Chapter – V

Towards greater understanding
Soviet View of the Bangladesh Crisis

Political scene in the two major countries of South Asia, India and Pakistan, started changing fast with the unfolding of the year 1971. In India, the remarkable victory of the INC in the snap polls, held in March 1971, brought an end to political instability prevailing in the country since the Congress split of 1969. With the installation of a strong government at the centre, the Indian political scene underwent a sea-change.

In contrast to the Indian situation, Pakistan presented a rather complex scenario as a consequence of the breakdown of negotiations between Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, leader of the Awami League, and Aga Mohammad Yahya Khan, the President of Pakistan. In the elections held in Pakistan on the basis of universal suffrage on 7 December 1970, the Awami League emerged as the largest single political party having secured 167 out of 169 seats allotted to East Pakistan in a house of 313 members. Mujib had fought elections on a six-point programme, having main focus on regional autonomy, which he was propagating in the eastern wing of the country since February 1996. Naturally, the Awami League asked for the transfer of power to the duly elected representatives of the people in the true spirit of the election manifesto of the party. This did not suit the whims of Z.A. Bhutto, leader of Pakistan People’s Party, and President Yahya Khan. For a couple of months, the military hawks of the Yahya regime and Bhutto stubbornly harped on ‘solidarity’ and ‘unity of the nation; whereas Mujib and his followers demanded provincial autonomy in a loose federative frame-work. This was followed by several rounds of talks among Mujib, Bhutto and Yahya, who finally agreed on 13 February 1971 to the convening of the session of the National Assembly on 3 March.

Strangely, Bhutto threatened on 15 February that his party would not attend the National Assembly session unless a consensus on a federal constitution was secured with Mujib’s consent. On 28 February, Bhutto demanded immediate postponement of the Assembly session. On 1 March, in collusion with Bhutto, Yahya Khan postponed the National Assembly sine die on the pretext of giving time to the two parties to reach an agreement.

Yahya’s announcement was quickly followed by mass demonstrations. The Martial Law Administration ordered violent shootings in Dacca and in other places, where insurgency was gaining ground. There was a spontaneous popular upsurge throughout East
Pakistan. Thousands of innocent people were maimed and butchered in the indiscriminate firings by the Pakistani troops.

At this critical juncture, when the whole of East Pakistan was simmering with revolt and Dacca was submerged in a bloodbath, it was impossible for Mujib to retreat from his platform of autonomy for East Pakistan. On 3 March, the Sheikh declined to attend the round-table talks proposed by the President in order to entrap his into prolonged negotiations so as to buy time for air-lifting West Pakistan detachments to the eastern wing of the country. Yahya Khan declared on 6 March that he had summoned the National Assembly on 25 March. On 7 March, Mujib reacted sharply and gave a call for civil disobedience. In retaliation, Islamabad issued series of Martial Law Orders against Sheikh’s directives. On 9 March, Yahya Khan announced his desire to visit Dacca. Sheikh Mujib laid down certain pre-conditions, demanding immediate termination of Martial Law, withdrawal of troops and handing over of political power to the duly elected representatives of the people before the Assembly was convened.

On 15 March, the President reached Dacca. For the next eight days, he remained engaged in complicated negotiations with the Awami League leaders. In view of the serious desires on the part of this military advisers and Bhutto not to hand over power to Mujib, Yahya Khan announced on 22 March that he had again decided to postpone the meeting of the National assembly, without assigning any valid ground. Mujib gave a call to observe 23 March (the Pakistan Day) as a day of protest. A reign of terror was let loose in East Pakistan. By order of the Martial Law Administrator, Awami League was proscribed. Sheikh Mujib was arrested. Meanwhile, Pakistan Day as a day of protest. A reign of terror was let loose in East Pakistan. By order of the Martial Law Administrator, Awami League was proscribed. Sheikh Mujib was arrested. Meanwhile, Yahya Khan had returned home. In a broadcast to the nation on 26 March, the President declared that Mujib and his party were the “enemies of Pakistan” as they ”wanted East Pakistan to break away” completely from the country.’…the crime will not go unpunished”, he warned.

Military crackdown in East Pakistan led to refugee influx into the neighbouring states of India. The consequent socio-economic and political convulsions arising out of the refugee problem thus turned this purely internal affair of Pakistan into an unprecedented crisis for India and the world community. The intransigent attitude of Islamabad and the open incitement that is received from its allies resulted in further estrangement of relations
between India and Pakistan leading ultimately to all out war between these countries in December 1971.

How did the Government of India react to the Bangladesh crisis? What was the Soviet approach towards this crisis? What was the attitude of the US Government towards the tragic events in the sub-continent? What policy was adopted by the People’s Republic of China? Was the convergence in the policies and actions of Washington and Peking accountable for the hardening of Pakistan’s attitude? These are some of the questions that merit consider-action

PRELUDE TO THE INDO-SOVIET TREATY

Reactions in India

The first Indian reaction to events taking place in Pakistan came on 27 March, when Sardar Swaran Singh, Foreign Affairs Minister, in the course of Lok Sabha discussion expressed grave concern of the Government on this “bloody conflict”2 While referring to this tragic event, prime Minister Indira Gandhi observed: “it is not merely the suppression of a movement, but it is meeting an un-armed people with tanks… the Government is not in a position to say very much more on this occasion”. In the Rajya Sabha, the Prime Minister indicated that the Government should act with “unmost testraint” “One wrong step or wrong step or wrong word may have an effect entirely different to the one which we all intend”, she added.

In view of the sharp press and public reactions in the country, the Prime Minister considered it necessary to further elaborate the Government’s view on this matter. On 31 March was unanimously adopted. Through this resolution, the House expressed “its deep anguish and grave concern” at the recent developments in East from West Bengal. It referred to “ a massive attack by armed forces despatched from west Pakistan “against the entire people of East Bengal resolution then mentioned flouting of people’s mandate by Pakistan, which was expressed through elections held in the country in December 1970. It further observed that “this House expresses its profound sympathy for and solidarity with the people of East Bengal in their struggle for a democratic way of life”. The Parliament of India demanded “immediate cessation of the use of force and of the massacre of defenseless people”. It further called upon all peoples and governments of the world to
take”urgent and constructive steps” to prevail upon the Government of Pakistan “to put an end immediately to the systematic decimation of people which amounts to genocide” In conclusion, this resolution recorded its “profound conviction that the historic upsurge of the 75 million people of East Bengal will triumph. The House wishes to assure them that their struggle and sacrifices will receive the whole-hearted sympathy and support of the people of India”.

The initial reactions of the Government of India indicate that New Delhi was moving with utmost circumspection. Without outrightly condemning Islamabad, the Indian Government expressed its deep concern over the tragic events in East Pakistan. It took steps to mobilise world opinion and seek international cooperation for putting an immediate end to genocide in East Pakistan.

Soviet Stand

The Soviet Union was the first major power which came forward with a clear-cut stand on the tragic situation in the sub-continent. In the course of his letter to the Pakistani President dated 2 April, the Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, Nikolai Podgorny appealed for a peaceful settlement of the complex problems which the people of Pakistan were facing. Referring to the failure of talks in Dacca and to the “extreme measures” resorted to by the military administration of Pakistan, Podgorny observed, “Soviet people cannot but be concerned at the numerous casualties, at the sufferings and privations that such a development of vents brings to the people of Pakistan”. He expressed the concern of the Soviet people at the arrest and persecution of Mianjibur Rahman and other politicians, who had received such overwhelming support of the population of East Pakistan at the recent general elections. Podgorny further observed that the “continuation of repressive measures and bloodshed in East Pakistan will undoubtedly only make the solution of the problems more difficult and may do great suggested a political solution of the problem without the use of force and appealed “for the adoption of the most urgent measures to stop the bloodshed and repressions against the population in East Pakistan…."

Though measured and moderate in its general tone and tenor, Podgorny’s letter minced no words about the overwhelming popular support’ enjoyed by Mujib and his followers and pleaded for a political solution of the problem in the vital interests of the
entire people of Pakistan. In stressing the need for a political solution, Moscow took a stand which was similar to that of New Delhi.

At this difficult stage in Soviet-Pak relations, the Soviet Union still tried to maintain a balance in her economic relations with Pakistan. At the end of April, the Soviets expressed their readiness to undertake the project-report regarding a steel mill to be set up in Karachi with their help. Early in June, the Soviet Union renewed some agreements which had been withdrawn in the wake of March disturbances.

In June, India’s Foreign Minister, Sardar Swaran Singh, visited Moscow for an exchange of views with the Soviet Union. The joint communique issued at the end of the Indian Foreign Minister’s Moscow visit shared India’s considered view that “immediate measures should be taken in West Pakistan for the stoppage of refugees and for their earliest return home under conditions of security”. Both the countries agreed to remain in touch with each other with a view to reviewing the serious situation. Izvestia laid stress on the establishment of stability in the Indian sub-continent and urged both India and Pakistan to settle the issue peacefully. Pravda expressed strong resentment over the resumption of US arms supplies to Pakistan.

Yahya Khan reacted indiscreetly to Podgorny’s letter. Making a dig at his reference to “universal declaration of human rights”. President Yahya Khan wrote, “the open and unashamed interference by India in the present situation in my country has only one objective, that is to influence the situation further by encouraging and materially assisting a handful of people to create disturbances. For any power to support such moves or to condone them would be a negation of the United Nations Charter as well as the Bandung Principles”. He further asked Podgorny to use his “undeniable influence with the Indian Government” in order to impress upon it the need of restraining it from interfering in Pakistan’s internal affairs or resorting to any action that might aggravate the situation and lead to irretrievable consequences.

China’s Outburst

Peking’s reaction to the South Asian crisis was much more violent. On 7 April, the New China News Agency accused India of interfering in Pakistan’s internal affairs and on 9 April, it published Yahya’s full reply to Podgorny’s letter. While lashing out at the ‘subversive elements”s in East Pakistan, the official statement of the Chinese Government
offered its outright support to Yahya Khan. On 11 April. The people’s Daily made frontal
attack on India and blamed the Soviet Union and the USA. Declaring that this crisis was an
internal affair of Pakistan, it warned all the three countries against interfering in the
internal affairs of this country. The People’s Daily article criticized Podgorny for sending
his message to President Yahya Khan. It pledged the resolute support of the Chinese
Government and people to the Government and people of Pakistan “in their just struggle
for safeguarding national independence and state sovereignty and against foreign
aggression and interference”.

Instead of pleading moderation with Yahya Khan, Prime Minister Chou En-lai also
came out to charge India with “gross interference in the internal affairs of Pakistan”. In a
message to President Yahya Khan dated 12 April, he alleged Soviet and US complicity in
the crisis. Chou En-lai differentiated the “broad masses of the people from a handful of
persons, who want to sabotage the unification of Pakistan”. He further promised to stand
fully by Pakistan in the event of any invasion from India and pledged to maintain her”
state sovereignty and national independence”. The Chinese press blacked out all accounts
of the tragic events in East Pakistan. Meanwhile Peking announced an interest-free loan of
$211 million to the Yahya regime. This was followed several military and economic
credits to Pakistan.6

China’s policy towards the East Pakistan crisis suffered from serious contradictions
in her global outlook. In respect of India, she instigated extremist elements among the
Mizos, Nagas, Kashmiris and Naxalites to rebel against a democratically elected
government On the contrary, in respect of East Pakistani freedom fighters, a majority of
the total population of Pakistan, China adopted a hostile attitude. Strangely, the so-called
champions of national liberation movement and the self-styled revolutionaries of Peking,
who had earlier recognized the rebel Government of Algeria, and the Government formed
in exile by Prince Norodom Sihanouk, did not shy away from supporting a military regime
against mass movement in East Pakistan.

Peking’s stand on the East Pakistan crisis was nearest to the position of Islamabad.
Both had been propagating that the crisis in East Pakistan was exclusively the “internal
affair” of Pakistan. Both had been alleging that India was the actual villain of the piece.
For both President Yahya and Premier Chou, the entire freedom fighting people of East
Pakistan were just a “handful of people”. In one way or the other, both had castigated the Soviets.

**Attitude of the USA**

The first US official statement on the events taking place in the sub-continent was released on 2 April. It expressed concern on the loss of life, hardship and damage suffered by the people of Pakistan and laid emphasis on the need of international assistance. While issuing this statement, a State Department Official observed that there was no proof of the use of US weapons by the military regime in the suppression of the East Pakistani movement. On 7th April, another statement of the State Department was issued in which it was observed that every possible step should be taken “to end the conflict and achieve a peaceful accommodation. “It again expressed concern over the loss of life and “damage occurred” in East Pakistan and hoped for the restoration of peaceful conditions.

Meanwhile public resentment against the bloody repression in East Pakistan continued to grow. New York Times strongly criticized the use of artillery and heavy weapons against unarmed Pakistanis fighting for autonomy. It editorially commented that “the US having played a major role in training and equipping Pakistan’s armed forces had special obligation now to withhold any military aid to the Yahya Government”. Further it wrote that by continuing its arms assistance to Yahya’s military regime, Washington had placed itself along with China and had become a “party to continuing slaughter of Pakistan’s Bengali majority”. An influential daily like Washington Post also criticized the attitude of the US Government towards the civil revolt in East Pakistan.

The US Ambassador to India, Kenneth B. Keating, came forward to record his objection to the US Administration for adopting a policy of reticence and using the term “internal affair” in the context of what was happening in East Pakistan. He expressed his displeasure at the mass massacre in East Pakistan and urged upon his Government not to extend its “association with the reign of military terror”. Keating, who was “deeply shocked” at the massacre in East Pakistan and “greatly concerned” at Washington’s “vulnerability” to Yahya regime, urged that the US Government should “promptly, publicly and prominently” deplore “this brutality”. He demanded that the administration should “privately intervene with Yahya Khan”, abrogate “one-time exception” and immediately suspend all military deliveries to Pakistan. The US Consul-General in Dacca
sent a detailed report to the US Senate Criticising the genocide and requested the US Government not to back Yahya regime, because an independent Bangladesh was bound to emerge.

The Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee of the Senate criticized the Administration for ignoring the gravity of the crisis in East Pakistan on the irrational ground of “stability and support of the status quo”. On 7 May, the Foreign Affairs Sub-Committee of the Senate resolved to suspend the sale of American arms to Pakistan. Prominent Senators belonging to both Democratic and Republican parties, such as Edward Kennedy, Walter Mondale, Edmund Muskie, George McGovern, William Saxbe, Mark Hatfield and several others criticized the polices of the Yahya regime and the blind support of the US Government to it.

In view of the mounting public and press criticisms of US policy towards the East Pakistani crisis, President Nixon felt compelled to break his silence. On 28 May, he wrote to Yahya Khan in support of “political accommodation”. President Nixon simultaneously informed the Indian Prime Minister of his Government’s discourses with Islamabad in the direction of achieving “a peaceful political accommodation” and “of restoring the condition under which the refugee flow would stop” and the refugees would be able to return to their homes. The US President wrote to Mrs Gandhi that India had a special responsibility in the region.

The initial reticence in US stand on the events in the South Asian sub-continent was only a cover to hide its actual designs. Kissinger, while claiming that the Administration “wanted to stay aloof” from the developments in East Pakistan, also admits that it tried “every incentive to maintain Pakistan’s goodwill” because she was a “crucial link to Peking and … one of China’s closet allies”. Recalling this first stage of the crisis, Kissinger refers to a meeting of the Washington Special Review Group (hereafter WSRG) held on 26 March, and on the basis of discussions held in this meeting, he records in his memoirs that “the consensus of the US Government was to avoid precipitate action”.

Despite the fact that the national security adviser himself told the President the same day that the “prognosis” in East Pakistan was for “civil war leading to independence” Nixon indicated that he did not favour “a very active policy” because of the apprehension that he could be accused of “having encouraged the split-up of Pakistan”. Thus, as
Kissinger writes, the US Administration was faced with a peculiar dilemma which resulted in its failure to condemn a “brutal military repression in which thousands of civilians were killed and from which millions fled to India for safety”. There was no doubt about the strong arm tactics of the Pakistani military” he acknowledges, but laments his country’s inability to take the right course because “Pakistan was our sole channel to make alternative arrangements”. On 2 May, President Nixon accepted Kissinger’s recommendation that “economic aid be used as a carrot to induce political concessions to make a serious effort to help Yahya” At about the same time Nixon “criticized” Ambassador Keating “for having taken over by the Indians, and got the US Consul-General in Dacca transferred.” “Don’t squeeze Yahya at this time” - Nixon gave a handwritten order.

Nixon’s tilt towards Pakistan was largely motivated by his “China initiative” to which Yahya had made some personal contribution. It was in accordance with an agreement reached between the two Presidents (in October 1970) that in April and May 1971, when the cauldron was at its boiling point in the sub-continent, secret exchanges with Peaking took place through Yahya’s emissary, Agha Hilaly, who was then Pakistan’s Ambassador to the USA. And finally it was the message received directly by president Yahya from Premier Chou En-lai and delivered to President Nixon on 2 June, which cleared the deck for Kissinger’s clandestine visit to the Chinese capital in July. President Nixon’s obsession with his “Yahya channel to Peking” is further revealed from the fact that the memorandum of both the State and Defence Departments to the Senate in connection with complete and immediate suspension of arms supplies to Pakistan were violated by the President himself. The reports of the World Bank and the Aid Pak Consortium against assistance to Pakistan was also set aside by Nixon. No heed was paid to the mounting criticism by the influential US press of the resumption of arms assistance to Islamabad by the Administration.

It was precisely against this background that Kissinger’s visit to Peking (9-11 July) took place. It is true that Kissinger’s visit to Peking was primarily motivated by common desire on the part of the US and China to normalize their relations in the wake of serious Sino-Soviet dissensions. But it cannot be denied that the time of his visit, the place of his departure for Peking (i.e Islamabad) and the discussions that were held in the Chinese capital between Kissinger and the Chinese Premier in the context of Indo-pak situation
increased India’s apprehensions. Pakistan was very much in the mind of the Chinese Premier during his discussions with Henry Kissinger. While asking Kissinger “to continue to use the Pakistan channel”. Chou En-lai remarked, “we have a saying in China that one should not break the bridge after crossing it”. Later, he told Kissinger in plain words that “China would not be indifferent, if Indian attacked Pakistan” and asked him to convey this expression of Chinese support to Yahya Khan. While testifying to his conversations with Chou En-lai, Kissinger rightly observes in his memories that Chou’s message to Yahya through his was a “gesture indeed for Washington”, because China had an Ambassador in Islamabad quite capable of delivering messages. This gesture, however, was equally reciprocated by Kissinger, who assured the Chinese Premier that “the US had traditional ties with Pakistan and we are grateful for its arranging the opening to china…”.

Kissinger’s visit to Peking proved a morale booster for Pakistan. But its psychological effect was demoralizing for India, Whic felt diplomatically humbled and militarily isolated in a critical situation, when the fighting forces of India and Pakistan were poised on the borders. Outright support to Pakistan, expressed by both the Prime Minister of China and the security adviser of the Nixon Administration in the course of their discussions in Peking, added to the bellicosity of Yahya Khan, who declared in Islamabad on 14 July that if India attacked to seize any part of Pakistan, he would declare “a general war”.

In keeping with the spirit of discussions held in Peking between Kissinger and Chou En-lai, Washington took several steps in July-August which augmented India’s fears and added to Pakistan’s intransigence.

On 15 July, the President announced his visit to China which was to take place in February, 1972. The very next day, he summoned the National Security Council with a view to discussing the situation in the Indian subcontinent. While recalling what transpired in this meeting, Kissinger records. “no one could speak for five minutes with Nixon without hearing of his profound distrust of Indian motives, his concern over Soviet meddling and above all his desire not to risk the opening to China by ill-considered posturing”. Nixon had apparently put in all his weight in favour of Pakistan. In another meeting of the WSRG, held on 30 July, the President expressed his desire to “lean towards Pakistan” more vigorously.
In the first week of August, Washington dispatched Robert Jacks, “a counter-insurgency expert with wide experience in Vietnam” to Dacca. The Secretary of State, William Rogers, reportedly observed that suspension of military assistance to Pakistan would only add to instability of that country. President Nixon outrightly rejected the move of the US Congress for the suspension of all economic and military aid to Pakistan. To add insult to injury, Kissinger summoned the Indian Ambassador to Washington and told him that New Delhi should not count on the US any more, “if China would intervene on behalf of Pakistan”. Thus, the earlier stand of the US Administration in this matter was completely reversed.

**Indo-Soviet Response to Sino-Pak-US Combine**

As the preceding discussion shows, the situation in the sub-continent continued to worsen. By the beginning of August, troops were massed on the Indo-Pack borders and war-cries were often heard. The possibility of a peaceful solution of the crisis through negotiations appeared to be quite remote. Only the release of Mujib and his party colleagues, the cessation of genocide in East Pakistan, the withdrawal of West Pakistan’s armed personnel to the barracks and the installation of a civilian government in Dacca could have created a climate of confidence. India had all along suggested a series of such measures to be undertaken in the direction of a political solution And so did Moscow through diplomatic channels and the press.

Starting with the unanimous resolution of the Parliament on the complex situation in East Pakistan, the Government of India repeatedly appealed for a political settlement of the problems between the two wings of Pakistan. New Delhi had shown enough of restraint and for that it had earned the appreciation of several world leaders including the US Secretary of State, William Rogers. It had done everything possible to prepare world opinion in favour of a peaceful settlement of the dispute. During his three-week tour (5-22 June), India’s Minister for External Affairs Sardar Swaran Singh held important discussions with the Foreign Ministers and Heads of Governments in Moscow, Paris, Ottawa, New York, Washington and London, directly aimed at creating a suitable atmosphere in the world capitals in order to persuade the President of Pakistan to take recourse to political settlement.
International consensus was also overwhelmingly in favour of East Pakistan’s autonomy. Throughout the world, independent press had championed the cause of the Awami League. Scores of leading Congressmen in America had raised their voices in support of the demands of Sheikh Mujib. The Foreign Affairs Committee of both the Senate and the House of Representatives had passed strong resolutions against the resumption of US arms assistance to Yahya regime. Several highly placed US Government authorities had most vocally disapproved of the actions of the West Pakistani military junta.

In the given situation, it was now expected of President Yahya Khan to release the Sheikh, open a dialogue with him and solicit the cooperation of the big powers which had their deep stakes in South Asia. It was expected of China and the USA to exert their influence with President Yahya Khan in favour of political accommodation. But Peking and Washington willed otherwise, since they had their own designs in the sub-continent, which were aimed at the gradual erosion of India’s growing influence in South Asia. Both these powers had made enough investments in Islamabad in every sense of the term—political, economic and military. How could they have preferred to incur the displeasure of Yahya, who was bent upon sticking to power at all costs? By practicing Ayub’s policy of “hunting with the hound and running with the hare”, Islamabad had already proved itself the biggest beneficiary of close Sino-US collaboration. By extending their military assistance to Islamabad, Peking and Washington had won many supporters among the military hawks of Pakistan, who would not agree to Yahya retreating from the chosen path of confrontation with India to avenge the defeat of the 1965 war. The Sino-Pak-US axis needed an atmosphere of tension and turmoil to sustain. It was this background that prompted India and the USSR to enter into the Treaty of Peace Friendship and Cooperation.

**The Indo-Soviet Treaty**

The Indo-Soviet Treaty, contracted for a period of twenty years, has a preamble and twelve articles, Two articles (XI-XII) are related to procedural matters. The first four articles and the preamble deal with general matters of mutual and international importance. Article VI refers to economic cooperation and article VII is related to the expansion of cultural ties between the two signatories.
Articles V and VIII to X are more significant and relevant in the context of the crisis in the sub-continent. Article V says that both the contracting parties shall maintain regular contacts on major international problems affecting their interests. Article VII binds the signatories not to enter into any military alliance against the other party and not to commit aggression against each other. According to Article IX, both the countries have to abstain from providing any assistance to any third party, if it is engaged in an armed conflict with the other signatory. In case either party is being subjected to an attack, or if it is threatened, both the parties shall immediately enter into mutual consultations in order to remove such threat and to take appropriate effective measures to ensure peace and security of their countries. According to Article X, both the sides declare that any obligation incompatible with this Treaty does neither exist, nor shall be entered into between itself and any other state or states.

The Indian Parliament was yet in session when the Indo-Soviet Treaty was signed. In the parliamentary debates which followed, Jana Singh leader Atal Behari Vajpayee welcomed the Treaty with reservations and posed certain questions as to whether it prevented India from taking unilateral action in the context of the Bangladesh crisis. Highly critical of Article VII of the Treaty, the Jana Sangh leader asked whether India was free to make an atom bomb or weather Moscow’s “green signal” was necessary for it. While formally welcoming the Treaty, Organisation Congress leader S.N. Mishra expressed certain reservations with regard to Soviet attitude towards India’s stand on the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and recgonisation of Bangladesh. Swatantra leader Piloo Mody stated that this Treaty pushed India into the Soviet “camp” from which she could expect “many dangers” and “no benefits”.

Socialist leader Samar Guha doubted Soviet intentions in the Indian Ocean and observed that the Treaty might cause difficulties for India in obtaining foreign aid from non-Soviet bloc countries.

As regards comments on the Treaty outside the Parliament, Piloo Mody said that the Treaty marked “India’s steady drift into the Soviet camp as a result of its past economic and military policies”\(^\text{13}\). C. Rajagopalachari formally welcomed the Treaty. But he lamented the “loss of an opportunity to America”. Swarajya commented that the Treaty meant an “inconsequential departure from India’s policy of non-alignment”. The Socialist Party referred to the absence of any mention about Bangladesh in the joint communique.
signed after the conclusion of the Indo-Soviet Treaty and compared it with Warsaw Pact. It reminded the country of “Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia”. Raj Narain regretted that now recognition of Bangladesh was out of question because the Soviets would not see Pakistan disintegrating.

The Indian press welcomed the Treaty but reacted very sharply with many reservations. While admitting that this was “not a treaty between a big brother and a client state” and conceding that it gave “most-favoured-nation treatment of India as the Soviet Union gave to COMEON or India to Nepal’, Indian Express editorially observed that”…. in signing the Treaty India… departed from its policy of non-alignment”. Hindustan Times alleged that this Treaty entailed alignment with the Soviet Union. It further noted that “India over-reacted to the prospect of an Indo-Pak conflict, the possibility and scale of Chinese intervention in any such event and American attitude towards Pakistan”. Several other dailies offered similar comments. Reactions of the Western press were mostly unfavourable. International Herald Tribune editorially alleged that the Kremlin took undue “advantage of India’s distress to consolidate its position in Delhi”\(^\text{14}\) Washington Post observed that by signing the Treaty, the Soviet Union took over from the US “the role of arbiter and dominant overseer” in the sub-continent. New York Times maintained that the Indo-Soviet Treaty meant the strengthening of Soviet influence in the second most populous country at her expense. “It would create the danger of a local war leading to a big-power confrontation in the India subcontinent. Leading British papers were equally critical of the Treaty. Times wrote that “India today discarded her policy of non-alignment and entered into a formal alliance with the Soviet Union”. Daily Telegraph found fault with India’s “lip-service” to the policy of non-alignment and termed it as “Kremlin-Delhi Axis”\(^\text{15}\). Guardian also described it as “departure from the Indian policy of non-alignment”.

Strangely enough, no immediate and direct official comments on the Indo-Soviet Treaty were offered by the USA, People’s Republic of China and Pakistan. While replying to a question by a reporter in New York on 9 August, the US Secretary of State, William Rogers, expressed the hope that the Indo-Soviet Treaty would have a good effect. Semi-official Pakistan times observed that the Treaty threatened both China and Pakistan. It further added, “The Treaty amounts to a deliberate move to create a situation in which India may feel free to attack Pakistan with the assurance that the Soviet commitment to aid
India would provide a deterrent to Chinese intervention on our behalf”. Z.A. Bhutto repeated similar view. The People’s Republic of China remained silent for some time.

From the foregoing criticism of the Indo-Soviet Treaty, it is clear that its opponents levelled three main charges: First, the Treaty was an encroachment on the fundamental rights of the Indian people leading to intervention in their domestic affairs. Secondly, it restrained India from taking unilateral actions in the East Pakistan crisis without the consent of the Soviets and finally, it sounded the death-knell of India’s policy of non-alignment by pushing her into the Soviet bloc and depriving her of freedom to take independent action in the field of foreign policy.

India’s internal developments in the recent years bear testimony to the hollowness of the first charge of the opponents of the Treaty. During this period, several agitations and movements took place in the country. Four general elections have since been held, several unprecedented changes have taken place on the political scene of the country and different political parties have come to power at the centre. The question of even the remotest applicability of the Treaty in these domestic matters has never been posed.

The second allegation is equally fallacious. A clear clue to all the actions that the Government of India was going to take in the coming months was given by Foreign Minister Sardar Swaran Singh during the Lok Sabha discussions on the Treaty on 9 August itself. The Foreign Minister unambiguously told the House that “this Treaty should act as a deterrent to any powers” that might have aggressive designs on India’s territorial integrity and sovereignty”. “It is, therefore, in essence, a Treaty of Peace against War” – Swaran Singh reiterated and added that it would not debar India from taking any desirable action in Bangladesh. No country could “restrain” her from doing so, “not even a friendly country like the USSR…” he declared16. Within a week of the signing of the Treaty, Defence Minister Jagjivan Ram said that there was no solution of the problem order than an independent Bangladesh and, if necessary, India will help the freedom fighters in every possible way. The subsequent events show that when the Bangladesh War broke out, India registered her active support to the freedom fighters of Bangladesh and came out to be the first country to accord her diplomatic recognition. Later, India signed the Simla Pact with Pakistan and the Tripartite Agreement with Bangladesh and Pakistan. All these instances sufficiently show that the Indo-Soviet Treaty did not preclude India from taking independent decisions.
The last contention that the Indo-Soviet Treaty signalled the death of non-alignment only exposed the hypocrisy and political alignments of its detractors, for the validity of India’s policy of non-alignment in the context of the Treaty was questioned mostly by those, who previously never accepted that India was ever non-aligned. Strangely enough, while lamenting the death of non-alignment, these critics proposed the names of a host of countries with whom they wished India to sign such treaties. So far as the allegation regarding the end of India’s policy of non-alignment is concerned, these critics have expressed their concern particularly over the nature of Article IX of the Indo-Soviet Treaty. In their opinion, this Article is similar to some of the provisions of Moscow-sponsored military alliances, like the Warsaw Pact (1955) and the Soviet-UAR Treaty (1971).

A comparative study of the relevant articles of the three above named treaties, however, reveals the unsoundness of this criticism. Article IV of the Warsaw Pact maintains that in the event of a foreign attack, all the signatories would render immediate assistance “with all such means… including armed force”. Articles V and VI provide for the establishment of a political consultative committee in each participating state and the institution of a joint command in order to provide for mutual aid in strengthening the individual and collective defence capacity. Article IX of the Indo-Soviet Treaty no doubt envisages “mutual consultations” between the signatories for removing the threat, but not the institution of a “joint command” for strengthening their individual and “collective defense capacity”. Apparently, the two treaties cannot be compared. The accent of the Indo-Soviet Treaty is distinctly on “consultations” between the two signatories in the event of a threat, whereas the Warsaw Pact clearly emphasizes the urgency of “immediate assistance” including the use of armed force”. Similarly it is different from the Soviet-UAR Treaty.

There is no truth in the contention that the Indo-Soviet Treaty debarred India from taking an independent stand in the field of foreign policy. Various foreign policy decisions of the Government of India in the post-Treaty period speak eloquently of its independent course. India has consistently worked for the aim of making the Indian Ocean a zone of peace. It is the US which has sabotaged these efforts. The Soviets have never sought base facilities from India, as alleged by the critics of the Treaty. India has not signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, which enjoys the strong support of the Soviets.
Contrary to the apprehensions of the detractors of the Treaty, India successfully experimented a nuclear device for peaceful purpose.

The Treaty has not dragged India into the Sino-Soviet dispute. While expressing the hope that “this Treaty will provide a pattern for similar treaties between countries in this region, “Foreign Minister Sardar Swaran Singh rightly observed in the course of his Lok Sabha statement on the discussion of the Treaty on 9th August, 1971 that “such treaties between countries of this region would stabilize peace and strengthen their independence and sovereignty”\(^1\). This was an open call to willing nations, including China and Pakistan, to sign similar documents. Resumption of diplomatic ties at the ambassadorial level, commencement of various rounds of high-level talks between the two countries on various issues including the border dispute, restoration of commercial transactions and cultural intercourse between New Delhi and Peking – all these instances indicate that the Indo-Soviet Treaty has not stood in the way of normalization of Sino-Indian relations.

Seen in the light of the foregoing discussion, it becomes clear that the Indo-Soviet Treaty was the logical consummation of Indo-Soviet relations in the past and a momentous outcome of the extraordinary situation prevailing in the sub-continent. Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko rightly emphasized this background of the conclusion of the Treaty at the time of the signing ceremony.

**In the Shadow War**

The situation in the subcontinent went on worsening further. The military regime of Yahya Khan kept on ignoring the overt and covert implications of the Indo-Soviet Treaty. Islamabad did not take any fresh step in the direction of a political settlement of the problem. With the recession of the monsoon, the exodus of the refugees reached a total of nine million. Military repression was intensified and so was guerilla retaliation. Tension on both sides of the Indo-Pak borders grew fiercely. On the western flank, both the Indian and Pakistani troops stood entrenched against each other. In the eastern theatre, what had begun as a domestic quarrel of Pakistan had turned into guerilla warfare, sometimes involving armed clashes between the forces of “India and Pakistan. With reports of incamera trail and execution-plan of Mujid gaining currency, shadow of a war started lengthening over the sub-continent. This phase of the East Pakistan crisis evoked divergent reactions from the countries concerned.
Soviet Support to India’s Peace Proposals

The Soviet reaction to events in the sub-continent in the months following the conclusion of the Indo-Soviet Treaty was one of utmost caution. The official Soviet press carefully refrained from using the term Bangladesh. Izvestia reiterated that the Indo-Soviet Treaty was not against any country, nor will it bring about any change in the Soviet policy of friendship with Pakistan.

The Soviets, however, did not mince words in reiterating their demand for an immediate political solution of the crisis. Soviet view on the matter was further elaborated by Podgorny himself. At a Kremlin banquet, given in honour of visiting King Mohammad Zahir Shah of Afghanistan on 15 September, he observed that the preservation of peace in South Asia would depend on the speediest attainment of a political solution of the problems which confronted East Pakistan. The Soviet President, in no uncertain terms demanded due regard for the lawful interests of the East Pakistani population and the creation of suitable atmosphere and safe conditions for the return of refugees.

During the state visit of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi to Moscow, the Indian and Soviet leaders got a better opportunity to discuss the complex problems arising out of the East Pakistan crisis. While welcoming Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, Soviet Premier A.N. Kosygin emphasized that the central theme of the Indo-Soviet Treaty was the strengthening of security in Asia and the world. The Treaty was not directed against any other country and it would not be maintained at the expense of strained relations with other countries, he added. Kosygin expressed his deep concern over the complex situation in the Indian Sub-continent, re-affirmed his Government’s earlier stand and observed that “it was not possible to justify actions of Pakistani Government, which compelled millions of people, average population of an European State, to leave their country, land, property and seek refuge in neighbouring India”. He further assured the Prime Minister of India that “the Soviet Union would do everything possible to maintain peace in the sub-continent” and observed that “never before the peoples of the Soviet Union and India had stood so solidly behind each other in their struggle for peace and progress”.

In her reply to the aforesaid banquet speech of the Soviet Premier, Indira Gandhi allayed all types of misapprehensions regarding the Indo-Soviet Treaty an various quarters and expressed her full satisfaction with Soviet understanding of the grim tragedy in East
Pakistan. Mrs. Gandhi regretted that the growing agony of the people of East Bengal did not seem to have moved many governments, which appeared to have ignored the real threat to peace and stability in Asia. She termed the Indo-Pak dispute as an international problem and observed that Indo-Soviet cooperation was “not merely an arrangement between the governments”, but “a coming together of the two great and friendly countries”. Referring to India’s firm determination for the maintenance of peace, Mrs. Gandhi stressed, “the search for peace calls for determined effort. Peace cannot be attained by waiting and hoping, but through action and perseverance.”

In the Indo-Soviet joint communiqué, issued at the end of the Indian Prime Minister’s visit to Moscow, the Soviet Union highly appreciated India’s humane approach to the influx of millions of refugees. She took into account India’s determination “to take all necessary measures to stop the further inflow of refugees and ensure the earliest return of those who were already in India”. Both the sides declared their strong desire to preserve peace in the subcontinent and re-affirmed their agreement to maintain further mutual contacts as well as exchanges of views on the serious situation.

During this period some high ranking Soviet leaders and officials visited India and held important discussions with the Indian leaders. On his way to Hanoi, Podgorny stopped over in New Delhi on 10 October in order to hold discussion with the Prime Minister and the President of India on the grave political situation in the sub-continent. The Soviet leader referred to the “legitimate rights and interests of the people in that region” and offered “full Soviet cooperation to any such solution within the existing Indo-Soviet cooperation to any such solution within the existing Indo-Soviet relations. The Deputy Foreign Minister of the USSR, Nikolai Firyubin visited New Delhi at the end of October where he expressed his full agreement with India’s assessment of a threat of attack from the side of Pakistan19. On 30 October, the Commander-in-Chief of the Soviet Air Force, Marshal P.S. Kutakov arrived in New Delhi and held several important discussions with the Indian officials. In the beginning of November, V. Kudryavtsev, General Secretary of the International Relations Committee of the USSR Supreme Soviet, visited India. He reportedly observed that the crisis in East Pakistan was a liberation struggle with elements of a civil war.

Leading Soviet journals also came out in support of the demands of the Awami League and stressed the immediate need of a peaceful political solution of the problems in
the sub-continent. Pravda expressed deep concern over the massacre in East Pakistan and observed that it was difficult to remain indifferent to genocide in East Pakistan. Orestov, a leading columnist of Pravda, criticized Joseph Alsop for writing in Washington Post that India was interested in attacking Pakistan. He cited Prime Minister Indira Gandhi’s statement asking for a political solution of the East Pakistan problem. The Pravda columnist contrasted war hysteria in Pakistan with India’s restraint and humanitarian work in giving shelter to nine millions of refugees. Pravda again asked for a political solution. Expressing its anxiety on the tense situation in the Indian Sub-continent, it referred to the refugee problem and demanded their safe return home and sought immediate end of the military repression in East Pakistan. Viktor Mayevsky, Pravda commentator, observed in a leading article that the Soviet Union was against calling the Indo-Pak conflict an internal problem of Pakistan.

Izvestia observed that the Soviet Union stood for an early settlement of the problem of East Pakistan with proper consideration for the inalienable rights and legitimate interests of its people. Representing the views of the Soviet Government, Izvestia urged President Yahya Khan to remain friendly with India for the sake of World peace and in the interests of his own country. It appreciated India’s restraint and her recourse to peaceful means. Red Star, the Red Army paper, blamed Pakistan for seeking a military solution of the problem.

Reinforcement of the Sino-Pak-US Axis

The Soviet support for India’s proposal for a peaceful political settlement of the crisis did not receive the desired response from Islamabad, Peking and Washington. On the contrary, the views expressed by the Soviet leaders on the situation in the sub-continent drew sharp reactions from Islamabad. In his broadcast to the nation on 12 October, President Yahya Khan, without referring to the Soviets, castigated some “hostile forces” and charged them with opposing the “existence” of Pakistan. These forces, he alleged, had long been on the lookout “to weaken… and ultimately to destroy” this country. While noting with interest Kosygin’s keen desire for the maintenance of peace in the sub-continent, Yahya regretted that Premier Kosygin “made no mention of the various positive steps” taken by Pakistan. Blaming India for trying “to cut away East Pakistan from the rest of the country in collusion with certain secessionists in that wing”, the Pakistani President expressed the hope that “the Soviet Union would use its influence to persuade
India to refrain from indulging in acts which could lead to an armed conflict”. He declared, “we deeply appreciate the friendship and support of the Government of the People’s Republic of China for our just stand and the understanding shown by the US Government in the present situation”

Yahya’s allegations against the Soviet Union and New Delhi were reiterated with equal vehemence by Z.A. Bhutto during his visit to Peking (5-8 November) as the leader of a political and military delegation, consisting of the three service chiefs of Pakistan. Bhutto claimed complete identity of views with China and observed that the outcome of his visit should be a deterrent to aggression. He observed that if war broke out between India and Pakistan, the letter would have certain friends, who would fight shoulder to shoulder with it without entering into a formal pact. Openly having a dig at India and obliquely referring to the Soviets, Bhutto alleged that certain people had succumbed to the Indian propaganda and pressure. Without naming them, he asked the Soviets to desist from encouraging India “to launch full scale aggression against Pakistan” The Chinese leadership seized this opportunity to reinforce its earlier stand on the Bangladesh crisis. Reiterating that the East Pakistan question was an internal affair of Pakistan, the acting Foreign Affairs Minister of China, Chi Peng-fei indirectly referred to India’s “ulterior motives” and observed on old lines that China’s “Pakistani friends may rest assured that should Pakistan be subjected to foreign aggression, the Chinese Government and people will, as always, resolutely support the Pakistani Government and people in their just struggle to defend their state sovereignty and national independence”.

Washington did not lag behind Peking in ganging up with the Yahya regime on the issue of East Pakistan crisis. President Nixon persisted with his dubious role. On 14 August, he wrote to President Yahya Khan, asking for “speeding the process of national reconciliation by enlisting the support of elected representatives of East Pakistan” A few months later, harping on the same theme in his letter to the Pakistani President, dated 2 November, Nixon demanded “participation by the elected representatives of the people of East Pakistan” with a view to restoring those conditions in the eastern wing of the country, “which will end the flow of refugees into India and achieve a viable political accommodation among all the people of Pakistan” In three successive meetings of the WSRG held respectively on 25 August, 11 September and 8 October, Henry Kissinger supported Nixton’s views and emphasized that the United States should not insist that
“East Bengal remain part of Pakistan”, because they accepted “autonomy as inevitable and independence as probable”.

On the face of it, the attitude of Washington appeared to be quite in conformity with the demands of the Awami League. But the fact of the matter is that the actions of the President and his adviser differed entirely from their words which they used intentionally to lend cover to their support to the Yahya regime expressed through diplomatic channels. Both of them vied with each other in setting aside the recommendations of the Representatives, Senators and the Department of State in order to bestow favours on Islamabad.

It is a well-known fact that in August, the House of Representatives passed a resolution, calling for the suspension of US military and economic assistance to Islamabad. Early in October, the Foreign Relations Committee of the Senate also proposed a ban on all forms of US aid to Pakistan until conditions in East Pakistan were suitable enough for the return of the refugees. Many prominent Senators insisted on even tougher measures against Pakistan. Senator Edmund Muskie (Democrat) charged the US Administration with deceptions and half truths in its attitude towards the East Pakistani crisis. Criticising Nixon’s evenhandedness and self-righteousness, he pleaded for diplomatic support to India. The Department of State also did not contemplate to antagonize India. Referring to the “angry swirl of history” in the sub-continent and “the agonies of a less bleak tomorrow” in his statement before a Senate Sub-Committee on 4 October, Maurice Williams, Deputy Administrator of the Agency for International Development and US Coordinator for Relief to East Pakistan, spoke high of the “miracles performed by the Government of India” in what he termed as the “Operation Lifeline” – “feeding, sheltering and providing health care to those millions of refugees”. He, however, expressed fears that if unchecked, the situation may drift towards still greater disaster.

On 12 November, Secretary of State William Rogers observed at a function in Washington that the USA would remain neutral in the event of Indo-Pak conflict. He counselled both these countries to exercise restraint since the Administration had tried to maintain friendly relations with both sides”, Rogers said, “we are apprehensive that these clashes might lead to an outbreak of hostilities in the days ahead…”. Charles Bray, a senior State Department official outrightly rejected rumoured speculation of the existence
of a bilateral arrangement between the USA and Pakistan according to which the former would go to help the latter in the event of an external aggression.

Despite the clearly expressed views of the members of the US Congress, the recommendations of the Department of State and his own unambiguous stand referred to in several of his letters to the President of Pakistan, Nixon did not feel any hesitation in reversing his own views as well as the considered American thinking in the above-mentioned quarters. The President received full-throated support from his advisor, Henry Kissinger, in the formulation of his pro-Pakistan tilt.

In addition to his strong dislike for the Indian leadership and his Government’s several military agreements with Pakistan dating back to his own tenure of Vice-Presidency in the mid-50s, Nixon’s obsession with the Yahya regime on account of his impending visit to Peking was largely accountable for his ‘tilt’ towards Islamabad. The US President’s reluctance to have any dialogue with the Government of India became pronounced during the visit of the Indian Prime Minister to Washington (3-7 November).

At a welcoming ceremony at the White House on 4 November, President Nixon received Prime Minister Gandhi as the representative of the “world’s largest free nation.” The President made an indirect reference to the Indo-Soviet Treaty and observed, “We are not bound together by a treaty commitment in the technical sense, but India and the US are bound together by a higher morality that does not need a legal document... He skipped even the remotest reference to the situation in the Indian sub-continent. Noting this, Christian Science Monitor rightly observed that Nixon greeted Indira Gandhi with the “conventional pious platitudes” and attributed that to the President’s strong support for Pakistan.

In contrast to the formal welcome remarks of Nixon, Mrs Gandhi directly touched upon the moving situation in the sub-continent. At a time when her country was “beleaguered” and she was herself haunted by the tormented faces” in over-crowded refugee camps, the Prime Minister observed that she had come to the USA in search of a “deeper understanding of the situation”, in search of some wise impulse”, which could work “to save humanity from disaster”.

Later the same day at dinner, Mrs. Gandhi said in her speech, “Every nation must bear its own cross. Our people have faced this challenge with exemplary unity, self-
reliance and self-respect”. But she made a dig at President Nixon for his ambivalence and observed “from others, who value and uphold democratic principles we expect understanding.. and a certain measure of support”. She expressed regrets for equating Indians “with those, whose action caused this tragedy”. While seeking support of the “international community to try to remove the root cause of the trouble”, she assured that “India will not be found wanting in generous responses”. In quite unambiguous terms, she reiterated, “in the meanwhile, I cannot avoid the responsibility or my duty to safeguard the future of my people”. “India had reached the limit of endurance” – she later said at a Columbia University meeting.

Mrs. Gandhi’s visit to Washington did not yield any result. Not even a joint communiqué was issued. Referring to the cause of the failure of talks between Nixon and Mrs Gandhi, Kissinger remarks in his memoirs, “the Nixon-Gandhi conversations thus turned into a classic dialogue of the deaf. The two leaders failed to hear each other not because they did not understand each other but because they understood each other only too well.

All efforts of India at a peaceful settlement of the East Pakistan problem were bound to fail for want of America’s cooperation. By the end of November, the Sino-Pak-US axis was reinforced to the fullest satisfaction of President Yahya Khan. On 23 November, national emergency was declared in Pakistan. On 25 November, Yahya told an Associated Press correspondent, “in ten days, I might not to here in Rawalpindi, I will be fighting a war”. By declaring war against India on 3 December, he proved true to his words.

**Bangladesh War**

With Pakistan’s ill-conceived blitzkrieg and reckless strafing of a number of airfields in North-West India on 3 December and the armed clashes on the Indo-Pak borders in the east turned into an all-out shooting war between the regular armed forces of the two countries. Inspiring his country’s “120 million mujahids” to wage a “jehad against the Indian kafirs”, President Yahya Khan declared, “Pakistan’s friends would come to her aid… Pakistan counted on the support of China in the past”.

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Sino-US parallelism

Yahya’s expectations from his allies literally came true. On 3 December, the US Department of State announced immediate “cut off” of remaining licenses on arms to India as a result of what it termed as “Indian incursions into Pakistan”\(^24\). In a hurriedly summoned secret meeting of the WSAG in the Situation Room of the White House, which was attended by top officials of the CIA, Department of State and Defence and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Kissinger disclosed that he was “getting hell every half-hour from the president” that the USA was “not being tough enough on India”. He expressed the President’s desire “to tilt in favour of Pakistan”. At Nixon’s instance, the security adviser ruled out “economic steps” against Pakistan. It was at this meeting that the convening of the Security Council on 4 December was decided. Nixon’s much awaited China trip scheduled for February, 1972 was announced by the White House with a view to intimidating India.

On 4 December, a Department of State Official clearly held India responsible for the war.\(^25\) He said, “India bears the major responsibility” for the “perpetuation of the crisis, a deepening of the crisis”. The same day, in the course of his letter to Brezhnev, Nixon charged India with trying “to dismember the sovereign State of Pakistan”. Alleging that the Soviet Government had “aligned itself with this Indian Policy”, he gave a sort of implied warning that “the spirit” in which they had agreed “to meet in Moscow next May” required from both of them “the utmost restraint and most urgent action to end the conflict and restore territorial integrity in the subcontinent. “Nixon wanted Moscow, in particular, to be warned about its supply of arms to India” – writes Kissinger. In another meeting of the WSAG, held on 4 December, it was decided that “the US Government’s UN approach would be tilted towards the Paks”, “economic aid to Pakistan currently in effect will not be terminated” and the “cut off” will be “directed at India only”\(^25\).

China’s reaction was similar to that of the USA. On 4 December itself, acting Foreign Minister Chi Peng-fei outrightly condemned India for her “armed aggression against Pakistan”. The Sino-US parallelism on the issue of Bangladesh became fully pronounced when Henry Kissinger held several rounds of “secret talks” with Huang Hua, China’s permanent representative to the UNO and “showed him the draft resolution” in advance which the USA had prepared to place in the Security Council meeting. Through Hua, Kissinger kept Peking “meticulously informed” of the American “moves”.

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The Sino-US fulminations against India and the USSR became louder in the deliberations of the Security Council, which was convened on 4 December. Both the Indian and the Soviet delegates requested the Council to first listen to the representative of Bangladesh, which was opposed by the Chinese and the US representatives on the ground that permitting the “spokesman of rebellious elements” to speak before the world body would be an interference in the internal affairs of Pakistan. Referring to the “unfolding of a major tragedy” in South Asia and holding India accountable for making “incursion” “across the border of East Pakistan”, US representative George Bush asked for immediate cease-fire and withdrawal of troops from both sides. While Pakistan accepted this proposal, India rejected it. Bush suggested posting of UN observers along the Indo-Pak borders until the voluntary return of the refugees. The Chinese delegate, who spoke strongly in support of Bush, alleged that India had “provoked large-scale armed conflict” and dismissed her plea, that it acted in self-defence, as sheer gangster logic”. Huang Hua asked the Council to strongly “condemn the aggressive acts of the Indian Government… perpetrated with the support of the social imperialists”.

When the US delegate moved his draft resolution on the lines of his above noted speech in the Council, it was supported by China and vetoed by the USSR. Explaining his veto, the Soviet delegate observed that the passage of any such one-sided resolution would have shifted responsibility “from the guilty to the innocent” and “justified military dictatorship against national liberation movement and crushing of democracy”.

On 5 December, the Soviet delegate brought his own draft resolution demanding a political settlement in East Pakistan and termination of all acts of violence, which had led to the straining of the situation. This draft resolution failed of adoption due to lack of adequate support. The same day, when another draft resolution, asking for a simple cease-fire, was placed by eight non-permanent members of the Council, the Soviet delegate vetoed it on the ground that is was not linked to “the elimination of the root cause of the conflict”, i.e. “the will of the East Pakistani population as expressed in December 1970 elections”.

In sharp contrast to the Soviet draft resolution, the Chinese delegate presented his own draft proposals which consisted of condemnation of India and was in some respect similar to that of the US, vetoed earlier by the USSR. It was not put to vote. The Chinese
delegate, however, used the opportunity to decry the USSR as the “supporter, encourager and protector of the Indian aggression against Pakistan”.

**Soviet Response to the Crisis**

When the Sino-US collusion in support of Pakistan was visibly reinforced in their official denunciation of India and in their identical stand in the debates of the Security Council, the Soviet Government deemed it proper to counteract the increasing pressures on India. Through the diplomatic channel, Premier Kosygin sent a note to Washington on 4 December, in which he asked for immediate cease-fire coupled with recognition of the independence of East Pakistan by the Yahya regime. Kosygin, who was on a state visit to Denmark, criticised Pakistan for the outbreak of the war in the Indian sub-continent. In the course of a dinner speech in the Danish capital on 4 December, he asked all the peace-loving countries to help in ending the Indo-Pak War. He demanded immediate solution of the internal political crisis in East Pakistan in the light of the outcome of December 1970 elections. The Soviet Premier laid stress on normalization of relations between India and Pakistan.

The Soviet Government issued its first statement on the Indo-Pak situation on 5 December. Tracing history of the conflict, the TASS statement blamed the military regime of Pakistan for the breakdown of March negotiations, the arrest of Mujib and mass terror in East Pakistan. Holding Pakistan responsible “for not taking any measure in the direction of political solution and for continuing war preparations against India”, this statement expressed the hope that only a reversal of the policy of repression, “release of Mujib and implementation of the election results of December 1970 could bring about an amicable settlement”. “Pakistan’s armed attack against India, under whatever pretext, would evoke most resolute condemnation by the Soviet Union, which would not remain indifferent to the events taking place in her direct neighbourhood and thereby involving her security”, the statement said. It urged the leaders of Pakistan and other countries “to refrain from steps, which might invite their involvement in the conflict and bring further aggravation of the situation in the Indian sub-continent”.
Sino-US Machinations

The firm stand of Moscow in the Security Council, strong support of the Soviet Government expressed through the diplomatic channels and the release of the Government statement evoked sharp reactions from the People’s Republic of China and the USA. Nixon writes in his memoirs that the decided “to remain absolutely steadfast behind Pakistan” in order not to “allow a friend of the USA and China” “to get screwed in a conflict with a friend of Russia”.

Both Peking and Washington took a number of steps on 6 December to counteract the Soviet support to India. The Chinese Government warned India through an article in the People’s Daily on 6 December. It said the “every country in the world has neighbours… and every country might create pretexts to interfere in the internal affairs of its neighbours and might even send troops to invade them”.

Washington took immediate steps against New Delhi in two directions. It increased pressures on India and the USSR on the diplomatic front and simultaneously mobilized world opinion in favour of Pakistan through a resolution in the General Assembly. The USA took steps not “to make it easier for the Indian Government to sustain its military efforts”. On 6 December, she suspended even her general economic assistance, which amounted to one-third of America’s aid to India in that year. In an apparent bid to put pressures on New Delhi, several allies of Washington [Belgium, West Germany and Japan] suspended their economic aid to India.

With a view to further demoralizing New Delhi, President Nixon, while receiving the Pakistani Ambassador-designate A.M. Raza in the White House on 6 December, told that the “followed with sympathetic interest the efforts of the Government and people of Pakistan to achieve an amicable political settlement in East Pakistan” Welcoming the “efforts of President Yahya to remove tension in the sub-continent”, the President accepted Pakistan’s invitation to visit Islamabad on his way either to or from Peking.

In a meeting of the WSAG, held on 6 December, Kissinger directed the officials that henceforth Washington should show “a certain coolness to the Indians” and asked them not to treat the Indian Ambassador “at too high a level”. The question of transfer of the US military equipment in possession of Jordan and Saudi Arabia to Pakistan was also
discussed. The participants considered the quantum of US military supplies and mode of delivery to Pakistan in order to restrain India from “extinguishing West Pakistan”.

The issue of Bangladesh was brought before the UN on 7 December, where both the Chinese and the US delegates tried their best to divert the world’s attention from the central problem of the suppression of the liberation movement of the people in East Bengal. The Chinese delegate rose to make various types of insinuations against India and the Soviet Union, condemning India as an “outright aggressor,” “supported by a certain big power” George Bush criticised India’s “punitive measures” against Pakistan. He moved a draft resolution which asked for cease-fire, withdrawal of all armed personnel from the area of conflict, resumption of negotiations and voluntary return of the refugees to East Pakistan. This resolution was adopted by the General Assembly. The Soviet delegate opposed it on the ground that it would “serve only to confuse the UN and complicate the situation” “Without the decisive, rapid and effective elimination of the main causes of the conflict and the decision of the destiny of the majority of Pakistani population, any one-sided push would lead to nothing”-the Soviet delegate observed.

Continued soviet support to India

Meanwhile Moscow reiterated it stand on the Indo-Pak crisis. The Soviet-Danish and the Soviet-Norwegian joint communique, issued at the end of Prime Minister Kosygin’s visit to these counties, asked for an end to repression in East Pakistan and for a peaceful solution of the problem. Pravda criticized China and the USA for pushing through the pro-Pakistani resolution in the Security Council and for not permitting the spokesman of Bangladesh to speak in the Security Council.

The Soviet Government issued its second TASS statement on the Indo-Pak situation on 7 December. This statement blamed china for her anti-Soviet and anti-India outbursts. Referring indirectly to the New China News Agency statement, published earlier in the People’s Daily, the statement criticized Peking for keeping completely silent on the plight of the East Pakistan, refugees, on the brutal mass repression and the arrest of Mujib. Reiterating the earlier Soviet stand on the whole issue, the TASS ridiculed the Chinese leadership for saying that ten million refugees were whisked away by India.

On 9 December, Pravda published a leading article by its political commentator, Viktor Mayevsky, who first focused attention on the formation of the feudal structure of
society and economy in Pakistan and on the acute discrimination against the people of the entire eastern wing of the country. The Pravda commentator came down heavily on Peking for inciting Pakistan against Indian and observed that “by aggravating the Indo-Pakistan conflict, the Maoists were actually trying to realize the politics of provoking Asians against Asians which was clearly a product of the Guam doctrine of the USA”. The author further added that “the Soviet Union attentively followed the development of events... taking place in it immediate neighborhood and consequently affecting its interests and security”. He demanded that “the government of all countries should stop taking steps, which could in any way strain the conflict further”. In support of his clearly expressed views, he quoted from Brezhnev’s speech on the Indo-Pak situation at the Sixth Congress of the Polish Communist Party. on 10 December, Pravda published another article by Yuri Zhukov, who criticized US-China pressure-tactics for intensification of the conflict. He observed that the General Assembly resolution ignored the destinies of the Bengalis the root cause of the conflict. Referring to the UN Secretary General, who had reported that Pakistan was guilty of aggression against India, Zhukov criticized China and the USA for apportioning the blame on India.1

Irrked by the ineffectiveness of their strongly-worded statements and serious warnings to India and the USSR, Washington and Peking now took recourse to gun-boat diplomacy. Close coordination in the policies of the Chinese and the US Governments and their combined machinations against India and the USSR are corroborated by the testimony of Henry Kissinger himself, who writes, “I wanted to consult the Chinese before, we made our next move” On 10 December, Kissinger and Huang Hua met clandestinely in the CIA’s walk-up apartment, where the Chinese representative was “briefed” “in great details” on America’s “exchanges with all the parties including the Soviets”. Kissinger disclosed to him all the economic, political and military pressures exercised by the Nixon Administration on the Government of India and the Soviet Union.29 Huang Hua agreed with Kissinger’s assessment of the situation. Taking a “hard line”, he assured Kissinger that his country “would surely increase its assistance to Pakistan” Recalling this precise moment, Henry Kissinger writes, “it was an extraordinary state of affairs, an active, if tacti, collaboration was developing with a country that we did no t recognize” and whom “until a year earlier” “we considered our most implacable enemy”. New Sino-US initiative was apparently decided at this meeting, which is
confirmed by their subsequent concerted efforts and by the testimonies, of Nixon and Kissinger themselves.

The circumstances of the dispatch of US aircraft carrier Enterprise to the Bay of Bengal are well-known. Recalling this act of gun-boat diplomacy, Kissinger records that “an aircraft-carrier task force that we had alerted previously was now ordered to move toward the Bay of Bengal, ostensibly for the evacuation of Americans, but in reality to give emphasis to our warning against an attack on West Pakistan”. The security adviser writes further: “moving the carrier task force into the Bay of Bengal” committed the USA to “no finalact” “but it created precisely the margin of uncertainty needed to force a decision by New Delhi and Moscow”. While placing such an order, the President expressed his desire “to aid China in case of Soviet action”. A case of clear convergence of the policies and actions of the USA and the People’s Republic of China was thus again coming to the surface in a bigger way. “Chou En-lai’s analysis was the same as ours” testifies Kissinger. “The Chinese played a very cautious role in this period. They had troops poised on the Indian border” President Nixon also admits.

The entire China-supported US initiative during the Bangladesh War was directed at pressurizing India to accept a cease-fire resolution in the Security Council. Nixon’s repeated warnings to the Soviets were also aimed at the same. Moscow had already used its veto twice to frustrate Sino-US designs in the Council. There was no impact on India of the dispatch of the Enterprise to the Bay of Bengal. Meanwhile, Pakistani reverses on the borders continued, causing serious concern in Washington and Peking. At this critical stage, President Nixon and Henry Kissinger decided to play their last card, according to which the resolution of the General Assembly was to be referred by the US Administration to the Security Council on 12 December as the only means to compel India to accept cease-fire. With a view to intimidating New Delhi and Moscow, Washington took recourse to the following pressure tactics. As planned, the Security Council was summoned to discuss the Assembly resolution on 12 December. At this meeting, Pakistan was represented by Z.A Bhutto, who took the floor to lavish praises on the USA and China. Threatening India with a thousand years’ war, Bhutto alleged that the Soviet Union was deeply involved in the “dismemberment” of his country. It was decided to resume the meeting on 13 December. Before the Council could meet the next day, the Nixon Administration took two more desperate steps to bale out Yahya Khan. On 12 December,
for the first time in his tenure as President. Nixon sent a message to Moscow on the Hot Line. According to Kissinger, “After waiting seventy two hours for a Soviet response to the conversations with Vorontsov and Matskevich, the President had set in train certain moves in the United Nations Security Council that could not be reverted”. After having dispatched Enterprise, the largest aircraft carrier of the US Navy into the Bay of Bengal and having arranged for Pakistan immediate military assistance from CENTO allies, Jordan and Saudi Arabia, the US Administration flashed the CIA-orginated stunt of an impending Chinese attack on India from the north. The Sino-US machinations reached their climax with Washington telling the Soviets on 12 December that “matters might get out of control” on its side, because it “had to be ready to back up the Chinese, if at the last moment they came in” after America’s all UN initiatives failed. Kissinger’s warning regarding the cancellation of Nixon’s Moscow visit in case of its failure to restrain India was handed over to Gromyko the same day by Jacob Beam, the US Ambassador to the Soviet Union.

**Moscow’s Refusal to be Bluffed**

This was precisely the background which the US Administration prepared in league with the Chinese on the eve of the holding of the Security Council’s meeting on 13 December. As expected, the US delegate brought a draft resolution, calling for immediate cease-fire. This, however, was vetoed by the Soviet Union. The Soviet delegate observed that the US draft resolution was an “illusion” and “a repetition of the old and unrealistic course” He brushed aside malicious reports in the Pakistani press regarding Soviet action in the war. Indirectly drawing attention to the movement of the US Seventh Fleet, the Soviet delegate warned those governments, “which wanted to warm their hands at the growing military confrontation in the area” against getting involved in the conflict.

In the wake of the third Soviet veto in the Council, the US Administration continued to exercise its pressure on Moscow. On 14 December, Kissinger again threatened to cancel the Moscow summit. He told a reporter, if the Soviets continued “to deliberately encourage military actions” the USA “might have to take a new look at the President’s plans”

The Soviets viewed the deteriorating situation in the sub-continent with deep concern, taking several concrete steps to counteract the Sino-US machinations. The Indo-
Soviet Treaty was invoked. V. Kuzhnetsov, First Deputy Foreign Minister of the USSR, visited New Delhi on 11 December in order to have a first hand discussion on the war situation. D.P. Dhar, Chairman of the Foreign Policy Planning Committee, went to Moscow on 12 December for direct consultations with the Soviet leaders. On 13 December, Podgorny warned some powers against playing incendiary role and aggravating the situation. The same day, Nikolai Pegov, Soviet Ambassador to New Delhi, was reported to have said that a Soviet fleet was already in the Indian Ocean and Moscow “would not allow the Seventh Fleet to intervene”. “If China should decide to intervene in Ladakh”, he continued, “the Soviet Union would open a diversionary action in Sinkiang”.

The Soviet military attaché in Kathmandu reportedly called on his Chinese counterpart and told him that China “should not get too serious about intervention” and warned him of Soviet “missiles”. Criticising the US policy, Pravda warned that Pentagon’s attempts to come back to “gun-boat diplomacy” would only accentuate tension in the Indian peninsula. “The Indian Ocean is not an American lake” – commented the Soviet military daily Red Star.

It was in these turbulent circumstances that the East Pakistan crisis came to an end. Dacca became the freed capital of Bangladesh. India unilaterally declared cease-fire on 16 December. In the meeting of the Security Council, held the same day, the Soviet delegate welcomed India’s action and requested the Council to ask the parties to observe cease-fire and help by ensuring measures for immediate accession of the lawful representatives of Bangladesh to power. He appealed to all members of the UNO not to complicate the Indo-Pak situation.

In contrast to the Soviet stand which was characterized by moderation and restraint, the draft resolution sponsored by the USA on 16 December still referred to the existence of “East Pakistan” – a curious connotation after the fall of Dacca. The same day, an extremely provocative statement of the People’s Republic of China was also issued which called the Soviet Union as the “back-stage manager of the Indian expansionists”. China pledged “not only political, but material support to Pakistan in her just struggle” against foreign aggression. The same day, in an official note, Peking alleged that Indian border forces had crossed into the Chinese territory for “reconnaissance” committing a “grave encroachment upon Chinese territory China’s lip-service to Islamabad was just a face-
saving device. With Pakistan’s acceptance of cease-fire on 17 December, the briefest but the bitterest of wars between India and Pakistan came to an end.

From the preceding analysis, it becomes clear that the US attitude towards the Bangladesh crisis was not only partisan. It posed a major threat to peace in this region and beyond. While outrightly backing the Yahya regime in diplomatic, economic and military terms, President Nixon and Kissinger did not show any regard for the well-expressed views of leading Congressmen and celebrities like Chester Bowles; J.K. Galbraith (former Ambassadors to India) and Kenneth B. Keating, the then US Ambassador to New Delhi. Opinions expressed by responsible press and even by allies like Britain, France, West Germany, Australia and others were ignored. No heed was paid to the reports of international organizations like the World Bank and Aid to Pakistan Consortium, which had recommended strict sanctions against Islamabad. In an apparent bid to accommodate Yahya Khan, the official reports of the UN Secretary General, who had held Pakistan responsible for crossing the cease fireline “first”, were bypassed. Even the CIA Director, Richard Helms, had observed in a meeting of the WSAG on 4 December that the CIA did not know “who started the current action and why Pakistan hit the four small air-fields of India on 3 December”.

The attitude of the People’s Republic of China towards the Bangladesh crisis was similar to that of the USA in many respects. Right from the beginning, Peking did not blame the military junta of Pakistan for its atrocities in East Pakistan. In addition to economic and military assistance, outright diplomatic support of the Chinese Government was pledged to Islamabad. Through various official statements, notes and The People’s Daily articles, India and the Soviet Union were warned of dire consequences in the event of their support to the cause of the Awami League. On account of serious internal travails and shake-up in the top echelons of the Chinese Communist Party in which several Politbureau members were expelled on charges of anti-Mao activities, China was not in a position to take any firm military action. The snow-bound Himalayas and the fear of Soviet retaliation might have further discouraged the Chinese from undertaking any adventurous action. Despite these odds, the Chinese did their best to help out the Yahya regime in every possible way. Peking entirely identified itself with the cause of Islamabad. For both the USA and the People’s Republic of China, East Pakistan crisis was merely an internal affair of Pakistan. The efforts of both these countries in the Security
Council were directed at the passage of a simple cease-fire resolution with a view to crippling the autonomy movement in Bangladesh.

Just contrary to the USA and the People’s Republic of China, India and the Soviet Union adopted policies which were based on hard realities of life in the Indian subcontinent. Right from the beginning of the crisis up to the emergence of Bangladesh in the comity of nations, both New Delhi and Moscow insisted on a peaceful political settlement of the problem in accordance with the clearly expressed wishes of the people of East Pakistan through democratically held elections in the country in December 1970. The efforts of both these countries in the UN Security Council were also precisely aimed at this end. Besides the Indian Foreign Minister’s visit to six major countries of the world, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi herself had undertaken the stupendous task of personally pleading for a political solution to the problem with almost all the influential quarters. The leadership of both India and the USSR had underscored the need for a political solution to the problem through their speeches, official statements, Government notes and diplomatic correspondence.

Had Yahya Khan summoned the National Assembly session of Pakistan in time and handed over power to Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in the true spirit of the election results, the issue of autonomy would have been satisfactorily solved without imperiling the unity and integrity of Pakistan and the whole crisis could have been averted.

Towards Deeper Understanding

Even after Bangladesh stood up as a nation, the fire was not immediately extinguished. More than ever before, it was after the emergence of Bangladesh that Moscow's role as a peace-maker in South Asia acquired a significant dimension. The Soviet Union recognised Bangladesh on 25 January 1972. Pravda urged the people of Pakistan that their future lay in the normalization of relations with India and Bangladesh. The Soviet Government pledged support to the process of normalization in the subcontinent during Sheikh Mujib's visit to Moscow on 2-5 March 1972.

Soviets For Peace in South Asia

While welcoming the Sheikh, Soviet premier A.N. Kosygin promised assistance to normalization in South Asia and stressed that among the peoples of the East, those of the
Hindustan sub-continent, the Soviet people saw their partners in the struggle against colonialism and imperialist repression. Both sides requested all peace-loving countries to help normalization in South Asia on the basis of bilateral political settlement with no outside interference. In the middle of March (16-19) when Pakistani President Z.A. Bhutto visited the Soviet capital, Kosygin re-affirmed his earlier stand, as expressed during Mujib's recent visit to Moscow. The Soviet Premier observed that any confrontation between the forces of national independence and those of warlike dictatorship, aided by the aggressive forces from outside, was harmful for the peoples of the sub-continent, including those of Pakistan. He expressed opposition to any external intervention and sincerely wished that President Bhutto's visit to Moscow should help normalization of relations among India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. The Soviet Premier assured that his country would do everything possible for normalizing the situation in South Asia. The President of Pakistan acknowledged Premier Kosygin's points, laid emphasis on the stoppage of unfriendly propaganda in the sub-continent and expressed his readiness for strengthening conditions of peace in the sub-continent. It is more striking to note that the leading Pakistani newspapers later commended the sincerity of Soviet peace efforts in South Asia. Dawn observed that Moscow’s desire for peace and stability in the region was well reflected in Premier Kosygin's offer to help in the settlement of disputable issues. Pakistan Times also wrote that the Soviet contribution to peace and mutual understanding in the sub-continent was of immense value. President Bhutto in an interview to Guardian himself admitted that he got the feeler for initiating talks with India through the Soviet Embassy in Islamabad.

The Soviet desire to support the process of normalization in the sub-continent was expressed further at the Fifteenth Congress of the Soviet Trade Unions on 20 March, where the significance of the Treaty with India and of good-neighbourly relations among India, Pakistan and Bangladesh as contributory factors for healthy political climate in Asia was stressed. When India’s External Affairs Minister visited Moscow on 3-5 April and held talks with the Soviet leaders on a wide range of questions including the situation in the subcontinent, the Soviets laid emphasis on the significance of an early political settlement of the existing problems in the sub-continent. Later when the Simla Conference was held (28 June-2 July), Pravda welcomed it as an “important step on way to durable peace in the Indian sub-continent”. The Simla summit was rightly seen in the Soviet Union
as a triumph of great statesmanship which would make it possible for the countries of the
sub-continent to develop their relations in conditions of peace and cooperation.

The critics of Indo-Soviet friendship in India, however, did their best to denigrate
the image of the Soviet Union before the holding of the Simla Conference. Indirectly
referring to Soviet emphasis on normalization of relations among countries of South Asia
through their own efforts, the Economic and Political Weekly cautioned that the Soviet
Union was conceiving to play “a paternalistic role in the sub-continent”35. Organiser wrote
that Russia, “the big brother” would interfere at the Simla Conference.

The key-note in Soviet policy towards the Indian sub-continent in the period of this
discussion was no doubt Moscow's emphasis on good-neighbourly relations in South Asia,
but all along high esteem for friendship with India was also asserted.

The Soviet desire to achieve stable peace in South Asia found repeated expression
on all important occasions where Soviet policy pronouncements were made. At a meeting
devoted to Soviet-Hungarian friendship, it was stressed that normal relations between
India and Pakistan would be a pre-condition for peace in that region. On the eve of the
50th anniversary of the formation of the USSR, the Indo-Soviet Treaty for Peace,
Friendship and Cooperation was hailed and the Soviet desire to have good relations with
both Pakistan and Bangladesh was stressed. Referring to withdrawal of troops from the
Indo-Pak border and evacuation of territories captured during the Bangladesh War, New
Times observed that true friends of the peoples of South Asia hoped that the realistic
approach of their leaders would enable them to overcome all their differences. Pravda
welcomed repatriation of the prisoners of war from India to Pakistan and Bangladesh
citizens from Pakistan. While addressing the Supreme Soviet of the Republic of
Uzbekistan, L.I. Brezhnev underscored “the great role played by India in deciding the fate
of Asia”. He added that Soviet friendship with that country was “on a long-term basis” and
“all the future. Steps taken in this direction would be of extreme use for both the Soviet
and Indian peoples”. In his speech delivered at the World Peace Conference in Moscow on
26 October 1975, Brezhnev welcomed the normalization of relations in South Asia and
paid glowing tributes to the successes of India's domestic as well as foreign policies.
Brezhnev's Visit to India and After

L.I. Brezhnev's visit to India on 26-30 November 1973 was an important landmark in Indo-Soviet relations. During his five-day stay in New Delhi, he held several rounds of discussions with the Indian leaders on matters of bilateral and international significance.

In a public meeting at the Red Fort on 27 November, Brezhev stressed that the Soviet Union would stand by India in days of joy and in days of trials. In his address to the Indian Parliament on 29 November, he laid stress on both the political and economic aspects of the idea of collective security in Asia. Asking for the resumption of the principles of Bandung and the policy of Panchsheel, he observed that a broad, active, constructive and comprehensive discussion of this question would definitely help trace a common approach acceptable to all States concerned. He paid tributes to India for playing the role of an "innovator" by paving the way for the independent foreign policies of the young states. After recounting India's services to world peace, he expressed satisfaction with India's contribution to the normalization of the situation in South Asia. He hinted at those who disliked the enhancement of India's international stature and at those who strove to impede it.

During Brezhnev's visit, three Agreements were signed such as the Agreement on further development of economic cooperation between India and the Soviet Union for a period of 15 years. Agreement on cooperation between the planning bodies of India and the Soviet Union and a consular convention between the two countries. The visit set at rest all speculations that Moscow's detente with Washington and its pre-occupation with problems in West Europe and Middle East would tend to belittle the significance of its relations with New Delhi proved wrong. The importance of Brezhnev's visit to India can be judged from the fact that three members of the Politbureau and six members of the Central Committee of the CPSU were included in his entourage.

Immediately after the aforesaid accords were released to the press, various sorts of insinuations about military contents in these Agreements were made in those domestic and foreign circles which had never approved of ever-growing Indo-Soviet ties. The visit was characterised as “a new foreign policy offensive” in order to press India for giving to the project of Asian security necessary momentum with a view “to outflanking China”. Newsweek commented similarly and ascribed the visit to the Soviet quest for port facilities
in the Indian Ocean. Times cautioned that since India was “a classical area in the left-wing analysis” and “a very substantial piece in the great game of Sino-Soviet rivalry”, the visit will be used “to woo her support for collective security in Asia”. Again Times linked the visit with the plan of collective security and further alleged that it produced few tangible results, because primarily it was a diplomatic coup. Another important British newspaper observed that the Indo-Soviet Agreements were neither in India's interest, nor in those of the West, because through these Agreements India was “sucked into the Soviet orbit. Daily Telegraph alleged that the visit had been planned with a view to finding out base facilities in the Indian Ocean. Guardian held the view that in return for Soviet aid, the Soviet Union wanted base facilities in the Indian Ocean and India’s participation in the collective security pact.\textsuperscript{36} International Herald Tribune echoed similar voice and viewed the visit as a means of accelerating Soviet influence in Asia against Japan, the USA and China and alleged that it would lead to an influx of Soviet advisers to India. New York Times through its editorial entitled “India Tilts” observed that henceforth India would move still closer to the Soviets.

China studiously refrained from directly commenting on the visit. But New China News Agency conveyed its reactions indirectly. Assailing the Indo-Soviet Treaty, the Chinese News Agency observed that the Soviets were working for the further dismemberment of Pakistan in order to achieve the age-old Russian objective of gaining access to the warm waters of the Persian Gulf through Afghanistan and Baluchistan.

Some political parties in India echoed the aforesaid comments in the Western and Chinese press. Organiser wrote that the Indo-Soviet Agreements had elements of “sell-out” and India was entirely “lost to Russia on the issue of collective security”. Motherland was highly critical of the consular convention. It alleged red danger to India because of its involvement in the collective security arrangements. The Socialist Party did not like the Soviet support to normalization in the sub-continent. The party mouthpiece, Janata, alleged that the Soviet Union was playing a significant part in doing away with the partition settlement of 1947.\textsuperscript{37}

Congress (0) leader C.D. Pande alleged that some of the provisions of the recently signed agreements with the Soviet Union were “humiliating” and by signing them, India lost her identity as a non-aligned country. He further added that in these Agreements, the Soviet Union had been given a dominant role in Indian economic planning.
Swatantra leader Rathnaswami expressed the apprehension that the economic agreements with countries having greater leanings towards heavy industry would not be advantageous to India. While advocating India's strong presence in the Indian Ocean, he cautioned the Government against depending on a single friend and asked for entering into similar agreements with the USA and China.

The CPI Politburo and its Central Committee which concluded its six-day session on 27 November 1973 did not take a public stand on the visit, though an unnamed party leader was reported to have said that Indian economic crisis was not likely to be overcome as a result of the visit.

All criticism of the visit was either based on lack of understanding or was politically motivated. This is evident from the text of the Indo-Soviet joint communique issued at the end of the visit. In this document, both sides expressed their readiness to participate together with other countries, on an equal basis, in finding a fair solution to the question of making the Indian Ocean a zone of peace. Such a declaration was a befitting reply to the barrage of various allegations levelled against nominal Soviet presence in this strategic waterway. It is important to note that the readiness of India and the Soviet Union to work together for making the Indian Ocean a zone of peace was a loud invitation to all littoral countries to keep a constant watch on imperialist designs in that region. As to the speculation about the Soviet demand for naval facilities in the Indian Ocean, India's Foreign Minister Swaran Singh categorically rejected any such military contents either in their discussions or in the Agreements with the Soviet leader.

The concept of Asian security as it was elucidated by Brezhnev during his speech in the Indian Parliament or the way it was referred to in the Indo-Soviet joint communique did not mean in any way a military grouping, nor a pact of some countries against others in the continent. All that was said was about the need for creating an atmosphere for discussing Asian security entirely by the continent's own efforts, based on sovereign equality, greater economic co-operation and strict non-interference in the internal affairs of any country. The Soviet proposal was obviously for a multilateral arrangement in Asia, envisaged through consensus among the countries of this region. It is strange how such a concept should have been taken as an entente against Peking, whose very acceptance of it was welcome by all, concerned. Foreign Minister Swaran Singh rightly observed that India should not be afraid of this idea merely because it came from one country, or the other.
Since this idea came from a friendly country, he continued, India should view it in the spirit in which it was offered and she should not try to see that “there might be a catch or something hidden in it”.

The Indo-Soviet Agreements, signed during Brezhnev's visit, in no way skirted India's independence to take decisions on all matters of her interests. Setting aside such criticism, Indira Gandhi held that “allegations of sell-out were levelled by those traditional detractors of Indo-Soviet friendship who never cared to substantiate their vociferous insinuations”. “The Soviet Union”, she asserted, “had been always truly friendly with India”. While recounting numerous instances of Soviet goodwill for India, she specifically referred to the crisis India was beset with events in East Pakistan and observed that the Soviet help at that time had gone a long way in strengthening India's self-confidence to meet the situation. She said that there was moderation in India's foreign policy in entering into the recent agreements with the Soviet Union, as it was a policy adopted years ago.38

During his visit to New Delhi, Brezhnev hailed the efforts of the South Asian countries to normalize their strained relations exclusively by their own efforts. On 9 April 1974, when the Tripartite Agreement was signed in New Delhi by the Foreign Ministers of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, Pravda welcomed it as an important step. In an apparent bid to create a wedge between Pakistan and India, the Chinese leadership almost simultaneously re-asserted its pledge to support the Kashmir people’s right of self-determination in the banquet held in honour of Z.A. Bhutto in Peking. The Soviet news agency TASS commented on the Chinese Deputy Premier's remarks at the banquet about a matter relevant to the exclusive competence of India and Pakistan. From this and other prompt reactions, continued Soviet interest in relaxation of tension in the Indian sub-continent becomes clear.

With the successful underground test of her nuclear device on 18 May 1974, India marked a significant breakthrough in her atomic development programme. Despite her commitment to the use of nuclear energy for peaceful Purposes alone, world reaction on India's nuclear - test was diverse.

The US State Department indicated its disappointment with India’s nuclear test and noted with concern that it would disrupt the already unsettled political situation in the area as well as help proliferation. The White House did not announce any aid cut because Nixon
had already frozen all assistance programmes for India during the Bangladesh War. New York Times called upon the USA, France and the Soviet Union to follow the example of Canada and suspend aid to India's nuclear programme.

Initially, official Chinese source did not announce India's test, but later peaking spoke of the futility of this device in the background of India’s staggering economy.

The Japanese Government regretted India's experiment and barred her from additional aid for nuclear development. Canada reacted similarly.

Islamabad condemned India's nuclear test outrightly and immediately broke off negotiations with India.

The Soviet stand on this issue could be seen in a leading article by a pravda commentator, who noted that Pakistan's very arguments for deferring talks with India on the issue of nuclear test were not appreciated by the Soviet Union on the ground that New Delhi had categorically declared that the experiment was aimed at peaceful purpose. In this article, the commentator set aside all artificial pretexts to aggravate the situation and sow seeds of animosity between India and Pakistan. While lashing at the evil forces, he applauded India’s commitment to universal and complete disarmament including nuclear weapons. The Soviet press hailed the launching of India's first earth satellite “Aryabhata” from a Soviet cosmodrome on 18 April 1975.

**Soviet concern over Deteriorating Internal Situation in India**

In the year 1974 when the political situation in India started deteriorating as a result of the combined onslaught of the rightwing forces, the Soviet media increasingly focused attention on the subject, when reporting about India. Pravda and Izvestia criticised the right-wing political parties for their activities in the states of Gujarat, U.P. and Bihar. These dailies blamed the politicians for “fomenting unrest among students and inciting communal feuds”. Later, in the wake of the Allahabad High Court's judgement in the election case of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, Pravda wrote that the judgement would only safeguard the interests of the right-wing political parties. Reporting from Delhi, Tass referred to CPI's support to Mrs Gandhi's decision not to quit the Prime Minister's post and file a petition in the Supreme Court. It blamed the right-wing political parties for “creating chaos in the country by subverting the progressive measures of the Government”. It also
referred in detail to the various meetings and demonstrations held in Delhi in support of Mrs Gandhi.

Pravda covered the news of the promulgation of internal emergency in India on 27 June. It attributed this situation to "the threat of internal disturbances caused by the Indian reactionary' circles", described the history of Raj Narain's election petition, and referred to the killing of L.N. Mishra and attempt on the life of A. Ray. It expressed its apprehension that “the threat would have ended the progressive transformations in the country”. “The steps taken by the President and the Government are aimed at the protection of the progressive gains”— Pravda observed. Quoting at length from the statement of the CPI Central Secretariat in support of emergency, Pravda gave out the details regarding the arrest of Jaya Prakash Narayan and the prominent leaders of the Jana Sangh, Bharatiya Kranti Dal and Congress(0). Referring then to the expulsion of Mohan Dharia, Ex-Minister, Chandrasekhar, member of the Congress Working Committee and Ram Dhan, Parliamentary Secretary of the INC, it observed that everything in the country was “normal”. “Measures that have been taken in the country since the promulgation of emergency, are yielding positive results”—Pravda observed. Radio Moscow offered similar comments and alleged that "while trying to discredit the socio-economic reforms carried out by Indira Gandhi's Government... the most shameless forces of Indian reaction and the Maoists are working in a united front with imperialist forces for the protection of the reactionary circles". Beginning with 1973, the leaders of the reactionary parties tried to introduce in India the ill-famed pattern of Chilean junta, it added. Charging Jaya Prakash with “demagogy”, New Times observed that “Mao Tse-tung provided Narayan's inspiration of his total revolution”, who was supported by “fascist Rashtriya Swayam Sewak Sangh and Ananda Marga organizations”. “Narayan even urged the army not to carry out the decisions and orders of the Central Government”—it alleged and added that the Allahabad High Court's decision was just to serve "as a signal for a coup d'etat.

Comments in the Western and Chinese press on events taking place in India in the wake of emergency were to the contrary. Economist observed that the imposition of emergency regulations led to the end of democracy. Journals and dailies like Political Quarterly, Times, Time, Newsweek, New York Times, Washington Post and many others levelled similar charges against Indira Gandhi. Times alleged that Prime Minister Indira Gandhi took recourse to a "draconian", "unprecedented" method which even Pt. Nehru
would not have done and which even the situation did not warrant. New York Times observed that by imposing emergency in the country, Indira Gandhi "unexpectedly veered off her democratic course". Le Monde wrote that Indira Gandhi "defied democratic rules" by clamping emergency and could no longer claim "moral superiority". The West German and Italian press treated the promulgation of emergency as a "coup de'tat," which was a "fatal blow to the Indian democracy". Similar comments were offered in most of the influential Western press.

In a dispatch from Peking, the People's Daily published a lengthy article on the emergency situation in India entitled "Ferocious Reactionaries Fully Exposed" in which the author referring to Indira Gandhi observed that "those who bow before her survive and those who resist perish". It condemned the Soviets for supporting Mrs Gandhi. On 30 June, Hsinhua observed, "New Delhi Government declared a state of emergency in the whole country... to extricate itself from the plight caused by Indira Gandhi's election malpractices". On 2 July, it cited anti-Indira articles and editorials from the Thai, Malaysian and Singapore papers. Peking Review alleged that "backed by the lads of the Kremlin", Indira Gandhi took recourse to "reactionary measures and criminal acts". On 29 July, this news agency of the Chinese Government condemned "Indira Gandhi's fascist rule". It had levelled similar charges even earlier.

The Soviet press reacted sharply to the adverse comments in the Western and Chinese media on emergency in India. In an article entitled "Anti-Indira Campaign", Pravda commentator V. Shurygin, alleged that the Western press and the People's Daily were not giving "objective analysis" of the Indian situation in clear support of the right-wing opposition in the country. An article in Izvestia, noted that "the Western and Chinese apologists of Indian reaction were expressing regrets because the international forces of reaction, courted by Peking, had a hand in the conspiracy". New Times blamed the leading Western and Chinese dailies for supporting Jaya Prakash Narayan. Criticising the People's Daily and New China News Agency (Hsinhua) Bulletin on the Indian situation, Radio Moscow beamed a special feature on the promulgation of emergency in India on 30 June. It assailed the Indian "agents of Peking, who got both arms and finance" from China and referred to Prime Minister Mrs Gandhi as saying that the "reactionary forces in India were getting foreign support"
Pravda welcomed the ban on twenty-six "fascist-oriented paramilitary and left-wing extremist groups". It offered similar comment on the imposition of press censorship. Radio Moscow welcomed the twenty point economic programme announced by the Government. New Times brought out a number of cover-stories on the expression of "people's will", "fruitful results of emergency", "changes in the Indian country-side", "time of reform" and "stabilization in India". The Soviet leaders sent messages of greetings on the eve of the fourth anniversary of the Indo-Soviet Treaty. In an exclusive interview to the Soviet Land, Congress President D.K. Barooah acknowledged that the socialist countries had shown great understanding in interpreting the recent developments in India. In a commentary the Tass observed that in a short period of time. India's image had altered due to favourable changes brought about by the twenty-point programme of Mrs Gandhi. Pravda also appreciated the "anti-feudal direction" of this programme and noted the increasing cooperation between the INC and the CP1. Izvestia welcomed the Supreme Court's decision in favour of Mrs Indira Gandhi.\[40\]

The report presented at the 25th Congress of the CPSU, held in February 1976, referred to the "recent campaign by the rightist circles against the Government of Indira Gandhi". It wished the people and the Government of India complete success in their struggle and observed that the "Soviet people felt solidarity with India's peace loving foreign policy and the courageous struggle of that country's progressive forces to solve their different social and economic problems". Bansi Lal, India's Defence Minister, conveyed thanks and gratitude to the CPSU leadership for expressing solidarity with the Government of India.

On the eve of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's visit to Moscow on 8-13 June, the Soviet press brought out several special articles relating to various aspects of the prevailing situation in India. In an article entitled "India's Stride", Pravda commentator A. Rosleyev observed that "the declaration of a state of emergency on 26 June 1975 and the subsequent measures of the Indian Government made it possible to repulse one of the fiercest onslaughts of the combined forces of reaction in the history of independent India. "Supported' by imperialism, these forces toiled hard to overthrow the Government of Indira Gandhi, terminate the policy of social and economic reform and thereby change India's independent course of foreign policy". The author then referred to the ban on strikes, "an important means of workers' struggle for their rights", and added that as a
consequence of the "stoppage of bonus" and "freezing of wage-increments to offset inflation", the living standard of the Indian working peoples had been adversely affected. New Times observed that the rightist forces had started "gaining strength in the rural areas and some Congressmen were against cooperation with the CPI. It suggested "vigilance, reliance upon the broad masses and cooperation with all the national and patriotic forces".

Prime Minister Indira Gandhi reached Moscow on 8 June. In a dinner speech at the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, Brezhnev focused his attention on three points—on his earlier proposal of collective security in Asia, the issue of Indian Ocean and the internal situation in India. He referred to forces in Asia which "disregarded the rights and sovereignty of States and strove to subject other peoples to their domination". These forces "were sabotaging peace and security in Asia on both bilateral and collective basis", he said.41

Indira Gandhi observed that Asia was in urgent need of an atmosphere of sympathy and cooperation. Appreciating the Soviet desire for friendly relations among countries of Asia based on peaceful cooperation, mutual understanding and good-neighbourly relations, she stated that "the Soviet Union was not only a great power, but a power with a large Asian contingent". "Both of our countries therefore share an interest in strengthening stability and harmony in Asia", she declared. She said that the Indian people valued the understanding shown to India by the Soviet leadership in the most difficult moments. She asked for the extension of detente in other parts of the world. Speaking at a civic reception on 10 June, she praised the Soviet leadership and observed that the people of Asia and Africa had found a reliable friend in the Soviet Union, a consistent supporter in their struggle for national freedom, racial equality and economic development. She acknowledged with gratitude the Soviet economic assistance to India. "We are not content to follow the social ethics of capitalist democracies... Indian socialism is being shaped in response to our own special needs and conditions... economic power has to be subordinated to social benefit...", she added. Referring to Indo-Soviet friendship as "a covenant of open hearts", the Indian Prime Minister observed, "ours is not a mere governmental relationship... but the mutual involvement of the two warm-hearted and creative peoples".

Indira Gandhi's visit to Moscow took place at a time when New Delhi was trying to mend fences with Peking after restoring ambassadorial relations with China. Sino-Soviet
relations were still in a state of flux. At the time of her visit to the Soviet capital, the climate of detente had pervaded Soviet relations with Europe and the US. Sino-American relations had reached an all time high. Soviet relations with Washington had also tremendously improved. This visit enabled Mrs. Gandhi to express her views on some important matters in which India was vitally interested. She carefully refrained from any adverse remarks about the People's Republic of China in her formal speeches. While replying to a question in a press conference in Moscow on 11 June, she said, "when we discuss the international situation, we cannot leave out a country like China". The Soviets did not harbour any misunderstanding on India's desire to have ambassadorial relations with China, she said later.

The Indian Prime Minister asked for the extension of detente in different parts of the world. Both the Indian and Soviet leaders had a free exchange of views on two important issues—problem of demilitarisation of the Indian Ocean and collective security in Asia. Mrs Gandhi made a distinction between the USSR, which sent naval ships in the Indian Ocean for cruising purposes, and those like the USA, which was establishing naval bases there. India and the USSR affirmed their readiness to participate together with all other countries on an equal basis in finding out a favourable solution to the question of making the Indian Ocean a zone of peace in conformity with generally recognised rules of international law. Both Moscow and New Delhi advocated mutually beneficial regional cooperation by the countries of Asia for the strengthening of peace and stability in the continent through common efforts by all the countries of this most populated region.42

Examined in the light of the bilateral negotiations held in Moscow on matters of mutual interest and on several important international issues, Indira Gandhi's Moscow visit was a remarkable success. The USSR re-affirmed her support to the principle of non-alignment in the joint communique. It was a befitting gesture to the forthcoming Non-aligned Summit at Colombo. The choice of Moscow for the Indian Prime Minister's first visit abroad after the proclamation of emergency in the country was a sign of closer ties between these two countries. Even Times and New York Herald Tribune praised the success of Mrs Gandhi's visit to the Soviet capital.

Moscow continued to express its support to Indira Gandhi's Government and its emergency measures. Pravda lauded the ever-growing Indo-Soviet relations and referred in detail to the appreciation of India's role as mentioned in the report of the Central
Committee of the CPSU. Speaking before a Republic Day rally in New Delhi, the visiting Soviet Minister for Heavy Industries, N.V. Goldin referred to emergency in India and observed that "thanks to the energetic steps of the Government combined with the support of the left, democratic, national and patriotic forces, the plans of reaction were foiled". "The more significant would be these successes, the greater the unity of democratic and progressive forces of the country"—he added. In Moscow, Kosygin conveyed to the visiting Foreign Secretary, Jagat Mehta, his personal and his country's admiration for the leadership and policies of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. Izvestia observed, "much has been achieved in the last 19 months.... The State has dealt a blow to black-marketeers and smugglers. It has managed to stabilize the prices of necessary commodities.... There have also been successes in carrying out the agrarian reforms".

Towards the last phase of emergency, New Times wrote in some details about "certain disagreement" that had arisen between the INC and the CPI. It observed, "the attacks on the CPI are opposed by all those who regard the unity and, cohesion of the democratic and progressive forces as an earnest of success in the struggle for radical socio-economic reforms, ...disunity would be fatal in the face of the intrigues of the internal and external reactionary forces, the real enemy of India's economic and social progress", it added. On the eve of elections, this weekly again laid stress on the unity of the left and democratic forces. Izvestia criticised the "monopolypress"for attacks on the CPI and observed, "millions of Indians know perfectly well that the Communist Party has always moved in the vanguard of fighters for the country's independence and for the interests of all the working people". Referring to "attack of rightist forces on the progressive measures" of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in the recent past, Izvestia lauded several steps of the Government such as stabilization of the economy, check on inflation, control on agrarian reforms and maintenance of food-stock.

News regarding holding of general elections in India and the formation of the Janata Party elicited diverse comments in the Soviet press. Pravda noted that the announcement of elections was aimed at restoring the political processes which were slowed down during emergency and that the Government was now relaxing some of the earlier regulations to allow legitimate political activity of the recognized political parties. New Times referred to the formation of the Janata Party which, it alleged, was supported by "reactionary Jaya Prakash Narayan". Referring to the Janata Party, Izvestia noted, "the
reactionaries are trying to consolidate their ranks as the elections approach... the leaders of the Janata Party are driven together only by their desire to remove Indira Gandhi's Government from power at any cost". It alleged that "the rightists hoped to divide the patriotic and democratic forces and create conflicts between the INC and the CPI". Later it observed, "the Janata Party lacks a common positive programme that can arouse the broad masses of voters". Izvestia noted in a commentary: "... a number of rightist parties, having different sorts of reactionary viewpoints, have united into a pre-election block under the name of Janata Party" "in the interest of big capitalists and landlords". It again assailed the Janata Party as a conglomeration of the supporters of rajas and feudal lords.

**The Soviet Union and The Change of Government in New Delhi**

The political scenario in New Delhi presented a somewhat complex spectacle, because the Janata Party, which had undergone recurring criticisms by the Soviets almost until the day of elections, had come to form the Government after recording grand successes at the polls. The Manifesto of the Janata Party was "committed to genuine non-alignment free from attachment to any power bloc". It was largely understood from this that close relations with the Soviet Union would not be entertained, if the Janata Party will come to power. In the election campaign, the different constituent units of the Janata Party alleged "definite foreign interference" during emergency. The President of the Janata Party, Morarji Desai had openly criticised the Indo-Soviet Treaty in his election campaign and declared that if his party came to power, the treaty will automatically go. Atal Behari Vajpayee had also expressed similar views in an election meeting on 4 March. Except during emergency, when the opposition leaders had been put behind the bars and strict press censorship was imposed, all the constituent units of the Janata Party had unambiguously criticised the Soviet policy towards India in terms which were anything but friendly. Predilections and prejudices of the leaders of the Janata Party were quite well known. The entire gamut of Indo-Soviet relations in the wake of Janata victory was thus placed in a very delicate situation.

The March 1977 election resulted in the victory of the Janata Party and a crushing defeat of the INC with its all notable leaders losing. From the Soviet perspectives such results were unexpected. However, keeping strictly to the norms dictated by more than two decades of close friendly relations between the two countries, the Soviet media refrained from any such expression of views which could be misunderstood. The Governments of
both the Soviet Union and India moved cautiously. Izvestia reported the first election results, informing its readers that Indira Gandhi, Sanjay Gandhi and Bansi Lal had lost their seats. It observed that the disunity of democratic and patriotic forces had negative effects on the election and gave an advantage to the opposition. On 25 March, this daily published in detail the bio-data of Morarji Desai, the new Prime Minister. Reference to Desai’s participation in the non-cooperation movement, his role in the freedom struggle and association with Mahatma Gandhi and his later political career was made.

On 22 March, Radio Moscow announced in its domestic service in Russian that the INC, which had been in power continuously since independence, suffered "palpable losses". It ascribed Mrs Gandhi’s defeat to the "disunity of the democratic and patriotic forces". In its English language broadcast beamed for countries in South and South-East Asia, Radio Moscow observed that the loss in the elections was "due to mistakes, excesses in applying measures that stemmed from the laws adopted after emergency in 1975". Referring to the TASS report in Russian, Radio Moscow analysed the reasons of the debacle of the INC and ascribed it to the family planning programme of the Government and activities of the Youth Congress. It observed that "time will show how the new leadership of the House of the People (Lok Sabha) will respond to the mood and needs of the Indian masses and to the development of India". "A change may occur in the political life of the country"—it added.

The victory of the Janata Party was widely reported in the Western and the Chinese press. Times editorially observed that the victory of the Janata Party led to "fall of the Nehru dynasty" and the "end of Indira Gandhi's political career". Newsweek expected Desai’s tilt towards the US and the West. Referring to the defeat of Mrs Gandhi, Washington Post noted that it was a "golden opportunity for the US and China to improve relations with New Delhi. New York Times observed that the results of elections in India would definitely adversely affect the further development of Indo-Soviet relations. The US News and World Report critically remarked, "with Indira Gandhi and her Congress Party voted out of power in India, the Kremlin is waiting for the other shoe to drop".44 While reporting the victory of the Janata Party and defeat of the "Dange clique", New China News Agency referred to Prime Minister Morarji Desai’s ..Statement at a press conference in New Delhi on 24 March that "India would not have any special relation with any
country". Peking Review held that the defeat of the INC in the elections was a pointer towards a serious setback in Indo-Soviet relations.

All apprehensions expressed in various circles about any shift in India's attitude towards the USSR were soon dispelled. The rationale of Indo-Soviet bilateral relations was taken in right earnest by both the countries. On 25 March, Soviet Prime Minister Kosygin sent a telegram of congratulations to Morarji Desai. He expressed the confidence that "the traditional relations of friendship and all-round cooperation between the Soviet Union and India would further strengthen and develop in the interests of the peoples of both these countries, the cause of strengthening peace and international security". In his reply to Prime Minister Kosygin's congratulatory message, Desai wrote, "I share your conviction that the relations of traditional friendship and cooperation between our two countries will continue to flourish in the interests of our peoples, international peace 'and understanding'. The Indo-Soviet relations during the Janata phase thus started on a happy note.

After a meeting between Foreign Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee and the Soviet Ambassador to India, Viktor Maltsev in New Delhi on 30 March, it was officially stated that both India and the USSR would work for "further strengthening their relations of friendship and cooperation". Expressing his gratitude for congratulations received from Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko, Vajpayee expressed the hope that India's traditional relations of friendly co-operation with the Soviet Union would further develop for mutual understanding and international peace. On the eve of the thirtieth anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries, Podgorny, Kosygin and Gromyko sent warm greetings to India. The Soviet Prime Minister expressed the hope that the time-tested relations between India and the USSR would continue to develop in accordance with the Indo-Soviet Treaty for the benefit of the people of both of these countries, for the cause of peace in Asia and throughout the world. India's Foreign Minister Vajpayee reciprocated the good wishes of the Soviet Premier, hailed the USSR and observed in a message to the Indo-Soviet Cultural Society on the occasion of this anniversary that friendly relations between the two countries would continue to flourish. Several Union Ministers spoke in favour of further growth of Indo-Soviet relations. Education Minister P.C. Chunder correctly observed that friendship between India and the Soviet Union was not based on "partisan considerations", rather it had acquired "national consensus", cutting across party lines and various other considerations. Vajpayee
expressed satisfaction with the elements of "maturity and pragmatism" in Indo-Soviet relations.45

It was in this atmosphere of mutual good-will and understanding that Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko's visit to New Delhi took place on 25 April. The invitation for Gromyko's visit, which was originally scheduled for December 1976, was renewed by Vajpayee within a week of the formation of the new Government in New Delhi. Referring to the Indo-Soviet Treaty and friendship, Gromyko said that "relations between these two countries met the fundamental interests of the Soviet and Indian peoples". Vajpayee observed, "though a lot of water had flown down the Volga and the Ganga since Gromyko came last... but Indo-Soviet friendship had been a stable factor".
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