Chapter II

GORBACHEV'S NEW THINKING AND ITS IMPACT
ON SOVIET UNION’S RELATIONS WITH INDIA
AND THE THIRD WORLD

With the advent of Gorbachev to power in 1985 the trend towards deideologization and pragmatism gradually became more important resulting in course of time incurtailment of traditional relationship between the soviet Union and the developing countries including India. Infect this trend had emerged during the last days of Brezhnev towards the end of the 1970s and early 1980s and could see a new orientation in the Soviet writings, a new look towards the World War was in the offing. The old basic premises-the socialist orientation, non-capitalist path of development, etc., began to be questioned in the writings of leading Soviet scholars like Brutents, Ulyanovsky, Mirsky, Primakov, Simonia, Sakhnazarov and a host of others. Thus one comes across various skeptical writings in the last days of Brezhnev. During the Gorbachev period this trend was further consolidated.

Characteristic of the Gorbachev period approach to international relations including relations with the third world were ideas of an interdependent, integral world, the primacy of universal over class values, peaceful co-existence without class struggle derived from the concept of “New
Political Thinking" propagated by him at the 27th party congress in 1986. At the 27th party congress Gorbachev emphasized the growing tendency towards global interdependence, which he said was leading towards a largely "integral world." While this formulation was not included in the new edition of the party programme ratified at the party congress, it was repeated in the official resolution in the congress and in the Pravda editorial on the Congress.1

The concept of interdependence became a key element in Gorbachev's "New Thinking" which replaced the Khrushcheviantenn "peaceful co-existence" Khrushchev had held that while military confrontation between the two superpowers was no longer evitable, all other modes of struggle between the capitalists and socialists systems were required, and the two remained locked in prolonged struggle from which one would emerged victorious. But the idea of interdependence forming the core of "new thinking" under Gorbachev suggested that the two opposite world systems need no longer compete in political and economic as well as military spheres in view of the danger of universal destruction inherent in a confrontation between nuclear powers. The emergence of new universal problems like protection of natural environment, elimination of backwardness in the third world, search for new sources of energy and the struggle to conquer disease also dictated cooperation

1 W. Raymond Duncan and Carolyn Mcgiffert Ekedahl, Moscow and the third world under Gorbachev (Oxford : West view Press; 1992), P.75.
rather than confrontation in an increasingly interdependent world. Thus the "new thinking" approach ruled out competition not only in the military sphere (already considered not inevitable during the domination of the concept of peaceful co-existence in the Khrushchev period) but also in the political and economic spheres.

The new approach laid down by Gorbachev at the 27th party congress was supported by Soviet ideologues Y.Primakov and V.Medvedev who rejected the idea of the struggle of the socialist block against capitalism represented by the west. Primakov who was elected the chairman of council of union and became a candidate member of the communist party politburo in 1989, linked "interdependence" - based on "new thinking" not only to the problem of survival of mankind but also to the need to find through global cooperative efforts solution of vital common problems facing mankind. Medvedev stressed a new approach to socialism based on drawing lessons from other socialist countries as well as the west itself. Gorbachev’s "new thinking" based on abandonment of class approach to international relations was opposed by a section of the party led by Ligachev. Gorbachev was supported by intellectuals like A. Yakovlev, Y.Primakov, V.Medvedev, F.Burlatsky, G. Sakhnazarov and A. Bovin. The Gorbachev think-thank evolved ideas that asserted the outdated nature of the approach regarding socialism and capitalism as mutually exclusive. A new approach to imperialism could also be noticed beginning with the 27th party congress which drew attention to the innovative features of
imperialism which enabled it to prolong its life. In his December 1988 speech at the UN General Assembly Gorbachev said:

The deideologization of interstate relations has become a requirement of the new phase. We are not abandoning our convictions... and we are not urging anyone to abandon theirs... (but) this struggle must not be carried over to relations between states.²

Gorbachev again returned to this theme in his address to the USSR congress of peoples Deputies in May 1989, arguing that new thinking is based on the primacy of human values, freedom of political choice precluding interference in the affairs of any state, and the necessity of deideologization of interstate relations.³

Under the impact of Gorbachev “New Political thinking” about international relations the Soviet Unions third World Policy began to undergo a through transformation. The key ideas of the “New Political Thinking” namely, the world is integral and interdependent were bound to dilute the soviet unions commitments to some of its formerly close allies in the Third world. The “balance of interests” approach and East-west cooperation instead of ideological confrontation now characterized Moscow's foreign policy as a whole, including its policies towards the third world countries. With the cold

² Pravda, 26 February 1986.
war now unrealistically presumed by the soviets to be over, many third world countries which were earlier befriended by the USSR because of their anti-imperialist potential, not lost some of their old importance for Moscow. Gorbachev’s attempts to seek close cooperation and integration with the west and the letter’s support for perestroika reforms meant that the third world countries locked in confrontation with the west could not take the Soviet support for granted. In pressing the concept of Super power cooperation to resolve disputes, Gorbachev and his associates increasingly advocated political settlement of regional conflict. Gorbachev cooperated with the United States in withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan and worked with the US to force the Cuba and Vietnam to withdraw troops from Angola and Combodia. A direct fall out of Gorbachev’s shifting third world strategy could be seen in the courtship of influential non-Marxist developing countries. K.Brutents, the first deputy Chief of the international department of the control committee of the party argued for a shift and emphasis from weak socialist-oriented states to those relatively large and well-developed third world states like Brazil, Mexico, Argentina, Algeria and India etc. 4

The following important strands may be noted while analysing the impact of “new thinking” on the third world:

1. Third world problems were viewed as global problems to be resolved through joint East-west efforts. The unresolved problems in the Third World were seen as serious threat towards peace.

2. Moscow began to show signs that its support in the past for socialist orientation and non capitalist path of development in the third world was wrong and must be discarded.

3. It began to seriously revise its previously held views regarding the negative consequences of imperialism and its responsibility for keeping the former colonies backward.

4. The Soviet Union now put stress on making its policy towards the developing countries economically viable.

5. It supported nuclear free zones everywhere including in the Third world Countries. It expressed its concurrence with the west in pressurizing developing countries to adhere to the Nuclear non proliferation regime.

6. Moscow's view on Nonalign movement also started undergoing a change. If earlier the non alignment movement considered important on account of its anti imperialist potential and Soviets prided in calling themselves "natural allies" of third world countries, the nonaligned countries now became important on account of their potential for finding solution of global problems, in this campaign for nuclear disarmament and in creating conditions favorable for cooperation with the west threw acceptance of the "New Political Thinking". Moscow hoped for drawing support from the developing countries for its "New political Thinking" on account of its closeness to their traditionally cherished values sustained by their religious and cultural heritage.
(Buddhism, Gandhism, etc., stress on non violence, dignity of human life).

It is interesting to note that a leading Soviet Scholar on the third world, Nodari Simonia wrote in an article in early 1990 about the likely disappearance of the nonalign movement in the 21st Century observing that some countries in the movement “will seek salvation not from other members of the movement but from the world community”. If the relative lack of emphasis on the third world in Gorbachev's political report to the 27th party Congress was striking, the following year in his speech on the 70th anniversary of the October revolution, Gorbachev opined that the “impulse for liberation” in the third world was “waning”. At the 19th Communist party of Soviet Union Conference (1988) made no mention of national liberation movements although India and Afghanistan were mentioned. At the 28th Communist party of Soviet Union Congress (1990) Gorbachev omitted any reference to the developing countries as the third world in the section of his report dealing with foreign policy. Of course in the context of Moscow’s foreign economic relations Gorbachev made a plea for making “adjustments” in USSR relations with the third world.

The growing decline of Soviet economy on account of the failure of the perestroika-drive, resulted in curtailment of Moscow’s economic assistance to the third world. In his interview to Pravda in June 1990 Soviet foreign Minister E. Shevardnadze reverted the charge that Soviet diplomacy was “forgetting about third world”. Shevardnadze however admitted: “... we are not satisfied with our relations with developing countries, and not so much in the political as in the economic, cultural, scientific, technical and others spheres. We are already restricted by the state of the Soviet economy and the structures of foreign economic relations.” As if to makeup for the Soviet neglect of the Third World the Soviet foreign minister tried to shift the emphasis to joint global action with the west to solve the outstanding problems of the developing countries. He said:

The third world is also an arena of regional conflicts and such global problems as pollution, development strategy, foreign debt, the popularization of advanced civilian technologies and the non-proliferation of technologies for the production of nuclear, chemical, missile and other weapons. All these problems are intertwined and can be solved only if we stop dividing this planet into categories and regard it as a single whole. 

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7 Pravda, 26 June 1990.
Gorbachev issued a decree on 24 July 1990 restricting of Soviet foreign economic relations. This decree affirmed that economic cooperation with the developing countries would be solely based “on the principles of mutual benefit and interest” and “international standard and practices”. The decree signaled termination of Soviet treatment to countries like Cuba and Vietnam as also a sizable cut in the USSR’s foreign economic aid.8

In order to justify reduced quantum of Soviet economic aid to the Third world countries Soviet scholars now started debunking concepts of non-capitalist path of development and socialist orientation which they had earlier espoused so zealously. Thus A.kiva, a prominent Soviet expert on Third World, writing in 1988, expressed ‘regret’ that his earlier writings on ‘Socialist-orientation’ were “influenced by subjective views and... occasionally fell short of scientific analysis of reality in revolutionary democracies”. Kiva admitted that the Soviet theory took a simplistic view of possibilities of bringing socialism in backward countries. The thesis of non-capitalist path, though “basically correct” was applied “dogmatically”. He Wrote, “for a long time a vulgar conception of Marxism, Leninism ate away our social sciences like a malignant tumor...”.9

8 For the text of Presidential decree see Pravda, 25 July 1990.

Influence of Gorbachev's "New Political Thinking" could be seen in writings of leading Soviet experts on the third world like Mirsky, Tiagunanko, Khoros and Shenin who in their contribution to round table discussion published in Soviet generals New Times, International Affairs doubted the very existence of neo colonialism and made a plea for joint action with the west in developing the third world resources.

The inspiration for such views of Soviet scholars can be traced directly to Gorbachev himself. In his famous book on perestroika Gorbachev clearly wrote: "... we do not pursue goals inimical to western interests. We know how important the middle East, Asia, Latin America, other third world regions and also South Africa are for American West European economies, in particular as raw material sources, to cut these links is the last thing we want to do, and we have no desire to provoke ruptures in historically formed, mutual economic interests." Interestingly the English edition of Gorbachev's book carries a distorted version of his work originally published in Russian language. The Russian language edition does not mention "historically formed mutual economic interests". It merely mentions "historically formed economic links", and not "mutual economic interests" as is the case with English edition.

11 M.S. Gorbachev, Perestroika i Novoe Myshlenie dlia Nashei Strany dlia vsego Mira (Moscow, 1987), P. 185
Obviously the wrong translation in English tries to soften the shock to the third world readers.

“New thinking” induced many changes in the foreign policy of the Soviet Union. Moscow’s relations with the former allies in the third world started undergoing some shifts. This shift was based on insistence on efficiency on the part of the concerned third world country which was also pressurized to accept compromises in the regional conflict in which it was involved. This shift could be witnessed in Soviet relations with Vietnam and Cuba. It was more pronounced in the relations with Iraq, a one-time close ally with USSR. The USSR lent support to the US sponsored resolution in the UN security council calling for sanctions against Iraq. As for the US naval presence in the Gulf, Moscow accepted the US assurances about its temporary character. The west was relieved of meeting any Soviet opposition whatsoever to its military presence in the gulf. Moscow saw in regional conflict a big impediment in the improvements of its relations with the USA and other western countries. Hence it laid great stress on political solutions, national reconciliations, political and other compromises, encourage to UN involvement etc.

In the case of India the shift in Moscow’s policy in general towards the third world did not so much affect the bilateral relations between the two countries. The change dictated by “new political thinking” did not imply total
withdrawal from the third world. The new course of Soviet foreign policy put an accent on strengthening relationship with dynamic and relatively strong third world countries - a criterion which India fully met. India was a leading non-aligned country vital for Moscow's security interests vis-a-vis US and China which persuad a policy of hostility to Moscow. A closer relationship with India, a country enjoying considerable prestige in the comity of nations on account of its consistent pursuit of goals of peace and disarmament was likely to land credibility to the good intentions behind new political thinking among the developing countries which were becoming critical of the Soviet unions bid for compromise and accommodation with the USA. During his visit to India in 1986 Gorbachev told the Indian parliament that Indo-soviet relations had provided the first example of new thinking in international relations because "differences in Social political system and ideologies... have not hampered dialogue".12

The principles of the Delhi Declaration were principles of universal security and were as such applicable to situations in all regions of the world, including the largest- the Asia and pacific region. Strengthening peace in Asia became a major commitment made by the USSR and India in accordance with the 1971 Treaty. The positions of the two countries were always in harmony on such an important and acute problem as turning the Indian ocean into a zone of peace and holding towards this of an international conference in accordance

with the UN decisions. The security interests of both states as well as universal security were threatened by the intensification of direct foreign military presence and the spread of the nuclear arms race to the region.\textsuperscript{13}

The Soviet Union and India stood for the settlement of conflicts in Asia on the basis of mutually acceptable compromises with due account taken of the legitimate interests of the peoples in the region. They were united on the need to stop the senseless fratricidal war between Iran and Iraq, and spoke in favour of a consistent implementation of the UN security council resolution 598. The co-authors of the Delhi Declaration, the USSR and India, supported the policy of national reconciliation in Afghanistan and Kampuchea. The idea of reconciliation was universal. Highly rated were the efforts of India to consolidate trust and mutual understanding among the states in the south Asian region, including the efforts being made through the South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC)\textsuperscript{14}

In accordance with the spirit of the Delhi Declaration, the Soviet Union did not try to impose either on India or any other state a ready-made formula for Asian security. Besides, no one had such a formula. The Soviet Union believed that there existed real prerequisites for ensuring peaceful development of the Asian continent. India shared this view. Rajiv Gandhi said that the

\textsuperscript{14} Duncan & Ekedahl, n. 1, P. 109.
principles of Pancha shil and Bandung, a life giving force of the non-aligned movement, established theoretical and political framework for a new-type of relations in Asia and the world in general. The head of the Indian government considered that the Soviet Union, Stretching wide into Asia, should, naturally, be part of efforts aimed at creating a new model of peace, stability, development, and cooperation on the continent.¹⁵

For its part, the Soviet Union consistently advocated the introduction of the Delhi Declaration principles into the practice of interstate relations. It firmly supported the international community's decision to convene the 3rd special session of the UN General Assembly on disarmament in 1988. The 1990s should become a decade of a nuclear-weapon-free and non-violent world—both the USSR and India insisted at the various international fora.

The constructive initiatives in the spirit of the new thinking advanced by India at international forums, including the United Nations and within the framework of the non-aligned movement and the Group of six, became well known, and won for the country a well-deserved international respect.¹⁶

¹⁵ Bondarvsky, n. 13, P. 23.
The Soviet-Indian joint efforts in the International scene were a factor of global importance. This was explained not only by the fact that the two countries accounted for one-fifth of the world's population. The considerable potentialities they used in the interests of peace and security were backed by those of their numerous friends. Thus, the Soviet-Indian interactions opened the way towards forging a broad coalition of peace, reason and goodwill.\textsuperscript{17}

It was quite logical that the declaration drew a broad positive response in the international community—at the United Nations, in the nonaligned movement and in the "initiative of the six states". Even countries with deep-rooted conservative traditions were beginning to realize that it is impossible to live as before. Remarkably the concepts of Delhi Declaration exerted a positive influence on the moral and political climate in the world and helped improve international relations. This was graphically illustrated by the US-Soviet agreement on the elimination of Soviet and American medium- and shorter-range missiles. Though this agreement was of limited nature and envisaged the reduction of the existing nuclear arsenals by only three percent, the very fact of such an agreement was of paramount global importance, 50% reduction in Soviet and US strategic offensive arms alongside the preservation of the vitally important Treaty between the United States of America and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on the limitation of Anti-Ballistic Missile systems (ABM Treaty). India on its own behalf and acting within the framework of the

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid.
“initiative of the six states” actively backed the development of this process because it brought closer the attainment of the main current objective of mankind—to rid the planet of mass destruction weapons. 18

Although the Delhi Declaration was in broad agreement with the “New Political Thinking”, there were certain subtle nuances separating the Indian and Soviet interpretation of the document on the establishment of a Nuclear weapon free non violent world. It was intriguing that the Indian side which never missed an opportunity to loudly professed its age-old faith in non-violence as a way of life did not think it proper to extend the hope of nuclear Ahimsa to completely exclude the use or threat of any kind of force from relations among the nations of the world. The Indian side was too keen to emphasis the conversion of communist Russia to the Gandhian Path of non-violence, but Moscow was forced to explain that it did not employ our abandonment of the concept of class war. The chief editor of Pravda V.Afanasev wrote that in giving priority to the common humanitarian values and human life, the CPSU did not deny its partisan class approach to social processes and war. “Marxist are not pacifist and they consider defensive and national liberation wars as just, natural and Law-governed” declared Afanasev. 19

Yet Afanasev’s views could not be taken as representative of the official line of deideologization of international relations that followed directly from the

18 Ibid.
19 Pravda, 4 December 1986.
new political thinking approach. Premakov and Yakovlev in the numerous
writings and statements referred to the irrelevance of the approach of class war
and law governed just wars of national liberation which was but a reiteration of
the old view of peaceful coexistence prevalent during the period of
Khrushchev.

Gorbachev also described the basis of the Delhi declaration as “priority
of Universal human values.” During his 1986 visits to New Delhi Gorbachev
sought and received Indian support on many of the broad rhetorical themes
of “new Thinking”

The Delhi Declaration on Principles for a Nuclear-weapon free and
non-violent world signed by Gorbachev and Rajiv Gandhi in November 1986
after the conclusion of Gorbachev’s Indian visit clearly bears a strong imprint of
the “New Political Thinking” approach of the Soviet Union. The Preamble of
the document not just echoes the spirit of the “New Thinking” manifested at the
27th CPSU party congress, it also literally reproduces from the political report
the statement that “a nuclear war should never be unleashed and can never be
won.” Among the 10 principles set forth in the declaration “on behalf of more
than one billion men, women and children of our two friendly countries, who
account for one fifth of mankind”. The principles listed at No 7, 8, 9, were

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21 Duncan & Ekedahl, n. 1, P. 107.
fully in line with the "New Political Thinking". The seventh principle-conditions must be guaranteed for individual harmonious development-was in conformity with the "New Thinking" which place priority on the individual as against the class. The 8th principle-mankind's material and intellectual potential must be used to solve global problems also followed the New Thinking approach which stressed giving up confrontation in favour of cooperation in order to solve urgent humanitarian problems like shortage of food, growth of population, elimination of illiteracy and environmental protection threw efficient and appropriate resources of the earth equally followed from the new thinking which did not blame the capitalist system for creation and exacerbation of these problems which at the present juncture could be solved only threw joint efforts of mankind. The "New Thinking" approach elevated these problems to the level of problems on the solution of which the very survival of humanity itself depended. The ninth principle - "the balance of terror" must give way to inter comprehensive international security - was again related to the new thinking which marked a change in the emphasis on political and military means characteristic of the earlier Soviet approach on regional security to a new system of comprehensive security which fully took into account other aspects of security. The two sides proposed an international convention banning the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons. The 2nd and 3rd principles of the declaration, namely, the human life must be recognized as supreme and non-violence should be the basis of community of life embodied the values and ideals closer to the Gandhian Indian tradition. This was likely to enhance the
credibility of the New Thinking approach among the countries of the third world many of which were already becoming suspicious of the impending collision between Moscow and Washington. The deepening of Moscow's cooperation with leading non-aligned countries in the interest of promoting world peace and nuclear disarmament was also needed by Moscow to justify its unilateral termination of cold war and self-out of the interest of the third world.22

The Soviet Union subsequently projected the Delhi declaration as the guiding document for international efforts to promote peace. In the wake of Gorbachaev’s second visit to India in November 1988, the Soviet medias again played upon the trail-bla1ing character of the document. A Pravda editorial referred to the major impact of the document on the world.23 It rejected speculative talk about the USSR changing its priorities and loosing interest in India calling such charges “groundless and melevolent.”24 The paper sighted the regular submit meeting between Gorbachev and Rajiv Gandhi as evidence of dynamism of Soviet-Indian ties. Following Gandhi’s electoral defeat in late 1989. Moscow moved in the direction of reassuring India of its continued commitment to bilateral relationship through the visit of Deputy Foreign Minister Yuliy Vorontsov.

22 New Times, no. 5, P. 27.
23 Pravda, 23 November 1988
24 Ibid.
Prime Minister V.P. Singh's visit to USSR in July 1990 demonstrated that while the USSR and India continued to remain politically close to another, there was a recognition from both side that the bilateral relations needed to be deideologised and new methods of bilateral cooperation's needed to be worked out. Both sides had come to realize that it was impossible to continue in old ways. There was confidence that Perestroika and "New Thinking" in the USSR would not adversely affect the bilateral ties. An "Indo-Soviet statement", reaffirming faith in the "Delhi Declaration" of 1986 and jointly affirming faith in certain principles of international conduct was signed at the end of V.P. Singh's visit.\(^{25}\)

If references to the special relationship between the Soviet Union and India based on the 1971 Treaty of Peace friendship and cooperation were a common feature of the official statements during the Brezhnev period, mentioned of Delhi Declaration became characteristic of the period of Gorbachev. The main thrust of the new political thinking approach lay in its emphasis on deideologization of inter state relations. Making an appraisal of Gorbachev's November 1986 Indian visit, Y. Primakov in an article published in Pravda referred to the "strong objective basis" of the "permanent process of development of relations between the USSR and India" which he attributed to the "convergence or closeness of interest of the two states", absence of "incompatibility" between them "in the geo-political sphere". What is important

\(^{25}\) The Hindu, 24 July 1990.
Premakov underlined the consistency of desire to deepen and extend the ties between the two countries irrespective of the party in power in India. In this context he paid a tribute to non congress Prime Minister Morarji Desai for having continued the general national policy of developing relations with the Soviet Union. Thus the ideological orientation of the Soviet-Indian relation was side-tracked for the first time. As a consequence of the domination of the “New Political Thinking” a new phase began when ideological orientation was relegated to a secondary place to be substituted by pragmatism and geopolitical interest. The ideological factor producing a commonality of interest between world socialism and the national liberation movement was now the thing of the past. The drift towards primacy of pragmatism and geopolitical interest was however not one sided. The ruling class in India by making compromises and diluting the anti-imperialist thrust of nonalignment was moving away from the forces of national liberation, while the Soviet-Union was moving away from the ideal of socialism by pursuing a path of compromise with the west in the guise of new political thinking, which the Indian side was the only too eager to endure as a move in the right direction of world peace and disarmament. Finally the unilateral capitulation of the USSR did not end the arms race or brought the world any nearer to peace. Gorbachev’s ill conceived decision to give up the policy of opposition to imperialism eventually led to the disintegration of the USSR creating a serious imbalance in the internation system. His “New

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Political Thinking” did not meet an adequate response from the west which interpreted the Soviet Union’s stand on futility of cold war as its ideological and military victory justifying imposition of liberal economic reforms on the Russia and the former Soviet Republics and an inequitable “new world order” on India and the third world.