CHAPTER III

RUSSIAN PERCEPTION AND ATTITUDE ON THE KASHMIR ISSUE DURING THE YELTSIN ERA
The visit of Russian President Boris Yeltsin to India in January 1993 marked the beginning of a new phase in Indo-Russian relationship. The visit brought to an end all speculations of further lowering of relationship between the two countries, the process of which started with the collapse of the Soviet Union. Regarding the Kashmir issue, a clear shift was discerned with the Yeltsin visit, in sharp contrast to Russia's perception of the issue just after the disintegration as we saw in Vice President Rutskoi's visit to Pakistan in December 1991. These new developments took place because of the "shift in Russian domestic and foreign policy that became evident in the second half of 1992."  

The Yeltsin visit was eagerly awaited and seen by both the sides as one prime step in reviving the 'special relationship' between the two countries. The visit was attributed special significance because the relations in the past two years were in a 'state of crisis'. After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, political dialogue between India and Russia at the summit level was interrupted. The volume of bilateral trade was drastically reduced, mainly due to unsettled rupee-rouble exchange rate and the destruction of the major structures engaged in trade and economic relations.  

In this state of crisis, the Yeltsin visit to India raised hope for a new beginning in bilateral relations. The Izvestia correspondent, on the occasion of Yeltsin's visit to India, wrote about the prospects of the Indo-Russian relationship under the title, 'the President

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1 Hannes Adomeit, "Russia as a 'great power' in World Affairs: Images and Reality", International Affairs (London), vol.71, no. 1, January 1995, p. 44.
3 Ibid.
of Russia is going to India to lay the foundations of a new relationship.\textsuperscript{4} The \textit{Pravda} correspondent expressed the hope that ‘New Delhi’s term has come’\textsuperscript{5} and the visit would usher in a new era of cordial relationship. \textit{The Observer} quoted the statement of the Russian State Secretary, Gennady Burbulis that, ‘India is the central plank of Russian foreign policy’. The newspaper further observed, “Delhi is perhaps a vital stop to determine the broad contours of Yeltsin’s policy.”\textsuperscript{6}

The visit of Russian President Boris Yeltsin to India started in the last week of January 1993. Yeltsin, it seemed, thought it one of his important task to clear the mists of misunderstanding between the two countries. During his speech at the central hall of the Indian Parliament on 29 January 1993 he referred to the Eurasian geography of his country. In his early months in office, Yeltsin reasoned, he had to look to the West to pull him out of the difficulties in which the country found itself. Because, he said, “this was necessary to facilitate the transition of a command economy into a free market economy”.\textsuperscript{7} He acknowledged the fact that “Russia is a Eurasian country, moreover, more of its land lies in Asia than in Europe, and this fact cannot be overlooked.”\textsuperscript{8} Yeltsin signaled that his trip to New Delhi was one significant move towards balancing Russia’s foreign policy between East and West. “Russia has had its own independent foreign policy for only a year,” the President recalled, and “at first we had to decide on significant nuclear weapons cuts with the United States. That was the main issue, and it

\textsuperscript{5} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{6} \textit{The Observer} (London), 26 January 1993.
\textsuperscript{7} Excerpts from the speech of President Yeltsin at the Central Hall of the Parliament House, on 29 January 1993, published in \textit{Strategic Digest}, vol. 23, no. 4, April 1993, p. 592.
\textsuperscript{8} \textit{Summary of World Broadcast}, 1 February 1993, p. SU/1601 A 1/3.
has been resolved, now our policy is equally balanced between West and East." Hence, it was clear that the Yelstin visit to India in January 1993 marked a new orientation in Russia's foreign policy making. Now, Yeltsin appeared to cast off 'pro-Western romanticism' and to adopt, in its place, pragmatism.

Yeltsin visit to India was also significant from another angle. It restored the tradition of contact between the two countries at the highest political level. Indian President, S. D. Sharma's speech at the banquet in the honour of visiting Russian dignitaries on 29 January seemed to be reassuring in this regard. Sharma, referring to Yeltsin's visit, said, "your first visit to India is a reflection of continuity in the midst of change." Observers of the Russian scene noted that already "since the end of 1992, Russian foreign policy was absorbing and reflecting the growing impulses of assertive nationalism, disenchantment with the West." In this background the visit of Yeltsin can well be described as a fruitful exercise in diplomatic relations in restoring back the special relationship, which both the countries enjoyed for more than four decades before the collapse of the Soviet Union.

President Yeltsin, during the visit, was accompanied by a high power delegation including Foreign Minister, Andrei Kozyrev, widely known amongst the policy circles as a pro-Americanist, Defence Minister, Pavel Grachev, Deputy Prime Minister, Vladimir Shumeiko, State Security Minister, Barannikov, and Foreign Economic Minister, Sergei Glaziev. During the visit both the countries signed a new twenty-year treaty of friendship

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9 Ibid.
11 n. 1, pp. 35-37.
and cooperation. The treaty provided the base for strengthening the relations between the two countries in the changed international circumstances. The treaty committed both the countries to the security of each other’s territorial integrity and prohibited them from taking any action, which might affect either country’s interests. However, unlike the Indo- Soviet treaty of 1971, the word ‘peace’ was not retained and the security clause of the old treaty was not included. It was viewed that in the context of post-cold war scenario there was no need for security understanding because the contemporary world was no more characterized by bloc politics. It was rather based on “a universal approach, non-discrimination, overcoming ideological reality.” According to President Yelstin, “the new treaty is more in line with reality, in line with the interests of the Indian people and the people of Russia.”

Both the sides signed a military technical cooperation agreement on 28 January 1993 during the visit of President Yeltsin. At the very outset it was made clear that the agreement is not directed against any third country. But the thrust of the agreement was “to assist India in protecting its sovereignty, its independence, its integrity and unity.” It was important in the context of Russia’s approach towards border issues. The new Russian state was confronted with autonomy issues and a number of border problems. Hence the similarity in the approaches of both the countries on a number of issues was obvious. The cases of Kashmir and Chechnya were striking in this regard. With these similarities it was expected that India would occupy a ‘special place’ in new foreign

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12 n. 7, p. 592.
13 Ibid.
14 Ibid.
policy priorities of Russia. With the India visit Yeltsin could realize that India could be Russia’s “largest international asset, nor US nor Western Europe.”

Yeltsin supported India, during the visit, on three crucial issues without mincing words. First, he supported India on the issue of Kashmir. He held Kashmir as an integral part of India. Second, he assured the Indian leadership of space cooperation and supply of cryogenic engines in spite of the Western pressure. Third, on the issue of nuclear proliferation Yeltsin seemed to understand Indian position on the issue. He did not raise this issue during the course of his talks with the Indian leaders. The position of Russian leadership on these issues was a clear indication that Russia shed its Western orientation, which failed to prove to be ‘panacea for all the ills of Russia.’ Yeltsin, as it appeared, could well gauge the emerging world order in which the interests of both the countries converge on many fronts. While speaking before the members of the Parliament of India, he acknowledged this factor by saying, “basic interests of our states coincide.”

Russia’s policy towards the Kashmir issue favouring India appeared in a major way during the Yeltsin visit. The Russian president minced no words in expressing Russia’s ‘unequivocal’ support to the Indian stand on the Kashmir issue. Yeltsin cleared the doubt in the Indian mind that the newly emerging Russian state, in its drive to shed the old ideology, had made a dramatic turn from the old Soviet policy. Speaking at a meeting with Indian businessmen on 28 January 1993 in New Delhi, Yeltsin made Russian stand on Kashmir clear: “we stand for the integrity of India. We support the

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17. n. 7.
settlement in Kashmir according to the Indian version so as to maintain integrity and unity of India. We support it. And in whatever international organizations it may be – the United Nations Security Council or others – we shall stand this by point of view.\textsuperscript{18} There could be no more certain words in describing Russia’s support to India on the Kashmir issue than the above words of President Yeltsin.

Yeltsin’s pronouncement on the Kashmir issue was one of the most telling proofs of the Russian attempt to revive its relationship with India. \textit{The Hindustan Times} in its editorial on 30 January 1993 under the title ‘Yeltsin strikes a positive note’, wrote, “supporting India’s position that Kashmir is its integral part and pledging to stand by it in the United Nations Security Council, the Russian President has held out the hope of a Soviet-type counter to Pakistan’s renewed efforts to internationalize the issue.”\textsuperscript{19} The Yeltsin visit also removed the Indian anxiety about the Russian stand not only on issues like Kashmir but also other related issues like Pakistan-sponsored terrorism and Pakistan’s move to spread religious fundamentalism in the region.\textsuperscript{20} During the visit Yeltsin made the point clear that “Russia will not seek to improve relations with Pakistan at India’s cost.”\textsuperscript{21} In this backdrop of Russia’s unequivocal support to India on Kashmir, it was in expected lines that while the Indian press hailed the Yeltsin visit as ‘it heralds new phase of ties’,\textsuperscript{22} the Pakistani press described the Russian stand as ‘contradictory’.\textsuperscript{23}

\textsuperscript{18} Excerpts from the speech of President Yeltsin at a meeting with Indian businessmen on 28 January 1993 in New Delhi, published in \textit{Strategic Digest}, vol. 23, no. 4, April 1993, p. 586.
\textsuperscript{19} \textit{The Hindustan Times} (New Delhi), 30 January 1993.
\textsuperscript{20} \textit{Patriot} (New Delhi), 30 January 1993.
\textsuperscript{21} n. 19.
\textsuperscript{22} \textit{The Hindustan Times} (New Delhi), 31 January 1993.
\textsuperscript{23} \textit{Pakistan Times} (Islamabad), 31 January 1993.
show of ‘poor judgement’\textsuperscript{24}, ‘threat to regional stability’\textsuperscript{25}, ‘serious attempt to isolate Pakistan at the global level’\textsuperscript{26}, and the like.

It would be worthwhile to discuss here in brief about the changed Russian stand on the Kashmir issue. After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, Russia emerged as a democratic state with the growing possibilities of the ethnic strife. According to the noted strategic analyst, James Clad, Russia was passing through a phase of contradiction.\textsuperscript{27} There were demands for independence from various republics of Russian Federation itself. The case of Chechnya was most striking in this regard. The Chechen rebels under the leadership of Dudayev had declared independence without any sanction from Moscow. They had applied terrorist methods to pursue their objectives. That was a clear sign of danger to the Russian state, which was a multi-ethnic and pluralistic state like India. Hence, a parallel could be drawn between Chechnya and Kashmir. Russia was determined to maintain its territorial integrity. The foreign policy guidelines adopted in March 1993 emphasized on political means of security for Russia “in all dimensions, including sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity....”\textsuperscript{28} India also believed in this principle. For the maintenance of its territorial integrity and sovereignty, it had to face as many as three times war with Pakistan. As per reports, Pakistan was involved in terrorist activities in Russia (The complicity of Pakistan in fomenting terrorism in India and Russia has been dealt with elaborately in the fifth chapter). Hence, the factor of

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{24} Pakistan Times (Islamabad), 1 February 1993.
\item \textsuperscript{25} Pakistan Times (Islamabad), 1 February 1993.
\item \textsuperscript{26} The News International (Lahore), 1 February 1993.
\item \textsuperscript{27} For his views see, D. Banerjee, “International Strategic Situation”, Strategic Analysis, vol. 17, no. 1, April 1994, p. 30.
\item \textsuperscript{28} Foreign Policy Concept of Russian Federation, FBIS-USR-93-037, 25 March 1993, p. 3.
\end{itemize}
terrorism interlaced with religious fundamentalism had been a matter of grave concern for both the countries. This commonality of approaches was reflected in President Yeltsin’s speech at Parliament House on 29 January 1993. He said, “we know how topical are issues of preservation of ethnic harmony in today’s India. Thanks to our own experience, we are aware how difficult are the endeavors to achieve this goal.” Hence, there was nothing unusual when President Yeltsin supported India in Kashmir in no ambiguous terms. It was indicative of understanding of the Indian position by the Russian leadership.

The problems in Central Asia, especially the problems of ethnic violence and economic backwardness were matters of concern for both the countries. Though Indian territory was not adjacent to the Central Asian republics, the spurt of religious fundamentalism and terrorism could have spill over effect on India. Even that had become easier because of the hostile neighbour, Pakistan, sandwiched between India and Central Asian republics along with Afghanistan. A joint study in September 1993 by the Institute of Defence Studies and Analysis (IDSA), New Delhi and the Institute of Oriental Studies in Moscow was forthright in its findings. According to the study, common historical and cultural heritage, linguistic similarities and above all, religion, were being exploited by Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Turkey to expand their influence in Central Asia. The study expressed the concern that, “economic and political instability have transformed Central Asia into a source of regional instability which could

29 n. 7, p. 592.
even develop into a source of global instability.\textsuperscript{30} Hence, it was natural, given Russian minorities spread over in the Central Asian states, Moscow would be apprehensive of the political and fundamentalist forces in the region.

Major irritants in Indo-Russian relations were resolved during the visit of President Yeltsin to India. Restoration of economic relations was among them. Trade between India and Russia almost collapsed in 1991-1992 because of disagreements over rupee-rouble exchange rate and the amount India owed to Russia as the successor state to the Soviet Union. This controversy was sorted out during the visit of Yeltsin. The two sides agreed that 63% of the debt would be repaid over the next twelve years at an interest of 2.4%, using the exchange rate of 1 rouble to 19.9 rupees that existed on 1 January 1990. The remaining 37% of the principal would be repaid over 45 years with no interest at the January 1992 exchange rate of 1 rouble to 3.1 rupees. Repayment of debt would be in Indian goods.\textsuperscript{31}

Indo-Russian defence cooperation got a fillip with the visit of Yeltsin. Both the countries signed a military technical cooperation agreement during the visit. The thrust of the agreement was to assist India in protecting its sovereignty, its independence, its integrity and unity. It could be mentioned here that Russian arms supply to India was reduced drastically after the disintegration of the Soviet Union. India's immediate concern was to safeguard the supply of spare parts for its MiG aircraft. To acquire the spare parts, Indian Defence Minister, Sharad Pawar visited Moscow in September 1991

\textsuperscript{30} The Frontier Post (Peshawar), 26 September 1993.
\textsuperscript{31} Far Eastern Economic Review (Hong Kong), vol. 156, no. 6, 11 February 1993, p. 18.
but returned empty handed. India then approached other arms sellers, including the United States, Israel and Britain. But Russia was aware that India was potentially one of its best customers, and was anxious to retain its Indian arms market. It made favourable gestures towards India later. In March 1992 Moscow offered India nuclear powered submarines, MiG-31 aircraft and SU-28 fighter bombers. In May 1992, the Russian Deputy Prime Minister, Gennady Burbulis, visited India and affirmed that Russia would continue defence supplies to India. In this way, the temporary set back in the field of defence cooperation was overcome. The agreement in the field of defence during the visit of Yeltsin further gave boost to the bilateral relationship. It strengthened Indian trust on Russian arms supply. To the satisfaction of Indian leaders Yeltsin categorically assured Indian leaders, during the visit, that Russia would not give military and technological aid to Pakistan.

During his New Delhi visit, President Yeltsin assured Indian leaders that Russia would go ahead with the Cryogenic deal. In fact, the agreement on joint development of Cryogenic booster unit was signed by the Soviet space agency, Glavkosmos and Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) in 1991. The contract valued at Rs.235 billion provided for the transfer of Soviet Cryogenic space technology to India and for training of Indian specialists. But after the disintegration of the Soviet Union the implementation of the agreement became a non-starter. However, to expedite the process,

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33 Ibid.
Russian Deputy Prime Minister, Gennady Burbulis came to India in May 1992 to assure the Indian leadership that Russia would honour its commitment on transfer of rocket technology to India. 36

While Burbulis was assuring Indian leaders of supply of Cryogenic engines and technology, the US State Department’s Chief Spokesperson, Margaret Tutwiler warned both India and Russia on 4 May 1992 that Washington would impose penalties on both the countries unless the deal was revoked. 37 The US objected to the agreement on the ground that it was in violation of Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR). According to the US, the technology involved in the cryogenic engines was of dual use; it could be used for developing ballistic missiles. But, the US appeared to gloss over the fact that while entering into the agreement both India and Russia were committed to this technology not being used for the development of ballistic missiles. The US, according to the Krasnayazvezda correspondent, adopted double standards on this matter. 38 For example, China was in the same category of countries affected by the rocket technology non-proliferation as India. But that did not stop the US from concluding an agreement with China on using Chinese booster rockets to launch nine American satellites. 39 The Americans were installing on the Chinese rockets not only their own satellites but also their own accelerating units and engine systems as an upper stage. And they did not consider this a deviation from the regulations whose observance they so jealously monitored. In spite of this American opposition, the Russian President put a brave face

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37 Ibid.
39 Ibid.
during his visit to New Delhi and assured Indian leaders of supply of Cryogenic engine and technology.

Despite his brave words in New Delhi in January 1993 regarding the Cryogenic deal, the unfolding of later events proved otherwise. President Yeltsin succumbed to the US pressure when he met the US President, Bill Clinton in June 1993 on the occasion of G-7 summit. A spokesman of the US State Department thereafter declared that Russia would sell a few rocket engines to India but halt transfer of technology. This withdrawal of Russia from its stated position made it clear that Russian foreign policy was still largely influenced by the US. It was understandable that the Russian economy was still in volatile condition. To boost the sagging economy Russia was still hopeful of massive Western aid. Hence, while there was some kind of perceptible changes in Russia’s foreign policy favouring India, at the same time its poor economy and related constraints and compulsions made this change difficult.

After returning to Moscow, Yeltsin, in his response to the question asked by ITAR-TASS correspondent on the outcome of the visit, said, “I am extremely satisfied with my visit.” He signalled that his trip to New Delhi was another move towards balancing Russia’s foreign policy between East and West. He emphasized that, “Russia is a Eurasian country, moreover, more of its land lie in Asia than in Europe, we can not over look this fact.” From the above statement it became clear that Yeltsin was no more prepared to follow one-sided approach, ignoring the emerging the realities. This change

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40 n. 34, p. 226.
42 Ibid.
in approach was evident during his visit to India. Russia’s Kashmir policy took a significant turn during the Yeltsin visit. Yeltsin’s total support to the Indian stand on the Kashmir issue was commensurate with emerging realities as both the pluralist countries were confronting the menace of terrorism and separatism, problems and prospects of economic reforms, etc.

Russia’s Kashmir policy, i.e. supporting Indian stand on the issue was reiterated later on many occasions. For instance, in the wake of Hazratbal crisis, Russia came forward to support India. In diplomatic exchanges, the Russian government assured the Indian government that it sees Jammu and Kashmir as an integral part of India and the happenings there as internal affairs of the country. This was a clear rebuff to the Pakistani attempt to internationalize the issue. Russia supported the Indian action in tackling the crisis in the meetings that took place between Indian and Russian diplomats aftermath of the Hazratbal seize.

Russia also came upon heavily on Pakistan for artificially politicizing the Kashmir issue and for using human rights slogans for ‘non-human rights end.’ The First Deputy Head of the Russian Foreign Ministry’s Department on International Humanitarian Cooperation and Human Rights, Oleg Malghinov, during his visit to India in the first week of June 1994, voiced his concern over this artificial politicization of the Kashmir issue by Pakistan. According to him, “Kashmir is not a human rights issue,” and “the issue should be resolved by means of “direct talks by India and Pakistan on the basis

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43 The Pioneer (New Delhi), 20 November 1993.
44 Ibid.
of Simla agreement. Malghinov was a member of the Russian delegation at the session of the Human Rights Commission in Geneva that year where Pakistan had to withdraw its bid to press for a vote on the human rights in Kashmir. He emphasized on the Russian policy that, "we are for India's integrity and we think that manipulating human rights slogans to give an additional argument by those who stand for its disintegration is a bad practice." He compared the Indian situation with Russia’s problems emerging out of ethnic violence and separatism and said, "we have the same problems here in Russia." In this context, the Russian support to India on the Kashmir issue was reassuring: while Russia was confronting the problems of separatism and religious fundamentalism in its Chechnya province, India was suffering from similar problems in Kashmir.

The visit of Indian Prime Minister, P. V. Narasimha Rao to Moscow in the last week of June and first week of July (29 June to 2 July 1994) further strengthened the bilateral relationship and as a result, both the countries came closer to adopt common position on various issues. Both the countries took this opportunity not only to strengthen bilateral relationship but also to infuse in them the warmth and sincerity of old Indo-Soviet ties. Prime Minister Rao and President Yeltsin signed two declarations on 30 June 1994. The first was the Moscow Declaration on protecting the interests of pluralistic states and the second was a declaration on further development and deepening of cooperation between the two countries. Yeltsin noted that the signing of these

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46 Ibid.
47 Ibid.
48 For the text of the Moscow Declaration, see National Herald (New Delhi), 5 July 1994.
declarations and other documents would facilitate the restoration of close political, scientific, cultural and scientific relations, which both the countries had enjoyed before the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Following his one to one talk with the Indian Prime Minister, ITAR-TASS quoted Yeltsin as saying, “there are no differences at all,” and “we work very harmoniously and in a coordinated manner and we understand each other well.”49 This statement of Yeltsin was an indication that both India and Russia had emerged from the brief period of uncertainty aftermath of the disintegration, and both the leaders were all set to build relations afresh, keeping in mind the emerging realities.

The Moscow Declaration was a joint response to the growing threats arising out of aggressive nationalism, religious and political extremism, terrorism and separatism, those elements that strike at the unity and integrity of large and pluralistic countries like India and Russia. The declaration read, among other things, “both the countries (India and Russia) are convinced that destabilization of relations between ethnic or religious groups, efforts to forcibly replace them, ethnic cleansing and promotion of internal and trans-border terrorism are motivated by vested interests which lead to annihilation of all positive and constructive elements accumulated by mankind during the many thousands of years of its existence.”50 In a crucial move, India and Russia supported each other’s territorial integrity and underscored their resolve to guard themselves against attempts to redefine norms of self-determination and sovereignty.

49 Summary of World Broadcast, 1 July 1994, p. SU/2036 B/16.
50 n. 48.
The implications of Moscow declaration were far reaching for both India and Russia. First, both the countries were facing challenges of cross border terrorism: India in Kashmir and Russia in Chechnya. Not only that, the spurt of terrorism in the Central Asian region had become a matter of concern to both the countries because the terrorist elements posed serious threats to pluralistic societies like India and Russia. Second, by expressing concern over these problems, Russia and India presented before the world community a timely picture of terrorism and religious fundamentalism. In a certain sense, the declaration anticipated the formation of global front against terrorism aftermath of the terrorist attack in the US in September 2001. Third, this declaration further strengthened the resolve of both the countries to fight the menace of terrorism and separatism jointly. In this context, it could be mentioned here that the declaration was novel in its nature because both the countries had never signed such a document on protecting the interests of pluralistic states.

During his return flight from Moscow on 2 July 1994, Prime Minister Rao said his Moscow visit had “helped in achieving a real breakthrough in bilateral relations,” which had been passing through a difficult phase since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Describing the Moscow Declaration ‘epoch making’, the Prime Minister said, it concentrated on the main problems the world was facing in the post-bloc situation, such as religious fundamentalism and political extremism. Though the Kashmir issue was not mentioned in the declaration, it was implied that both the countries were opposed to nefarious designs being carried out by separatist forces to disturb territorial integrity and unity of pluralistic states like India and Russia. This was evident from the text of the
declaration itself, which needs quotation at length: “Exercising their right to self-determination, the peoples of Russia and India have established by law sovereign and free states. Throughout the territories of their respective countries, the will of the people and the realization of their historic destiny are expressed through participation in the process of representative democracy.”

Before 1993, aftermath of the disintegration, Russia’s position on the issue of Kashmir was not in favour of India. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the Rutskoi visit to Islamabad was disappointing for India as the Russian leader was advocating for international arbitration of the Kashmir issue. But by the year 1993, the Russian leaders, it seemed, realized the past mistakes and were ready enough to mend those mistakes. This was visible during the visit of Indian Foreign Secretary, K. Srinivasan to Moscow in August 1994. His visit was considered important in view of Pakistan’s effort to internationalize the Kashmir issue in the forthcoming 49th session of the United Nations General Assembly. During his discussions, the Russian leaders expressed support to the Indian version of the Kashmir issue, i.e. it is a bilateral issue and it should be resolve bilaterally according to the provisions of the Simla agreement.

Indian Home Minister, S. B. Chavan visited Moscow in the first week of September 1994. The main purpose of his visit was to finalise the extradition treaty with Russia to help control international terrorism, organize crime and drug trafficking. The treaty had become necessary because, as per reports, the terrorists involved in the Indian

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51 Ibid.
52 n. 34, p. 292.
53 The Hindustan Times (New Delhi), 3 September 1994.
territory had entrenched themselves in the Russian capital, Moscow.\textsuperscript{54} The treaty was but one step to fulfill the accord President Yeltsin and Prime Minister Rao reached on both the countries’ common interest in combating terrorism, ethno-religious bigotry and secessionist movements.

Russian Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin visited India from 22 to 24 December 1994. During the visit both the countries agreed to establish ‘hotline’ between Moscow and New Delhi. About eight agreements were signed during the visit. However, the highlight of the visit was the agreement on long term military and technical cooperation till the year 2000. During the visit the Russian Prime Minister dispelled the Indian apprehension of Moscow’s arms supply to Pakistan. He made it clear to the press that “as for arms to Pakistan, we have an agreement with the Indian leaders whereby our relations with Pakistan are fully transparent and open. We are not supplying any weapons to Pakistan today and we have no intention of doing that in the future.”\textsuperscript{55}

The Russian liberal party leader, Vladimir Zhirinovsky supported Indian stand on Kashmir in his usual radical tone. During his visit to India on 6 March 1995, he minced no words in criticizing Pakistan for its help to terrorists in Kashmir. “The same element of religion which played havoc in Kashmir had now been injected in Bosnia and Russia,”\textsuperscript{56} he said referring to the fighting in Bosnia and Chechnya. For Zhirinovsky the problem in Kashmir was an internal problem, hence there was no necessity of any external interference. He was of the view that there would have been no conflict over

\textsuperscript{54} Patriot (New Delhi), 6 September 1994.
\textsuperscript{55} The Hindustan Times (New Delhi), 24 December 1994.
\textsuperscript{56} Times of India (New Delhi), 7 March 1995.
Nagorno Karabakh if Armenia had been handed over that enclave; similarly there would have no conflict if Kashmir (along with Pak-occupied Kashmir) had been with India.\textsuperscript{57}

The visit of Indian External Affairs Minister, Pranab Mukherjee to Moscow from 3 to 5 August 1995 was timely and significant in view of the increasing tension between India and Pakistan due to the proxy war that Pakistan pursued vigorously; and its efforts to isolate India diplomatically at international fora. Such efforts were also being made in Russia, which had been traditionally more favourably inclined towards India. Pakistan was keen to see that Russia changes its stand on Kashmir, that it applies the same principles and standards with regard to sale of conventional arms to both the countries. In short, it was anxious to neutralize the special relationship between India and Russia. The visit of Pranab Mukherjee further strengthened the bilateral relations and prompted his Russian counterpart, Andrei Kozyrev to dispel all Indian fears. Kozyrev was reported to have said that “Russia considers Kashmir as an integral part of India and that this issue be resolved on the basis of the Simla agreement.”\textsuperscript{58}

The resolve of India and Russia to fight the menace of terrorism was again reiterated during Mukherjee’s meeting with Russian Prime Minister, Viktor Chernomyrdin. The terrorist menace was a matter of concern for both India and Russia, and the role of Pakistan in fomenting this menace was being increasingly acknowledged by both the countries. The Russian media openly referred to those mercenaries who had

\textsuperscript{57} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{58} Tribune (Chandigarh), 22 August 1995.
been trained in Pakistan and fighting in Chechnya and Tajikistan. In this connection, the Central Asian republics of the former Soviet Union, now independent and sovereign states such as Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan and Kirghizstan also figured prominently. During the Mukherjee visit both the countries agreed to pay greater attention to the economic and cultural growth so that they do not become the centers of religious bigotry, conservatism and orthodoxy.

The year 1996 was considered highly significant in Indo-Russian relations. On 9 January 1996, Yevgeny Primakov was appointed foreign minister of Russia in place of Kozyrev. While Kozyrev was known for his pro-Western orientation, Primakov was interested to maintain good relationship with old allies. He was known for his administrative experience and for his advocacy of balanced foreign policy between the East and the West. Primakov frankly acknowledged that during the tenure of his predecessor Russia had made the ‘mistake’ of focusing its foreign policy for winning the favour of the West, especially the United States. Primakov was trying to mend those mistakes of his predecessor. After assuming office, Primakov put emphasis on “the development of relations with the US, the European countries as well as China, India, Japan, the near and middle east countries, Canada, Asia Pacific countries. India’s number in Primakov’s list priorities could hardly be overlooked. Unlike the foreign policy concept of the Russian Federation, published in January 1993, which placed India

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59 Ibid.
62 Patriot (New Delhi), 5 April 1996.
in the seventh place in the list of ten priorities area, Primakov placed India in the fourth place in his list of priorities. Hence, it was in expected lines when Primakov singled out New Delhi as his first destination in Asia.

Primakov's visit to India from 29-31 March 1996 had a special significance in reenergizing Indo-Russian ties. During the visit both sides focused on peace, stability, cooperation and avoidance of the rise of Islamic fundamentalism in the regions of central and southwest Asia. Primakov talked about ominous situation in Afghanistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. He went so far as to describe the presence of Russian troops in the central Asian republics as a bulwark against the rise of fundamentalism in that sensitive region. Primakov's discussion with Indian leaders manifested a greater understanding on the part of both sides about parallelism in their respective national interests and their similar concerns. The discussions emphasized, in the context of both countries being plural societies with a multi-ethnic polity, the similarity of predicament that India and Russia were facing in Kashmir and Chechnya respectively. Primakov reportedly expressed the view that "the territorial integrity of Russia and also the territorial integrity of India are of primary interest to us." Primakov and his high level Indian interlocutors agreed that terrorism in all forms, religious extremism and separatism, poses a threat not only to multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-lingual states, but it also constitutes a direct threat to international security and stability.

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n. 61.

Primakov, during the visit, spoke of India as a ‘global power’ and a ‘priority partner’ of Russia.\textsuperscript{65} It was stressed that both the countries were united in the common struggle against terrorism, including narco-terrorism and in opposing certain dangerous international trends of discrimination against some countries. Primakov found a sympathetic response in New Delhi regarding his opposition to proposed eastward expansion of NATO. Regarding arms cooperation, Russia had been approaching the issue of selling defence equipment to India more vigorously. According to Stanislav Fivin, the Deputy Head of the Russian defence company, Rosvooruzhenie the defence cooperation with India constituted about 40\% of Russia’s arms and military technology exports.\textsuperscript{66} He added that Russia regarded India as its strategic partner and could not contemplate any arms supply to Pakistan. He said, “Russia does not want Pakistan to emerge as a counter weight to India.”\textsuperscript{67} During the visit of Primakov the controversial issues regarding NPT and CTBT were kept off the agenda and were not allowed to spoil the growing relationship.

One major development that took place gradually after the year of 1993 was the increasing level of defence cooperation between India and Russia. It was no secret that Indian military establishment had been dependent on Russia for spares as well as its modernization. The ratios of independence for Russian spares in India were 40, 64 and 80 percents for the army, the air force and the navy respectively.\textsuperscript{68} Though starting with a disappointing note after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the Russian cooperation in

\textsuperscript{65} The Hindu (Chennai), 29 March 1996.
\textsuperscript{66} The Hindu (Chennai), 21 February 1996.
\textsuperscript{67} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{68} National Herald (New Delhi), 26 October 1996.
the field of defence increased gradually. For instance, on 22 October 1996, during the visit of Russian Defence Minister, General Igor Rodionov to New Delhi, both the countries signed an agreement on military cooperation between the two countries.\textsuperscript{69} The accord envisaged reciprocal training of the services personnel at each other's training institutions, joint military exercises and deputation of observers to each other's military practices. With this new pact, military steering groups were to be established by all the three services whose activities would be coordinated by Russia's main Directorate of International Military Cooperation and India's Defence Planning staff. The two sides were to exchange views and information on the operational doctrines of common military hardware. Other components of the agreement were related to deputation of military specialists for the maintenance of arms and communication, visit by senior officials, participation in seminars and symposiums, joint sporting and adventure activities. During his visit to Moscow in October 1996, Indian Defence Minister, Mulayam Singh Yadav signed an agreement to extend military to military cooperation that would last till the year 2010.\textsuperscript{70} During his discussions with Yadav, Russian President Yeltsin repeatedly referred to his country's relations with India 'brotherly.'

The uncertainty regarding Indo-Russian cooperation in the nuclear field was overcome gradually in the later phase of the Yeltsin period. During the visit of Indian External Affairs Minister, I. K. Gujaral to Moscow in February 1997, the Russian leaders reiterated that Moscow would honour its commitment to sell nuclear reactors to India.\textsuperscript{71}

\textsuperscript{69} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{70} \textit{National Herald} (New Delhi), 10 October 1996.
\textsuperscript{71} \textit{News Time} (Hyderabad), 17 February 1996.
On 14 March 1997, the Russian Parliament approved with applause the statement that each one of its factions supports the policy of cooperation with India. This was an indication of the overwhelming public support in Russia for strengthening relationship with India. This also served as a reliable pointer for the forthcoming visit by the Indian Prime Minister, H. D. Deve Gowda to the Russian capital in March 1997, in which both the countries discussed about nuclear cooperation. One of the major purposes of the Deve Gowda visit was to finalise the purchase of two 1000 MW nuclear power reactors. The negotiations for the reactors sale had been started in the year 1988 but after the 1992 Nuclear Suppliers Group Pact Russia was dillydallying, bowing to the US pressure, about the deal and it became doubtful whether it would ultimately supply the reactors. Since the proposal dated back to 1998, it could escape the provisions of the pact. To nullify the American pressure the Russian leaders assured Deve Gowda that no third country could have any say on their bilateral relations.

During his talks with President Yeltsin, Deve Gowda recalled the Moscow Declaration of 1994 as a joint declaration against “aggressive nationalism, separatism, religious extremism, terrorism and cross movement of narcotic drugs and arms.” He emphasized that India and Russia had a shared interest in working together in these areas. These challenges posed danger to pluralistic societies of both the countries. While India was facing the separatist threats, Russia was facing the same challenge in Chechnya. Hence, to check the menace of these ever increasing threats both needed to develop

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73 The Hindustan Times (New Delhi), 24 March 1997.
74 The Hindu (Chennai), 26 March 1997.
common approach on the issues of common concern. In this context Russia’s policy towards Kashmir supporting India was on expected lines. Yeltsin was of the view that India was a major stabilizing factor in Asia.\(^75\) Hence it was necessary that for peace and stability in the region, the sovereignty and territorial integrity of India had to be maintained.

Many other factors also came into focus during Deve Gowda’s visit to Moscow. In a major decision Russia agreed to help India in developing a state of the art integrated air defence system.\(^76\) During the discussions between the two leaders, Yeltsin criticized the NATO move to expand eastward. He referred to this move as ‘manifestations of expansionism’ and said: “Russia believes that dominance of a group of states to the detriment of other members of world community is extremely dangerous and inadmissible.” He told Deve Gowda that “the world can not be unipolar and in a multipolar world India and Russia are two poles themselves.”\(^77\) This common resolve to promote the multipolar world order has been reiterated many times in later occasions.

The rapid pace of Indo-Russian relationship seemed to come to a halt after India tested nuclear devices in May 1998. That was a real test case of friendship in part of Russia. It was difficult for Russia to reconcile the Indian tests, provided its stated stand on nuclear non-proliferation. It had always been an advocate of NPT and CTBT, and wanted India to sign both the treaties. But India rejected both the treaties on the ground that they are discriminatory. Also Russia had never raised the issue to such a level to

\(^{75}\) *The Pioneer* (New Delhi), 26 March 1997.
\(^{76}\) *Times of India* (New Delhi), 27 March 1997.
\(^{77}\) *News Time* (Hyderabad), 27 March 1997.
jeopardize the emerging relationship between the two countries. But now, especially after the nuclear tests conducted by India, Russian leaders were in a dilemma regarding how to handle the quirky situation.

On 12 May 1998 President Yeltsin publicly expressed his anguish and declared, "India has of course let us down over their nuclear explosions." Foreign Minister Primakov in an NTV interview emphatically stated: "we do not like it. Naturally we are against them because India is upsetting stability that has taken shape in the world now in preventing nuclear explosion in general, both underground and so on. We would like very much that India, being our friend and partner, stop and would not go any further." Primakov during his speech at Helsinki on 3 June 1998 put forth a three-point Helsinki initiative for the implementation of NPT and CTBT. The proposal envisaged signing of the NPT and CTBT by India and Pakistan, bilateral discussion to resolve outstanding problem between the two countries, and immediate interaction among permanent members of the United Nations Security Council to work out common measures for curbing an arms race in the South Asia. However, Primakov opposed any economic sanctions but stressed on the big powers stepping up "efforts for resolving the Indo-Pakistan conflict in Kashmir and sorting out all other outstanding differences between the two countries." All these reactions of top Russian leaders were bitter in tone and tenor for Indian leaders.

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79 Ibid, p. 90.
80 *The Hindustan Times* (New Delhi), 4 June 1998.
Though the initial reaction of Russian leaders to the Indian nuclear test was bitter, in fact they did not take any concrete step commensurate with their reaction. Later, neither Yeltsin nor Primakov nor Russian Parliament stressed on big power intervention to resolve the Kashmir issue. The strategy of Moscow seemed to resolve the post-Pokharan dilemma by condemning the nuclear tests in the subcontinent along with the other members of the P-5 countries but at the same time going ahead with business as usual with India. Russia did not impose any sanction on India and did not let the nuclear issue have any bearing on bilateral relations between the two countries.\textsuperscript{81} Even some of the important agreements and defence deals between the two countries were finalized after the nuclear test. For example, on 21 June 1998 Russian Minister of Atomic Energy, Yevgeny Adamov signed in New Delhi a deal to build two light water 1000 megawatt nuclear reactor at Kundankulam in Tamil Nadu despite the US pressure. In fact, more than Indian tests, Moscow’s main worry was the threat of other threshold countries and above all Pakistan turning overtly nuclear. Russia urged Pakistan to show maximum restraint in connection with the Indian tests and to adhere to non-proliferation norms. The Pakistan Ambassador in Moscow was called to the Russian Foreign office and this message was conveyed to him. The Russian embassy in Islamabad also got in touch with the Pakistani authorities on the issue.\textsuperscript{82}

Even at the initial phase of reactions, all the Russian leaders were not critical of the Indian nuclear tests. The Russian Duma came out in all praise for the Indian tests. The


\textsuperscript{82} n. 34, p. 727.
Chairman of the Duma, Gennady Seleznev supported the Indian tests in this way: "I believe that India acted correctly. In this respect it acted very consistently and it was a correct decision not to curtail its research programme halfway in spite of US pressure. I can only admire their national pride." The Izvestia in its headline, 'Moscow will not quarrel with its ally – Indian nuclear tests do not threaten Russia' on 14 May 1998 emphasized, "India is not Iraq, Iran, Libya or North Korea. To befriend her is not shameful." The reference obviously was to India's long record as a practicing democracy and the international prestige that it enjoyed from its very inception. In another article, Vladimir Kuchenenko in Rossiya kaya Gazeta highlighted the double standards of the West and its attempts to preach 'victorious morals' to India, he asked why can't India, for instance, ensure its own security through nuclear weapons at a time when other countries have this right. Hence looking at all these developments one could well understand the Russian policy of not decrying India's nuclear tests outrightly, but to show understanding at India's security imperatives. In this atmosphere of understanding it was natural in part of India not to expect any shift in Russia's policy towards Kashmir, i.e. supporting Indian stand on the issue.

In the spring of 1999 Pakistani regular forces backed and reinforced an infiltration in the Kargil sector of Kashmir. The intrusion plan was conceived even while Indian Prime Minister visited Lahore in February 1999 to extend friendship to Pakistan. However, Russia came ahead in this hour of crisis to favour India. It assured India that it

83 n. 78, p. 90.
84 n. 34, p. 725.
would block any Pakistani attempt to internationalise the issue at any international forum including the United Nations Security Council. A senior official in the Russian foreign ministry said: “we will block any attempt by Pakistan to raise the Kashmir issue in the United Nations.” This stand could be compared to Yeltsin’s unequivocal support to the Indian stand on the Kashmir issue about six years ago in January 1993. Hence, the whole Yeltsin period, except initial two years, was marked by consistency regarding its Kashmir policy. While the initial two years were marked by uncertainty, the later years witnessed marked improvements in bilateral relations. In this emerging scenario Russia’s policy towards Kashmir was favourable to India.

It would be appropriate here to dwell on, at some length, the shift in Russia’s policy towards India, particularly towards the Kashmir issue since the last quarter of 1992 and afterwards. It is true that after the break down of the Soviet Union, over a year the entire system of trade and economy, military and technical and cultural ties between India and Russia were thoroughly undermined. The situation was so hopeless that Russian analysts were said to fall into two categories: pessimists and skeptics. President Yeltsin saw himself as being involved in a war against economic collapse, panic, famine, decline and death. He himself admitted, “the coming months would be toughest in my life.” In such a desperate situation, the Russian leaders sought the help of the Western powers to revive the sagging economy. The transition from state socialism to capitalism required

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86 The Pioneer (New Delhi), 1 June 1999.
87 Deccan Herald (Dharmad), 3 June 1999.
enormous financial resources. Kozyrev-Gaider team hoped that the West, which so enthusiastically hailed the end of communism in Russia, would provide massive financial assistance for reforms. This however did not happen on the scale expected by the reformist government. The consequent disappointment led to self-introspection among the Russian leaders. Vladimir Lukin, Chairman of the Duma International Committee even talked in the Duma of reframing Russian foreign policy as "all of Russia's partners without exception - the Americans, West Europeans and to my great regret, all East Europeans - have used us as a doormat." The US policy during the Gulf war in 1991, its vigorous pursuit of eastward expansion of NATO, its attitude to ethnic problems in Russia, led to the disenchantment among the Russian leaders; thus bringing to an end to the romanticism between Russia and the west.

Some other factors also influenced Russian leaders to adopt a pragmatic policy. Russia's exclusion from deliberations related to the future of the Korean peninsula; the US efforts to deny Russian entry into the military markets of US regional allies such as South Korea; US encouragement of Central Asian energy development while playing down Russian role in this; and the US efforts to retain strategic importance in the Western Pacific highlighted the diminished position of Russia in US regional security calculations. However, gradually Russia could be able to adopt an independent approach in its foreign policy outlook. With Primakov handling foreign policy portfolio

91 n. 60, p. 199.
in 1996 the main contours of Russian foreign and security policy in Asia could take a firm shape. Primakov agenda included, among other things, “the pursuit of multipolarity as a strategic objective; non-adversial relations with all regional powers ... and an increased role in arms sales and technology transfer, especially to India and China.”

Hence, the coming of Primakov in the Russian foreign policy making had its sanguine impact on Indo-Russian relations.

The visit of Prime Minister, Primakov to New Delhi in December 1998 proved highly successful in bilateral relationship. He expressed himself in favour of a strategic triangle covering India, Russia and China, for peace and stability in the world and also as a counter entity against unipolarism. Though his idea of strategic triangle could not be materialized so far, Primakov was strongly critical of ‘global policeman’ role of the US. Regarding the Primakov visit, a Russian Foreign Ministry source commented, “the India visit offers Mr. Primakov a happy chance to launch a new drive against a unipolar world in which the US cast itself in the role of a global policeman.”

The source further said, “by punishing Iraq the Americans sent us a message that we better stop obeying them over such issues as nuclear or defence cooperation with countries like Iran or India, Primakov visit to India will give them a worthy reply.” Primakov supported India’s claim to be a permanent member in the United Nations Security Council. India was a “strong and appropriate candidate to occupy a seat in a reformed UN Security Council,” Primakov in response to a question said.

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93 Ibid.
94 The Hindu (Chennai), 20 December 1998.
The most plausible conclusion, drawn from the above discussions, could be that the overall Russian perception and attitude and policy during the Yeltsin period were favourable to India. Barring the two initial years, 1991-1992 after the disintegration in which Russia seemed to distance itself from its old stand regarding Kashmir, Russia had supported the Indian stand on the Kashmir issue. The first and foremost reflection of this orientation towards India was found in Yeltsin’s visit to New Delhi in January 1993. The same orientation was maintained throughout. The signing of Moscow Declaration in June 1994 was a vindication of commonality of approaches on various issues such as terrorism, separatism and religious fundamentalism. Both were pluralistic societies and both were suffering from these problems in their territories. Hence, naturally, while Russia supported Indian stand on Kashmir, India supported the Russian stand on Chechnya. Also factors like multipolarism, economic reforms and democracy brought both the countries together. Now, bereft of any ideological considerations or any kind of Cold war compulsions, Russia’s Kashmir policy was based on pragmatism and a clear understanding of the issue in the changing scenario.