may not be able to carry all the increased load of traffic. Besides, the eastern part of this railway and especially the Soviet Pacific Fleet base at Vladivostok is insecure in the face of the Chinese threat.


52 Ibid.


54 A Lodozhsky, "The USSR's Efforts To Turn The Indian Ocean Into A Zone Of Peace", International Affairs, Moscow, No.8, August 1981, p.44.

So safeguarding these vital shipping routes across the Indian Ocean appears to be a strategic requirement for the Soviets. Apart from the need to safeguard these sea routes, security of Soviet Central Asia is also affected by it as it is common knowledge that the Pentagon reinforced the Persian Gulf and the Arabian Sea with the latest nuclear submarines carrying Trident Strategic missiles with targets in the Soviet Union.  

Soviet anxiety over the U.S. arms build up is related to the compulsions of its geography. The length of the Soviet frontiers is more than 60,000 kilometers of which not less than two third accounts for the sea frontiers. All the vitally important routes linking the European with the Asiatic and Far Eastern parts of the U.S.S.R. pass through the Mediterranean and Indian Ocean and this ice-free southern route is the only link between the Soviet ports in the Far East and the Black Sea.

The existing internal land routes cannot be a substitute for these more economical and convenient sea routes and thus Soviet Union wants to keep the Indian Ocean clear of the American and Chinese domination. Soviet Union worries particularly, is the arrival of U.S. nuclear submarines in the Ocean, which can endure longer and operate at greater depths. The motives of American deployment in the area is also clear from a comment made by an American military correspondent, that "in the age of missiles and nuclear war-heads, the Indian Ocean... serves as a huge launch pad for missile carrying submarines. It is as near to many Russian military and industrial centres... Moreover within the rach of naval missiles there are vast territories of Soviet Siberia."

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56 M. Kosova, "Pentagon Shadow Over the Indian Ocean", International Affairs, Moscow, No.1, January 1980, p.142
57 V.K. Bhasin, Super Power Rivalry In the Indian Ocean, New Delhi, 1981, p.53
58 Quoted by Collin Cross, The Fall of British Empire, London Holder Sloughton, 1968, p.135
Furthermore, the Sino-American thaw developed after a sharp deterioration in Sino-Soviet relations especially after the clash along Ussuri river. Thus international power again got transformed from a two power adverse partnership game into a more complex one which was more unfavourable to the U.S.S.R. Indian Ocean has also become a centre of power rivalry among the superpowers, and the U.S. had deployed Polaris submarines with Poseidon missiles barrel pointed towards the Soviet Union.

The significance and strategic location of Indian subcontinent, and particularly the land mass of India itself is crucial for the Soviet Union. India's strategic location in the Indian Ocean gives her a central position in the Asian politics. Moreover, India is adjacent to the tier that borders on the southern flank of the Soviet Union and has enormous significance for the world power blocks on the one hand and the two rival communist systems on the other. Furthermore, the Soviet dispute with China has at least two crucial factors for similarity with the Indian disagreement with China. On the one hand, the U.S.S.R. and India both have frontier wars over disputed territory with China, and on the other, both states share borders with China, Russia in the north and India in the south. Thus, the overall geopolitical consideration on the whole advised Soviet Union to be close to India. Thus, the Soviet policy towards India, according to J. Bandopadhyaya, "is based on mutuality of national interests and convergence of political understanding of world politics and international relations. Thus, India's strategic location in the Indian Ocean gives her a central position in Asian politics and adds to her geopolitical importance in the world. All major sea and air routes of the world pass through India and Indian Ocean are an
From the geographical point of view as Nehru often used to say, India is a kind of bridge between the East and the West and becomes inevitably involved in major global issues.

It must be noted that all the Indian Ocean countries do not by any means support the Zone of Peace concept wholeheartedly though a majority of them, being non-aligned, certainly do.

The big powers are so overwhelmingly superior in military strength that there is nothing the Indian Ocean states can do but build up relentlessly world opinion against the obduracy of big powers. The struggle for dismantling all foreign bases and evacuation of all foreign forces from the Indian Ocean and its maritime states must continue. This might eventually affect public opinion in the United States which may force the administration to take action in the desired direction.

The littoral states also need to promote economic interdependence among themselves. For policy of resources is an important as removal of mutual suspicions. In this way the development of the region as a whole may be greater than the sum total of the development of individual countries.

India being the largest country in the region with long standing democratic traditions could well take the initiative in developing a benevolent, benign and tolerant leadership to instil confidence in the smaller nations of the region. A regional and consultative approach on all problems may gradually convince the nations that India is desirous of helping

59 J. Bandopadhyaya, The Making of India's Foreign Policy, Allied Pub., New Delhi, 1980, p.32
60 Ibid.
and becoming an equal partner and does not wish to dominate or exert a dominating influence in the Ocean.

In dealing with advanced countries of the world, the littoral states should take a practical view of the world affairs. They must build up adequate defences against the threats they face. In this respect India will have to shoulder the biggest burden in strengthening and expanding its naval and maritime forces and superstructure and thus, in close cooperation with the maritime forces of the neighbouring countries, in a regional approach, present a credible threshold of deterrence to any potential aggressor.

Security and self reliance for littoral states can only come about by internal strength and stability, economic development and self-reliance, and a naval strategy to provide effective and credible sea power to defend and safeguard national interests. Unitedly they can, in the coming years, develop into a reckonable forum-for-peace whose attainment by persuasion and negotiation appears despairingly elusive.

(C) Soviet Union and the Afghan Imbroglio

The world was taken by surprise by the events of 27-28 December 1979 when sizeable number of Soviet troops equipped with sophisticated weapons invaded Afghanistan in which Hafizullah Amin was killed and Babrak Karmal was installed as the new ruler of Afghanistan. The foundations of Soviet invasion of Afghanistan had been laid much earlier and the December 1979 episode was the final act.

The overthrow of the Daud regime in Afghanistan on April 27, 1978, was no ordinary event. Afghanistan through the ages had seen so many upheavals when kings and conquerors had bitten the dust in orgies of massacres and mayhem. But what had
happened on that day in April 1978 was the end of a long era of succession of autocrats and tyrants. Afghanistan, once the backwaters of Asia had now joined the mainstream of the progressive comity of nations. Those who had now assumed power did not belong to ruling dynasties or powerful tribal hierarchies. Unlike past political upheavals it was not a mere replacement of one ruling clique by another. It was a revolution since the power had passed from the representatives of a set of exploiting classes to the representatives of the exploited and the oppressed classes. This was reflected in the 30-point programme which the first President of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan Nur Mohammad Taraki, announced on May 9, 1978.61

According to Thomas T. Hammond, the information for preliminary planning by Moscow would have been collected when General A. Epishev, the head of the Main Political Administration of the Soviet armed forces, made an inspection tour of Afghanistan in April 1979.62 This was followed by the visit to Afghanistan by General Ivan G. Pavloski, Deputy Minister of Defence from August 1979 to October, 1979.63

In late November 1979, Moscow put its troops in a state of alert and reservists were called up to fill up understrength combat divisions in the central Asian military district. Bridging equipment was moved to the Afghan border.64

The Warsaw Pact countries had also placed their troops on an advanced stage of readiness. By mid-December Moscow had airlifted about two battalions of troops with heavy weapons into Bagram Air Base, whose management had already fallen into the Russian hands.65

A statement published in Pravda on 13 December 1979 stated that the Soviet Union had decided to grant Afghanistan's request... (for) immediate aid and support to send to Afghanistan a limited Soviet military contingent that will be used exclusively for assistance in preventing the armed interference from the outside. The Soviet contingent will be completely pulled out of Afghanistan when the reason that necessitated such an action exists no longer.66

By 1 January 1980, fifty thousand Soviet troops were in Afghanistan and more were on the way. Thus by January end 1980 the number of Soviet armed forces in Afghanistan was estimated between 80,000 to 100,000.67

The Soviet troops entered Afghanistan during the last week of December 1979 in defence of the PDPA regime and its security interest in the region. L.I. Brezhnev considered the activities of outside powers as posing "a serious threat to Afghan revolution and also to our southern borders."68

Regarding the entry of Soviet troops in Afghanistan Babrak Karmal had stated: "Today I declare once more to all the people of the world that the entry of the United Soviet contingents

65 Ibid.
66 Pravda, 31 Dec 1979
into Afghanistan was in accordance with the request of the late Noor Mohammad Taraki and later, of Amin's government, and was begun much earlier than the election of Babrak Karmal to the responsible position of leadership of the Party and the state."\textsuperscript{69} Shah Mohammad Dost, the DRA Minister of External Affairs has confirmed this. He has also claimed that it was Nur Mohammad Taraki who had requested the Soviet Union for military assistance under the Treaty of Friendship and Mutual Cooperation which Afghanistan had signed with the Soviet Union on December 5, 1978.\textsuperscript{70}

The emergence of Babrak Karmal regime backed by Soviet troops pushed Afghanistan into Soviet orbit and its non-aligned status was completely undermined. Engineering of the April 1978 coup and signing of the Afghan Soviet friendship treaty in December 1978 were steps towards the final takeover of Afghanistan by Moscow in December 1979.

\textit{International Response:} It is one of Newton's Laws that every action evokes reaction. Similar analogy is applicable in international relations. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan took the world by surprise and was severely condemned and criticised. The United Nations General Assembly and Security Council have passed resolutions condemning the aggression in Afghanistan and called for the withdraw of all foreign troops from Afghanistan. Besides, the European Economic Community (EEC), Organisation of Islamic Countries, Seventh and Eighth Nonaligned summits, and other countries have

\textsuperscript{69} Excerpts of Interviews and Speeches delivered by Babrak Karmal, General Secretary of PDPA, CC and President of the ORA, Kabul, 1981, p. 130, quoted in Kalim Bahadur, 'The Politics of the Sour Revolution', \textit{op.cit.}, p.31

\textsuperscript{70} Kalim Bahadur, 'The Politics of the Sour Revolution, p.31
severely criticized the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan while calling for the unconditional withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan. However, the United States has played a leading role in this regard by not only condemning the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan but has taken certain steps since 1980 to help resolve the tangle.

The U.S. Response: The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan proved instrumental in changing U.S. perceptions about Moscow. As President Carter said that "the Soviets have seriously misjudged our own nation's strength and resolve and our unity and determination and the condemnation that has accrued to them by the "World community". They underestimated the courage and the tenacity of freedom in that country (Afghanistan) and they did not anticipate the world's quick and forceful response to their aggression." The U.S. reaction to those developments irked Moscow and the Soviet media especially Pravda accused the United States of "anti-Soviet hysteria reminiscent of the lamentable cold war times." To this President Carter reacted: "We do not want to return to the cold war, we do not want to have a confrontation with the Soviet Union. The Soviets have tried to mislead the world, they have failed". However, the Soviet media continued its criticism of Washington while concealing the real facts.

By January 1980, the Carter administration had realized that the Soviet invasion and subsequent occupation of Afghanistan posed a challenge to U.S. strategic interests in

71 Presidential Documents, No.16, 28 Jan 1980, p.111
72 Ibid., No. 16, 25 Feb 1980, pp.386-87
73 Pravda, 8 Jan 1980
74 Presidential Documents, No.16, 3 March 1980, p.387
the Gulf region and South West Asia and a direct threat to its security. As President Carter said on 14 January 1980: "Our own nation's security was directly threatened. There is no doubt that the Soviet move into Afghanistan, if done without adverse consequences, would have resulted in the temptation to move again until they reached warm water port or until they acquired control over a major portion of the world's oil supplies... The Soviet Union has altered the strategic situation in that part of the world in a very ominous fashion. It places the Soviets within aircraft striking range of the vital oil resources of the Persian Gulf; it threatens a strategically located country Pakistan, (and) it poses the prospect of increased Soviet pressure on Iran and on other nations of the Middle East." The increasing Soviet influence after the April 1978 in Kabul was detrimental to the United States strategic interests in the region. Such an indication was given by Harold H. Saunders, Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs in a statement before the sub-committee on Asian and Pacific Affairs of the House of Representatives on 26 September 1979 when he said: "our effort to encourage peace and stability in that troubled region is clearly made more difficult by Afghanistan's internal unrest and exodus of refugees from Afghanistan." The United States regretted the "reorientation in Afghan foreign policy... away from its traditional genuine non-alignment..." Washington also realized that direct interference in Afghanistan by any country including the Soviet Union would threaten the integrity of that country as well as the peace in the region.

75 Ibid., No.16, 14 Jan 1980, p.41
76 Ibid., 28 Jan 1980, p.165
77 Ibid., p. 185
78 Department of State Bulletin, Washington, D.C., Oct 1979
79 Ibid., Dec 1979
and it was a matter of concern to the United States. American scholars were also taking pains to show that the Afghan revolution and the friendly help the Soviet Union gave to defend Afghanistan's independence and sovereignty is in reality a smoke-screen to "cover the Soviet desire to fulfil Russia's age-old imperial dream of establishing a warm-water port on the Indian Ocean from which it could interdict western oil supplies... The Kremlin seeks to close the remaining gaps in an arch of influence stretching from the Horn of Africa to Central Asia." Some American scholars are more forthright on this crucial issue. According to them "the combined effect of the revolution in Iran and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in U.S. perception was that a significant and quite abrupt deterioration in the local geopolitical balance had occurred, to compensate for which a military response was not only in order but imperative. The United States not only condemned the Soviet aggression but also took some measures to persuade Moscow to vacate the aggression in Afghanistan.

The specific U.S. measures against the Soviet action in Afghanistan were envisaged in his message to the nation on 4 January 1980 suggesting U.S. measures in this regard:

1) Blocking grain sales to the Soviet Union beyond the 8 million metric tons already contracted; this means withholding an additional 17 million metric tons which the Soviets have already ordered;

2) Stopping the sale of high technology and strategic items to the Soviet Union including computers and oil drilling equipment;

80 Ibid.
iii) Curbing Soviet fishing privileges in U.S. waters. The catch allowed to Soviet fishing fleets in 1980 would be reduced from 350,000 tons to 75,000 tons, resulting in an estimated Soviet economic loss of 35 million to 60 million;

iv) Delaying the opening of a new Soviet Consulate in New York and an American Consulate in Kiev;

v) Postponing new cultural and economic exchanges between the two countries, now under consideration;

vi) Boycotting the 1980 Summer Olympics in Moscow.

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan had accelerated the process of reinforcements of some form of qualified globalism for the U.S. policy. "The invasion appeared to challenge the United States to create a policy based on a new national consensus, one that required the necessary military power to support whatever role it determined to play." 

Reaction in South Asia: India's Perception: The Soviet armed intervention in Afghanistan shook all the national capitals in the South Asian neighbourhood. This, according to Bhabani Sen Gupta, changed the entire course of Afghan history and an independent and non-aligned country became a "satellite of Soviet Empire". The background of Soviet invasion was laid down during the last week of April 1978 when the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) seized power with Soviet help, by overthrowing and simultaneously killing Sardar Mohammad Daoud. Between April 1978 and December 1979, the Soviet military advisers and troops had started reaching Afghanistan for a virtual takeover. The PDPA regime had

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83 Department of State Bulletin, Washington D.C., Jan 1980
84 United States International Communication Agency (USICA), Chronology of Afghanistan Events: A Retrospective, New Delhi, 1980, p.2
departed from the traditional path of genuine nonalignment and Afghanistan was gradually pushed into the Soviet orbit. The Soviet invasion, says Bhabani Das Gupta, finally sealed the fate of Afghanistan as an independent and sovereign country. Today's Afghanistan is a client and satellite state of Soviet Union.  

Major Indian newspapers had given different view of the Soviet action. The Hindu called the intervention "clear military aggression on the part of the Soviet Union against the small nation of Afghanistan and found it reprehensible on two counts: first, for its blatant violation of national sovereignty supposed to be guaranteed in international law and by U.N. Charter; secondly, as a manifestation of superpower bullying that threatens peace as well as regional security".  

The Indian Express took a mellower view of the Soviet action: "There is no need to credit Moscow with all kinds of malevolent intentions. It is enough that they have placed themselves in a better position to intervene in a region where disaffected minorities like the Baluchis and the Kurds could yield rich opportunities. These are possibilities which must cause at least as much concern in India as the possible threat from Pakistan's newly acquired weaponry."  

The Hindustan Times saw the two superpowers equally responsible for the Afghan crisis. "If Soviet intervention is to be condemned, so must also be the American. What is more, any strengthening of the Pakistan army as a part of the power

86 The Hindu, 1 Jan 1980  
87 Indian Express, Delhi, 1 Jan 1980
game will only revive the tensions on this sub-continent. Of course, the danger to Pakistan from the west is now real. This danger is not so much of invasion as of sap and mine, the erosion of the authority in the Pathan and Baluchi area. So there is every reason to feel nervous. But perhaps all such consequences can be limited and the tension on the sub-continent avoided."

U.S. supply of arms to Pakistan caused much concern in India that it could increase tension in South Asia. Mrs. Gandhi attempted to bring back some semblance of balance to the Indian position. At a press conference on January 16, 1980, she disapproved interference by any foreign power in the affairs of another country and said that the Soviet presence in Afghanistan had increased tension and moved dangerously closer to the Indian border. Her Foreign Minister told the Lok Sabha: "India has close and friendly relations with the government and people of Afghanistan and we are deeply concerned and vitally interested in the security, independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of this traditionally friendly neighbour of ours and we believe that they have every right to safeguard them."  

Mrs. Gandhi took a regional view of the Afghan crisis rather than a spatial global view which prevailed in the United States, China and Pakistan. Seen from the pure regional angle, the strategic divide in South Asia is between Pakistan and India. Pakistan's traditional allies are the United States and China, India's the U.S.S.R. In Indira Gandhi's view what was needed in the interest of regional stability and

88 The Hindustan Times, Delhi, 1 Jan 1980
89 The Indian Express, Delhi, 17 Jan 1980
balance of power, according to Sen Gupta, was to contain the Afghan crisis, not to aggravate it and enlarge its context and scope. It would be necessary to obtain the withdrawal of the bulk of the Soviet forces from Afghanistan within a specific timeframe. But this would not be possible if the insurgency was internationalised and if Pakistan were converted into a base for Sino-US military operations against the Soviets in Afghanistan.

Mrs. Gandhi's policy also implied that while India could line with a Marxist Afghanistan passing into the orbit of the Soviet block, it could hardly line with a Pakistan rearmed by the U.S. and China, everless with a Pakistan destabilised and perhaps dismembered by the intermeshing impact of great power confrontation and internal conflict. Mrs. Gandhi's way to stabilise the situation and enforce a certain element of caution in the actions of Pakistan, the U.S. and China was to unequivocally reaffirm the strategic linkage between India and the Soviet Union in the event of a major conflict building up in South Asia.  

Pakistani Perception: The Soviet intervention in Afghanistan has brought the largest trauma in Pakistan. Since the revolution of April 1978, half a million Afghans had taken refuge in Pakistan, thousands of them were actively engaged in an armed insurgency against the pro-Soviet regime. That Pakistan was training and arming a large number of insurgents and permitted other powers, notably the United States, China and Egypt, to feed the rebels with arms and ammunitions had been common knowledge. Faced with the twin problems of legitimacy and tackling the problem of Baluch and Pakhtoon


92 For a comprehensive report see The Indian Express, Delhi, 10 Oct 1979
rationalism, the Pak military regime began look to the Afghan rebels for solutions. It started training Afghan refugees for insurgency activities with the objective to bring down the revolutionary regime and replace it by a friendly fundamentalist regime to offset the problems in the provinces.93

If the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan poses an unprecedented threat to Pakistan, Carter's reflexive offer of military and economic aid immediately cast Gen. Zia in an important international role and ended his isolation from the community of polite and civilised governments. Gen. Zia clutched at his unexpected luck, but was far from anxious to provide the Soviet Union too much. His government's first official reaction to the Soviet action was somewhat cautious. On a statement issued on Dec. 29, it expressed "gravest concern at the Soviet intervention, all the more because the victim was an Islamic nation. It called for the immediate withdrawal of Soviet troops." Unofficially, however, Pakistan saw the action as part of a grand Soviet design to establish hegemony in South Asia, and regarded it as a direct threat to the security of Pakistan, Iran and other neighbouring countries.94

The Statesman wrote: "Gen. Zia painted a scenario of the Gulf region which mirrored American visions. After Soviet intervention he said, Afghanistan had become a "big red wedge". The question was whether the wedge moved west to Iran or east to Pakistan. If it moved west, the entire Gulf would be overrun. Either way the prospects were grim. He was certain that the Soviets had larger geopolitical designs. Otherwise, the presence of 80,000 Russian troops in a rugged

94 The Times of India, Delhi, 3 Jan 1980
barren country devoid of any mineral or natural resources did not make sense. The Soviet presence in Afghanistan was as much a threat to Pakistan as it was to India. More in pain than in anger Zia agreed with a reporter that Pakistan perceived Indira Gandhi to be "pro-Soviet."  

More than four years after the Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan, the Afghan problem was no nearer solution, nor did the Soviets seem any closer to establishing stability in the country. There was little doubt that Moscow's initial expectations that it could draw on the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) and on the public hatred of Hafizullah Amin to win popular legitimacy for the Karmal government and its own military presence have proved illusory. However, despite international censure and the Karmal government's inability to consolidate itself fully, there were no signs of flagging determination in Moscow. The Soviets appeared to be settling down for a longer stay till the task of consolidation is completed.  

Within weeks of the Soviet action, President Carter came out with a plan of increasing the U.S. military aid to Pakistan, reverting the April 1979 decision, which cancelled all aid programmes following confirmed reports that Pak was building a nuclear plant capable of producing materials suitable for nuclear weapons. Further, Carter's Assistant for National Security Affairs, Zbigniew Brzezinski stressed the U.S. commitment to use armed forces if necessary to help Pakistan preserve its territorial integrity. For Zia-ul-Haq the changed situation

95 The Statesman, 7 Feb 1980; Indian Express, 7 Feb 1980
offered the best opportunity to seek legitimacy at home under the pretext of a new "threat". The same threat was also used to seek enormous military aid from the U.S. Zia passed the message to the U.S. in this way... if you visualise the map of the region... then Pakistan deserves attention." 98

Reactions of Other South Asian Countries: Bhutan strongly objected to the presence of Soviet troops in Afghanistan. 99 Nepal's first reaction to the developments in Afghanistan was available on 1 January 1980 when a spokesman of the foreign ministry issued a statement in Kathmandu saying: "His Majesty's Government has been watching events in Afghanistan with increasing concern; Recent developments, including the large foreign military presence, in that non-aligned sovereign country have deeply aggravated our concern, since they pose a danger to peace and stability. His Majesty's government believes in the inviolability of the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of all states and their right to determine and chart their own destiny themselves without foreign interference. Nepal opposes foreign intervention wherever it may occur. Nepal believes as a matter of faith and principle that foreign troops be withdrawn forthwith within National boundaries." 100

At a meeting with foreign press correspondent in Kathmandu on 4 January 1980, the Nepal Foreign Minister, K.B. Shahi deplored the presence of Soviet troops in Afghanistan and called for their early withdrawal. 101

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99 S.D. Muni, "Bhutan: South Asian Initiatives", Strategic Analysis, 7(12), March 1984, p.1011
100 Rising Nepal, Kathmandu, English Daily, 2 Jan 1980
101 Ibid., 5 Jan 1980
When the issue of Afghanistan was brought before the General Assembly on 14 January 1980, Nepal's permanent representative to the U.N., Uddhave Dev Bhatta, made his country's position clear by asserting that the Soviet armed intervention in Afghanistan contributed a threat to international peace and security and unless eliminated immediately, it would have a far-reaching and negative impact on peace, stability and the atmosphere of cooperation and understanding of the region and beyond. He further added: "The presence of Soviet troops has put at stake not only the sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity of Afghanistan but also the fabric of civilised relationships between states." On 15 January 1980, Nepal voted in favour of a resolution at the emergency session of the General Assembly which called for the immediate unconditional and total withdrawal of foreign forces from Afghanistan.

The Nepalese stand on Afghanistan issue was quite different from that of India which had abstained from voting in the General Assembly on that issue. Nor did Nepal try to link Soviet intervention with the Sino-American and Pakistani designs and activities in Afghanistan which India had been emphasizing right from the beginning of the Soviet action. In fact, the Nepalese Foreign Minister K.B. Shahi at a meeting with foreign press correspondents in Kathmandu on 4 January 1980, had described the U.S. decision to rearm Pakistan as a "bilateral affair" but soon corrected himself by adding that "rearming of any country in any part of the world will only create tension."
Nepal also took initiatives to make other small powers of the region to realize the gravity of the situation and forge unity among them in opposing the Soviet action and remaining vigilant against the big powers interference in the internal affairs of a small power. The King of Nepal along with the Nepalese foreign Minister visited Sri Lanka, Singapore, Burma, Bangladesh and India. The contents of his talks were quite relevant in this connection. In a joint communique issued at the conclusion of his visit to Sri Lanka on 27 February 1980, it was mentioned that His Majesty and President J.R. Jayawardene "reviewed the situation in South East Asia and South Asia and noted with serious concern that developments that had been taking place there". They "reaffirmed their support for the sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity of Kampuchea and Afghanistan, and the right of those nations to decide their destiny themselves without external interference." The two Heads of the States also called for the immediate withdrawal of all foreign forces from Kampuchea and Afghanistan. In addition, they reiterated their "faith in the principles and purposes of the U.N. charter and in the policies and principles of non-alignment" and expressed their determination to continue to work to strengthen those principles. They also expressed the hope that "South Asia will be an area of peace, stability and cooperation, and called upon all to scrupulously respect the non-aligned status of the countries of this region."

The All Nepal National Students' Union, the student wing of the Communist Party of Nepal, handed over a memorandum to the Soviet Embassy in Kathmandu strongly condemning the Soviet


106 Ibid.
military intervention in Afghanistan and "the manner in which the Soviet Union in collusion with Indian expansionism have undertaken military intervention in Bangladesh, destroyed the identity of Sikkim and sought to exert political and economic pressure on small countries such as Nepal and Bhutan thereby creating danger for peace and stability in the entire subcontinent". The memorandum demanded the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of Soviet and Vietnamese forces from Afghanistan, Kampuchea and Laos and an end to military intervention and expansionism. It also called for the abrogation of the Indo-Soviet military pact.\textsuperscript{107}

Under these circumstances the Soviet leadership appears to have reassessed its options in Afghanistan. The essence of the revised policy clearly underscored by Gorbachev in his political report to the 27th Party Congress. In regard to Afghanistan he stated: "it is our vital interest that the U.S.S.R. should always have good and peaceful relations with all its neighbours. This is vitally important objective of our foreign policy."\textsuperscript{108}

Gorbachev's support to Najibullah's national reconciliation moves was a step to facilitate the Geneva talks. Under this conciliatory move the Soviet Union intended to establish a broad coalition government in Kabul with the participation of various insurgent groups based in Pakistan, in which the PDPA would retain a dominant role.\textsuperscript{109}

\textbf{Geneva Talks:} The Geneva talks to find a political solution

\textsuperscript{107} Nepal Post, Kathmandu, 16 Jan 1980
\textsuperscript{108} "Soviet View of Contemporary World", Excerpts from the Political Speech of CPSU General Secretary to the 27th Congress.
\textsuperscript{109} New Times, No. 13, April 6, 1987, p.67
to the Afghan question started in June 1982 in pursuance of the resolution passed by the General Assembly. In the wake of Pakistan's refusal to recognize the Karmal government in Kabul, the U.N. Secretary General and his personal representative, Diego Cordovez, made hectic efforts during 1981-82 to help hold "proximity talks" between Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iran. Diego Cordovez held indirect talks with the representatives of Pakistan and Iran which led to the first round of talks in Geneva in June 1982. Iran refused to take part in the negotiations. There was no outcome of the talks which led to its postponement. However, it was agreed that the "proximity talks" veered round four main points:

1) Withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan;
2) Non-interference in the internal affairs of states;
3) International guarantees of non interference; and
4) Voluntary return of the refugees to their homes.\textsuperscript{110}

The Soviet Union was a silent observer while Iran preferred to be simply "kept informed". Until the middle of 1983, resulted in the preparation of 23-page draft agreement for the consideration of "concerned parties."\textsuperscript{111} The U.N. special representative Diego Cordovez claimed that 95 per cent of the agreement was in hand.\textsuperscript{112}

But there was no satisfactory outcome because of the differing opinions among the concerned parties. The fourth round of Geneva Talks held in June 1985 also proved a failure.\textsuperscript{113} However, the eighth round of talks held in Geneva

\textsuperscript{110} U.N. Doc. A/37/482, 27 Sep 1982
\textsuperscript{112} "An Accord in the Offing", Far Eastern Economic Review, Hong Kong, 9 June 1983, p.28
\textsuperscript{113} New York Times, 28 June 1985
in the beginning of August 1986 was adjourned on 8 August 1986, in view of the reported Soviet proposal to "withdraw some troops." The diplomatic process initiated by the Secretary General of the U.N. with the support of all governments concerned and aimed at achieving through negotiations, a political settlement of the situation relating to Afghanistan, has been successfully brought to an end.

The personal representative paid an additional visit to the area from 8 to 18 March 1986 for consultations. The final round of negotiations began as proximity talks at Geneva on May 5, 1986, was suspended on 23 May 1986 for consultations and was resumed from 31 July to 8 August 1986. The personal representative visited the area from 20 November to 9 March 1987, and from 7 to 11 September 1987. The personal representative again visited the area from 18 January to 9 February 1988 and the talks resumed at Geneva from 2 March to 8 April 1988.

After more than eight years of bloody strife, the Geneva Accord signed on 15th April 1988 between the Pakistan and Afghan Foreign Ministers, with the Soviet Union and the United States standing guarantee, marked a historic moment in the history of this Asian region. The accord only guarantees that Pakistan and Afghanistan will not interfere in each other's affairs, that they will not encourage or support rebellions or secessionist activities under any pretext. What the accord does not do is provide a framework for ending the civil strife in Afghanistan. Nor is there any agreement between the U.S.S.R. and the U.S. on ending military support to their allies in Afghanistan so that the conflict will, in a sense now, be a

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fight to the finish for control of Kabul without Najibullah having the support of 100,000 Soviet troops, tanks and attack helicopters.

Since May 15, Soviet troops began to leave Afghanistan. Before the accord, the Soviets had indicated that they were not opposed to a substantially broad based coalition as an intrim arrangement, an attitude that had worried the Najibullah Government. Shevardnadze, the Foreign Minister, told the Soviet news agency Tass that he was not particularly worried about the political fortunes of people in Kabul. No one, he said, could claim a monopoly of power or "put his personal considerations and aspirations above the interests of the nation." This is however, as far as the Soviets are ready to go. They will accept a new coalition in Kabul, but only if it is not balantly anti-Soviet (as one led by the Peshawar based seven party alliance — the Islamic Unity of Afghan Mujahidin — might be). It is because of this that the Soviets have refused to promise that they will not give military aid to any government in Kabul. Their position is that Afghan-Soviet relations go back at least a decade before the happenings of 1979, and all that is not going to be given up for the sake of an expeditious withdrawal.

(D) South Asian Regional Cooperation

South Asia has become a major arena of international rivalry between major world powers. The consequence is that a complex web of strategic, military and ideological interests are so juxtaposed as to result in divisions within the region which throws up obstacles to cooperation.

Vast changes have occurred in South Asia's geopolitical situation during the last decade. Momentous developments in
1971 — the dismemberment of Pakistan and the emergence of Bangladesh as an independent country — created a new South Asian environment much more conducive to cooperation than conflicts. Since 1947 the South Asian scene had been bedevilled by the ongoing conflict between India and Pakistan, which reached its climax in the 1971 Indo-Pakistan War. Although the war truncated Pakistan, the residual state of Pakistan emerged as more viable and geographically compact. Since the Simla Agreement of 1972, Pakistan's attitude also underwent a radical change.

A direct result of the Simla Agreement is that the new state system in the region is more compact and stable, with lesser problems of national identity and integration. Further, this resulted in dissolving the artificial balance of power, created by external powers, between India and Pakistan. This was, earlier, one of the major distortions in the regional power structures, a major source of conflict and an impediment to regional cooperation. Since then, the power gap between India and her neighbours is so great that any intra-regional conflict, over regional issues and with regional initiative, becomes redundant. This, particularly, made it possible for the idea of regional cooperation to take shape. As one scholar concludes: "for 1970s, unless there are very much great changes indeed, South Asia can be considered to be a zone of peace" and when peace prevails cooperation is more feasible.

The idea of South Asian Regional Cooperation took shape through a proposal made by President Ziaur Rahman of Bangladesh in May 1980, in which he called for a summit meeting of the leaders of the seven South Asian countries, to explore the possibilities of establishing a framework for regional

115 Wayne Wilcox, The Emergence of Bangladesh, Washington, 1973, p.76
cooperation. President Ziaur Rehman argued: "The countries of South Asia share many common values that are rooted in their social, ethnic, cultural and historical tradition. Perceptions about certain specific events or political situation of the world may differ but such difference do not seem to create a gulf between them that cannot be bridged."\textsuperscript{116}

This Bangladesh proposal was endorsed by Nepal, Sri Lanka, Maldives and Bhutan, but both India and Pakistan were reticent. It was a time that Mrs. Indira Gandhi had recently returned to power (in January 1980) and her government wanted a closer scrutiny of the proposal which had been discussed by the government of Bangladesh with the Indian government led by the Janta Party. At this time India's relations with Pakistan and Bangladesh were not very close. Mrs. Gandhi's government was apprehensive that the neighbours may collectively try to isolate India on global issues and may put pressure on it in order to improve their bargaining position vis-a-vis India. India also considered unrealistically ambitious the proposal of a summit level meeting as a first step for initiating regional cooperation without any groundwork.\textsuperscript{117}

The initial reservations of India towards the Bangladesh proposal were also because of the Western support behind the move. President Carter of the U.S. in his State of Union Address on 23 January 1980, proposed a "cooperative regional security framework."\textsuperscript{118} Zbigniew Brezinski, National Security Adviser to the U.S. President and Warren Christopher, Deputy Secretary of State, visited Pakistan at this time and made an offer of U.S. arms and other assistance to help Pakistan meet

\textsuperscript{116} S.D. Muni, \textit{Regional Cooperation in South Asia}, National, 1984, p.10
\textsuperscript{118} \textit{Department of State Bulletin}, Washington, March,1980, pp. 35-36
the situation arising out of Soviet action in Afghanistan. Simultaneously, Clark Clifford, emissary of the U.S. President, visited India and advised India to "evolve a regional approach with Pakistan to the fundamentally changed situation which the whole region now faced."

It was in the context of these developments that India's Foreign Minister, Narasimha Rao, asked the U.S. to keep off the strategic and security aspects from the regional cooperation move.

**SAARC : From Establishment to the Present** : The launching of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, or to use its popular acronym SAARC, following the Dhaka Summit in early December 1985 was the slow, steady and welcome culmination of the steps initiated by President Ziaur Rehman of Bangladesh as early as 1977. The formal process began with the meeting of the Foreign Secretaries of the seven countries in Colombo in April 1981 and continued with three similar meetings in Kathmandu, Islamabad and Dhaka.

The idea got a push forward in the meeting of the Foreign Ministers in New Delhi in August 1983, which accepted the concept of regional cooperation for collective self-reliance through economic growth, social progress and cultural development. Nine areas were identified for regional cooperation, namely, agriculture, rural development, telecommunications, meteorology, health and population, postal service, transport service, science and technology and sports, arts and culture. Following the meeting of the Foreign Ministers in Thimpu in May 1985, the summit meeting of the Heads of States was held.

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119 Ibid., p.65
120 Ibid., April 1980, p.62
121 *The Hindustan Times*, New Delhi, 30 April 1981
in Dhaka in December 1985 and the SAARC was launched amidst much euphoria and fanfare.

The Declaration of its establishment gives the following objectives of the SAARC: 122

(a) to promote the welfare of the peoples of South Asia and to improve their quality of life;

(b) to accelerate economic growth, social progress and cultural development in the region and to provide all individuals the opportunity to live in dignity and to realise their full potential;

(c) to promote and strengthen collective self reliance among the countries of South Asia;

(d) to contribute, to mutual trust, understanding and appreciation of one another's problems;

(e) to promote active collaboration and mutual assistance in the economic, social, cultural, technical and scientific fields;

(f) to strengthen cooperation with other developing countries;

(g) to strengthen cooperation among themselves in international forums on matters of common interest; and

(h) to cooperate with international and regional organizations with similar aims and purposes.

Though, the SAARC move was made in early 1980, there were, however, vague indications in this direction since 1977. In 1978, when President Carter of the United States and the British Prime Minister Callaghan paid visits to South Asia, they underlined the need for the South Asian countries to forge cooperative linkages amongst themselves. Both these Western leaders made it known that if there were definite proposals for regional economic cooperation like the harassing

122 Text of the Declaration of the SAARC
of water resources, their countries were willing to come forward to provide economic assistance and support.

They also indicated the desirability of even China being involved in such cooperation exercises. This was in line with the growing rapport between the U.S. and China on regional South Asian Affairs. 123

The idea of regionalism in South Asia found prompt support in the West, particularly as it had been voiced by the leaders and the regimes sympathetically disposed towards the U.S. There were clearly two aspects of this Western support to South Asian regionalism. One was the Western offer of economic help if South Asian countries could work out multilateral regional cooperation projects in areas like.

The second aspect of Western support was related to the security dimension of the region in respect of the U.S. and the U.K. had encouraged the move of the whole of South Asia being declared a zone of peace. They also wanted the region to become a nuclear weapon free zone, in view of India's known and Pakistan's aspired nuclear capabilities. The Western support for Pakistani proposals in the U.N. on South Asia as a zone of peace and as nuclear-weapon free zone during this period was a clear indication in this respect. The American and the British leaders during the visit to the subcontinent in January 1978 had also tried to secure firm commitments from India and Pakistan regarding nuclear non-proliferation. 124 It is difficult to say as to what precisely prompted the West in their support for regional harmony and peace in South Asia.

123 S.D. Muni, "Strategic Aspects of SAARC", Strategic Analysis, VIII(1), April 1984, p.23

at that time. But possibly the Carter administration priority coupled with the revival of super power tensions in the Indian Ocean. 125

The nature of South Asian events and diplomatic activities during the first few months of 1980 were such that President Rehman's proposal which underlined his concern for "peace, stability and security" in the region, was perceived even in Dhaka as a reflection of the Carter doctrine in South Asia. 126

South Asian Governments have found it advantageous to project assertive and divergent postures towards India in their strategies for domestic political sustenance and support mobilization. 127 Such intra-regional disharmony has tended the South Asian countries to look towards outside powers for support to ensure a favourable regional balance. The external powers have naturally exploited regional disharmonies to serve their own strategic interests. 128

The United States and China favour this security biased approach to SAARC. This aspect of U.S. support to regionalism in South Asia has been evident since 1977, particularly since 1980. The Dhaka summit which endeavoured to give a political and strategic profile to SAARC was promptly welcomed by the U.S. and China. This is understandable in view of strategic interests of these extra-regional powers in the South Asian countries. China looks upon SAARC as a conducive factor to help it consolidate its growing political and strategic influence in India's neighbourhood. 129

125 Dieter Braun, The Indian Ocean: Region of Conflict or Zone of Peace, London, 1983, p.27
127 U.S.Bajpai, India's Security, New Delhi, 1983, Chapter 7
128 Stanley Wolpert, Roots of Confrontation in South Asia, Oxford University Press, New York, 1982
The U.S. and Western interests may also not favour SAARC to bring about collective self-reliance in the region. South Asia has the potential to become a major market for Western goods, investments and technologies as a dependent rather than a self-reliant region. The Western efforts are therefore geared to adjusting South Asia in their desired patterns of East-West and North-South relations. If these efforts succeed, will SAARC, incapable of meeting the rising developmental aspirations of the millions of South Asian people become a viable entity? At the same time, it would also be a miracle if SAARC can develop as an autonomous regional factor for peace through development in the face of adverse regional and extra regional pressures. 130

Thus the outside powers have exploited regional disharmonies to serve their own strategic interests. Such disharmonies and mutual apprehensions are deliberately played up by outside powers. These apprehensions thrive on the domestic need of some countries to project an assertive and anti-Indian policy for their domestic political sustenance and support mobilization.

SAARC and The Soviet Union: The development of regional economic cooperation in South Asia serves as a major factor of peace and stability in the region and on the whole Asian continent. The Soviet Union supports the efforts of South Asian States in this direction as well as of all other peace-loving states in the Asia Pacific region.

The Soviet Union and other socialist states are strongly in favour of Asia becoming a continent of peace, stability, good neighbourliness and cooperation. The U.S.S.R. has taken a

series of new initiatives in this field, aimed at pooling the efforts of all Asian States regardless of their social systems which might even include a pan-Asian forum on the whole range of questions involving the assurance of durable peace and equitable economic and political cooperation among Asian states. The interests of each state in the region necessitate the elaboration of a broad concept of security which could be based on the five principles of peaceful coexistence developed by Asian countries, on the ten Bandung principles on the initiatives put forward by the Soviet Union, the Asian socialist states, India and other countries, for promoting security in Asia and for making the Indian Ocean a zone of peace. Security and stability in the region could be made stronger if all nuclear powers agreed to stop all nuclear weapon tests notably in Asia and in the Indian and Pacific Oceans, and if the states of the region refused to participate in the U.S. and N.A.T.O. plans to militarise space. 131

Yuri Kuritsyn, APN political analyst, writes that "the results of the summit meeting of seven South Asian countries which was in the capital of Bangladesh on December 7 and 8, 1985, have evoked interest in the Soviet Union. The South Asian region adjoins Soviet territory. It holds a strategic position in the north of the Indian Ocean, where the busiest international sea routes, important for the U.S.S.R. as well, are passing. A total of 1,000 million people, i.e., nearly 25 per cent of the world's population, live there. Therefore, it is natural that the Soviet Union wants to have stable relations of friendship and cooperation with the people of South Asia." 132

131 A. Granovski, "Regional Cooperation in South Asia: A Way Stronger Peace, Stability and Economic Independence", issued by the Information Department of USSR Embassy in India, New Delhi, 16 Sept 1985

132 Yuri Kuritsyn, "Promoting Good Neighbourliness, Trust and Cooperation in South Asia", issued by the Information Department of the USSR Embassy in India, New Delhi, 9 Dec 1985
The New Edition of the CPSU Programme whose draft was under discussion in the U.S.S.R. at the time of SARC meeting in Dhaka on December 7-8, 1985, pointed out: However, different newly-free countries may be and whatever road they follow, their people are united by a desire to develop independently, and to decide their affairs without foreign interference. The Soviet Union is fully in solidarity with them. These words fully apply to the South Asian countries. 133

The Soviet Union does not want South Asia as a seat of global conflict. It stands for replacing tension in South Asia by relations of good neighbourliness and mutual assistance in national development. Observers believe that these problems were in the fore of issues discussed by the Dhaka meeting. Thus, the success of the summit fully met with the national interests to the U.S.S.R. and its Asian policy in general. 134

Disarmament is a must for development. Regrettably, writes Kuritsyn, the South Asian region is being stuffed at rapid rates with ever more sophisticated and expensive weapons, including those that can carry nuclear warheads. South Asia accounts for 50 per cent of all people who live, according to the U.N. data, in "abject poverty", i.e., people whose annual income is less than 75 dollars. 135

The arms build-up and other military preparations in South Asia did not make the situation safer there. If one of the neighbouring countries, clashing with one another, buys a new consignment of tanks, heavy guns or bombers, the other too considers it necessary to replenish its stocks. Such a race inevitably results in increasing mutual suspicion and distrust.

133 V. Florin, "Who Opposes Regional Cooperation in South Asia", Issued by Information Department of the USSR Embassy in India, New Delhi, 20 Nov 1985
134 Ibid.
135 Yuri Kuritsyn, op.cit.
This is to the benefit of only those whose policy is to draw dividends from seats of tension and conflicting situations. In case of South Asia these are the owners of foreign military bases and installations in the Indian Ocean and on its shores, who are thousands of kilometres away from this region, the owners of submarines with nuclear weapons on board, cruising not far from the coastal countries. There are those who intentionally whip up the arms race in the region, make a fortune on it and try to use it for strengthening their positions.

The Soviet Union opposes such a development of events in South Asia. Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbochev pointed out at the session of U.S.S.R. Supreme Soviet held in late 1985: "to ensure that the Asian region is not a source of tension and an area of armed confrontation, the Soviet Union stands for broader political dialogue between all the states in the region in the interests of peace, good neighbourliness, mutual trust and cooperation." 136

These words reflect in the best possible way the U.S.S.R's attitude towards the summit meeting of seven Asian states. The leaders of these South Asian States have repeatedly declared against the arms race. The joint efforts of South Asian countries in their striving to curb the arms race are also well known. Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, together with a group of other countries, submitted to the U.N. a draft resolution on "the Prevention of the Arms Race in Outer Space". It coincides with the concrete programme of wide-scale international cooperation in peaceful exploration of outer space in conditions of its non-militarisation, submitted by the Soviet Union for the consideration of the world community. 137

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136 Ibid.
137 Ibid.
After the SAARC meeting held in Dhaka TASS submitted a report that it was the first summit of those countries, which in itself is a politically significant event. A new page in the history of the region was written by the desire, stated by the participants in the forum, to pool their efforts and to seek the replacement of mistrust and conflicts, that grim legacy of the colonial past, with mutual understanding and cooperation. 138

The positive results of the Dhaka meeting are reflected in full in the documents approved by it, the Declaration and Charter of the Association. The South Asian countries, which have an aggregate population of about one billion, or one-fifth of the world's have quite a few problems in common, which can be effectively resolved only by common efforts by the erstwhile difficulties, rooted in the colonial past, have lately been compounded by new ones, born of the predatory practices of international monopolies. These include growing foreign indebtedness and also trade protectionism, practices more and more often by the U.S.A. and its allies.

The specific economic position of the Asian countries calls for a very careful approach to the choice of the mechanism of regional economic cooperation which would ensure equal and mutually beneficial participation for each member-country irrespective of its size and development standard. The Western attempts of economic integration based on the ungovernable market regulation, on the establishment of all sorts of common markets and so on are patently unacceptable for South Asian countries. 139

Of special interest to the countries of South Asia in

138 Vasily Kharkov, "Important Step in Regional Cooperation," TASS News Analyst, 10 Dec 1985
139 A. Granovski, op. cit.
this connection, according to Granovski, is the experience of planned regional economic cooperation within the framework of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance, which is based on the interests of the member-countries which differ both in size and in the level of their development. The nucleus of this cooperation is production specialisation and cooperation of partners on the basis of inter-governmental agreements in manufacturing modern industrial products which serve as a material foundation for technical progress. Opportunities for specialisation in the new high-technology industries which the South Asian countries have just started are extensive.\textsuperscript{140}

The South Asian countries have adopted different strategies of economic development. Being comparatively well placed, the Indian economy has grown faster, so has the Indian state structure and the bourgeoisie as compared with their counterparts in South Asia. The neighbouring state structures and the dominant classes do not seem to relish this development.\textsuperscript{141}

The advance along the road to overcoming the obstacles to cooperation calls for persistence and patience from the partners as well as willingness to understand one another. Obstacles to regional cooperation stem not only from objective economic issues involving different standards of economic development but also from outside factors.\textsuperscript{142} One of the major obstacles, from the Soviet point of view, is the policy of American imperialism in the region. In its attempts to attain global supremacy the Reagan administration is stepping up its military presence in South Asia region and adjacent Indian Ocean.\textsuperscript{143}

\begin{thebibliography}{143}
\bibitem{140} Ibid.
\bibitem{142} A. Granovski, \textit{op.cit.}
\bibitem{143} Ibid.
\end{thebibliography}
The U.S.A., says Granovski, is openly setting individual countries of the region against one another, trying to pose as a "disinterested defender" of small countries of the region from the alleged "Soviet threat". It is supporting and encouraging the destructive forces in certain countries of the region. The shipments of the American weaponry, including F-16 warplanes to Pakistan, the conversion of the island of Diego Garcia into a major naval base posing a direct threat to the countries of the Indian Ocean, the attempts to gain control over the instabilisation of the political situation in the region. They retard the efforts of the countries of South Asia to establish a climate of mutual trust and to promote constructive economic cooperation. Nor are the goals of regional cooperation promoted by the attempts of individual states to make the settlement of regional problems conditional on the prior settlement of bilateral differences on specific issues.  

Boris Chekhonin, TASS Political News Analyst, appreciated the steps taken by the leaders of the seven South Asian states. He says that "the decision on setting up a special group to study the problem of terrorism and its impact on security and political stability of the states in the region is highly urgent, the more so that terrorism has its concrete address in that region: acts of sabotage and politically motivated assassinations are plotted in Pakistan. It is exactly in the territory of that country that dozens of bases were set up to train terrorist bands and infiltrate them into India and Afghanistan. Who can guarantee that the geography of these incursions will not be extended, that Nepal, Bhutan and other member countries of the seven states whose governments pursue an independent and consequently, unsuitable to Washington
policy, will not become the targets for terrorist provocations on the part of Pakistan?". According to Boris Chekhonin, it is not fortuitous that the U.S. assigned to Pakistan the role of the policeman in that region, the role which is incompatible with the status of non-aligned country. 145

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145 Boris Chekhonin, TASS Political News Analyst, "On the Results of SAARC Conference", Issued by the Information Department of the USSR Embassy in India, New Delhi, 10 Dec 1985