CHAPTER IV

THE IMAGES AND PERCEPTIONS OF INDIA BY THE SUPERPOWERS: RETROSPECTS AND PROSPECTS.
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INTRODUCTION

In international politics, images and perceptions play a significant role in the formulation of approaches between nations. These images and perceptions have historical, social, cultural and psychological dimensions. Nations imbued with their nationalistic ideals form their self-images which are often reflected in the making of their foreign policies. The example of the United States can be cited. The ideals of the Founding Fathers led America to build its self-image as a nation ordained by the Almighty to lead the 'lesser civilizations', and to project itself as charged with a messianic spirit. This self-image of the U.S. subsequently found its reflections in the U.S. policies and in the utterances of the U.S. policy-makers when it moved from isolationism to involvement. This self-perception may not be historically true but it does act as an important factor in forming approaches towards other nations.

Images and perceptions are also prone to distortions, based on fears, suspicions and misperceptions carried from the past to the present. They represent internalised 'information', based on personal, psychological make-up of the decision-makers their childhood illusions, religious prejudices, cultural background etc. The utterances of such decision-makers affect the attitudes of the peoples and they begin to form their opinions about a country or about a particular global issue.
In the examination of the approaches of the Superpowers towards India, it is clearly discernible that these images and perception of the two great powers were responsible to a large extent in articulating their approaches to India and vica-versa. The cultural and historical chasm between the U.S. and India or the USSR and India is fundamentally attributive to such divergent perceptions about each other. The U.S. policy-makers, nurtured in a business civilization, cannot fully understand the tenets of India's foreign policy of nonalignment based on its ancient philosophy of peace and goodwill and its adherence to the purity of means in achieving the ends. Similarly, the materialistic conception of life, promulgated by Marx and Engels could not be fully appreciated by the Indians who have a long history of spiritual resurgence and otherworldliness. The conflicts and cooperation between nations are, therefore, the results of such convergence and divergence of their perceptions.

The present chapter tries to analyse the images and perceptions of the Superpowers about India on various issues of regional and global significance in order to know why they adopted particular approaches towards India during the period under study.

The above theoretical framework of perceptions forms the basis for the examination of the Superpowers perception about India. These perceptions are broadly discussed under the following heads:

(1) Self-image,

(2) Leaders and Leadership of the U.S. and USSR,
(3) The Sense of History,

(4) The Foreign Policy of India,

(5) The Internal Problems of India,

(6) Military Aid and Economic Assistance

(7) The Overall Image of India

(1) SELF-IMAGE

The history of the U.S. diplomacy from the birth of the Republic (1776) until World War II was dominated by two opposite pulls, viz., isolationism and internationalism. But in both pulls, the Amerrican philosophy of uniqueness and their persistent proclamation "as the enlightened Saviour of all that is noble" has been the underlying factor in the perception of American leaders while dealing with India. At the turn of the century, the Statesman-historian Albert J. Beveridge speaking in the U.S. Senate said: "God has not been preparing the English speaking and Teutonic peoples for a thousand years for nothing but vain and idle self-contemplation and self-admiration. No! He made us master organisers of the world to establish system where chaos reigned. He has given us the spirit of progress to overwhelm the forces of reaction throughout the world and of all our race. He has marked the American people as his chosen nation to finally lead in the redemption of the World."¹

This theme of American uniqueness was well reflected in the address of John Foster Dulles before the Atomic Power Institute on 19th May, 1958:

"One nation was founded by men of religious faith... They believed they had a mission to help men everywhere; to have the opportunity to exercise their God-given rights---America would not be America if it were stripped of such idealism." ²

Writing about the changes that have underlined the U.S. perceptions, Hans J. Morgenthau says:

"First, we had a conception of the U.S. as a model of passive conception. Secondly, we had the conception of the U.S. as a Missionary to bring to other nations the blessings of American civilization for their benefit. And now we have the crusading conception that implies the duty to destroy the enemies of the universal happiness for which the U.S. stands or to embark upon a crusade not only on behalf of the positive values which the U.S. represents but also, in a negative sense, to destroy the enemies of those values." ³

Such manifestations of self-image are to remind other nations that the "U.S., was the first new nation" and also the "first in the age of democratic revolution". It was this view that prompted Chester Bowles to say that "India has been seen "as an impoverished nation struggling bravely but probably futilely to govern itself through democratic institutions, which for humanitarian reasons we have been obliged to assist." ⁴

2. Department of State Bulletin, 19th May, 1958, p.800
4. Chester Bowles: "America and Russia in India", Foreign Affairs, 49, 4, July 1971, p.638
In contrast, the Soviet Union has no history of uniqueness as such for its political, social, economic and cultural developments, were on quite different lines. However, by the advent of the first decade of the twentieth century, the Soviets began to voice the uniqueness of their October Revolution. "The birth of the Soviet State, the first-ever country to abolish exploitation of man by man and proclaim a policy of fighting for the freedom of peoples, for peace on earth in the literal sense of the word, was the point of departure for reshaping our ancient planet."\(^5\)

The Soviet Union proclaimed its "complete break with the barbarous policy of bourgeois civilisation which has built prosperity of the exploiters belonging to a few chosen nation on the enslavement of hundreds of millions of working people in Asia, in the colonies in general, and in the small countries."\(^6\) The Soviet Union opened the flood-gate of ideological supremacy on the strength of its Marxist-Leninist philosophy and proclaimed "a dictatorship of the proletariat involving at least several advanced countries and capable of exercising a decisive influence upon world politics as a whole."\(^7\)

It was this faith in their ideological supremacy that induced the Soviets to take a firm stand against British imperialism in India before her independence. Lenin was quick to perceive that there was a close identity of interests between the socialists in Europe and the nationalists in Asia and the two ought to march together in their common struggle against the capitalist powers of Europe. Extending the same perception, the editor of the Blue Book, K.M. Troyanovski said: "We Russians... ought

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to join hands with India whose fate is in many respects comparable to ours, with a view to overcoming a common foe... There can be no general peace without a free, independent India... India is a centre of Western activity in the East. India will, therefore, be the first fortress of the Revolution on the eastern Continent. We Russian revolutionaries... feel it our duty not only to rejoice at the announcement of a revolution in India but to support this revolution by direct or indirect means and with all our power.”

(2) LEADERS AND LEADERSHIP

Leading politicians and statesmen have the ability to affect their people’s perception. Doing this is one of the functions of leadership. "The way in which leaders of nation-states view each other...is of fundamental importance in determining what happens in relations among them.”

Sometimes, individual characteristics of decision-makers viz., the skills, personalities, religious beliefs and psychological disposition, influence their rapport with each other and their conduct of the policies. Their impulsive outbursts, idiosyncrasies, ability to outwit others, pungent rhetorics, verbal competition and intellectual 'manoeuvrability' prompt their perceptions of others. Sometimes, they exhibit more distaste and contempt than an open hatred. Innumerable examples can


be cited. But brevity demands a few samples. For Hoover, the USSR was "a murderous tyranny under Bolshevik murderers"; Truman saw the USSR as "trying to expand the boundaries of their world, whenever and wherever they can"; for Soviet Government Gandhi was "a reactionary who hailed from the Bania caste... betrayed the people and helped the imperialists against them..."; Reagan called the Soviet Union 'the focus of evil in the modern world'; Mao Tsetung declared that "neutrality is a camouflage; a third road does not exist" and the Chinese press had even called Nehru "a running dog of British imperialism", and the anti-western proclaves of Krishna Menon annoyed the American administration.

Some of the notable heads of States, diplomats and decision-makers during 1947-1964, like Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy, Dean Acheson, John Foster Dulles, Chester Bowles, Galbraith, Stalin, Khrushchev, Bulganin, Nehru and Chou-En-lai had their own perceptions of the international situations with all their individual strengths and weaknesses. Critics of repute have perceived each one of them in their own way.

Henry S. Truman "was not able to make peace, because politically he was too weak at home. He was not able to make war because the risks were too great."\(^{10}\)

According to Cabell Phillips "he was liked, he was admired, he evoked steadfast loyalty to many, but he could not inspire\(^{11}\) and Douglas McArthur in his 'Reminiscences' described Truman as "among the President's many weaknesses was his utter inability to discriminate between history and histrionics\(^{12}\).

11. Ibid., p.743
12. Ibid., p.744
Further, Norman Thomas in his "Respectable Rebel" has this to say about Truman: "Harry Truman proves the old adage that any man can become the President of the United States".\(^{13}\) Dwight D. Eisenhower "was a great tortoise upon whose back the world sat for eight years. We laughed at him... We talked wistfully about moving and all the while we never knew the cunning beneath the shell"\(^{14}\)

John F. Kennedy was "an idealist without illusions, a skeptical mind, a laconic tongue, enormous personal charm, an agreeable disdain for the rituals of Massachusetts policies and a detachment from the niceties of American liberalism."\(^{15}\)

"Dean G. Acheson found it difficult to conceal his contempt for the contemptible".\(^{16}\) To Lester Pearson "not only did he suffer fools gladly, he did not suffer them at all"\(^{17}\). John Foster Dulles "spent most of his time in aeroplanes and invented Brinkmanship, the most popular game since monopoly"\(^{18}\): "he was indisputably the prime mover of U.S. foreign policy. He was the informing mind, indeed almost the sole keeper of the keys to the ramified web of understandings and relationships that constituted America's posture of catagorical anti-communism and limitless strategic concern".\(^{19}\) He is also praised as "the world's longest range misguided missile".\(^{20}\)

I.F. Stone in "John Foster Dulles: Portrait of a Liberator" says "The Department knows the

\(^{13}\) Ibid., p. 744
\(^{14}\) Murray Kempton quoted in Ibid., p. 792
\(^{15}\) Ibid., p. 450
\(^{16}\) Douglas Southall Freeman: "Plain Speaking, an Oral Biography of Truman", quoted in Ibid., p. 2.
\(^{17}\) Lester Pearson in Time, 25th Oct. 1971, quoted in Ibid., p. 2
\(^{18}\) Richard Armour: Ibid., p. 253
\(^{19}\) Ibid., p. 253
\(^{20}\) Ibid., p. 254
Secretary as a cold, arrogant and ruthless man who has been exhausting himself running around the world because he really trusts no one..."21 Nikita Khrushchev"never lost an opportunity for scoring debating points against the U.S. 22 "Americans saw in Nehru qualities they admired or disliked and made decisions accordingly. They found Nehru personally difficult to deal with, but recognised his crucial role in modern India. Dean Acheson said: "He (Nehru) was one of the most difficult men with whom I have ever had to deal." 23

President Kennedy is reported to have described to Arthur M. Schlesinger, his first meeting with Nehru as "a disaster... the worst head of state (sic) visit I have had."24

"Stalin regarded Mr. Nehru as a more dangerous enemy than Mr. Dulles. Dulles was a distinguished product of capitalism with his appointed role to play. Nehru was neither fish nor fowl; he was a bad red herring." 25 The Kremlin coldshouldered India's first ambassador to the Soviet Union, Smt. V.L. Pandit believing that Nehru could not be very different from "the ordinary run of the imperrialist lackys." 26

According to E. Zhukov, a prominent Soviet Indologist:

"Gandhism posions the masses with disbelief in their own strength. It is an ideal system for covering up a deal between the imperialists and the feudalists. Gandhi is an apostle of Indian

21. Ibid., p.254
22. Ibid., p.377
backwardness (and) an opponent of industrialisation...To this day, Gandhi plays a negative, arresting role in the development of India and Indian social thought." \(^{27}\)

Great Soviet Encyclopaedia referred to Gandhi as "a reactionary,... betrayed the people,... aped the ascetics". \(^{28}\) However, later, the Soviets corrected their views about Gandhi. R.A. Ulyanovksy in his preface to the third edition of a collection of Gandhi's writings remarks:

"In the past there have been errors in analysing Gandhism in Soviet literature, due mainly to the one-sided approach to the problem; this was subjected to a just and convincing criticism." \(^{29}\)

V.V. Balabushevich, in the course of his highly appreciative article on Gandhi, "The Great Son of India", published in 1969 to mark his centenary, observes that:

"The earlier analysis of Gandhi and Gandhism... was due to the complicated character of his outlook, controversial nature of his actions as well as the lack of material necessary for a thorough investigation of his activity." \(^{30}\)

Writing about Nehru, Rostislav Ulyanovsky says:

"An overview of Nehru's versatile activity as a politician, public figure, philosopher and historian brings us to the conclusion that the best about his legacy is rooted in his gravitation towards socialism and progress." \(^{31}\)

\(^{27}\) Quoted In V.Sen Budhraj: 'Soviet Union and the Hindustan Peninsula,' Bombay, 1973, p.64
\(^{28}\) Referred by KPS Menon in B.R. Nanda's 'India and Soviet Union, Delhi. 1976, p.136
\(^{29}\) A. Vafa: 'Soviet Scholars on Mohandas Karam Chand Gandhi, Delhi, 1971, p.47
\(^{30}\) Ibid.
In his lecture in the Conference on India and the U.S. held at the Mayflower Hotel in Washington on May, 4 and 5, 1959, Clark Mollenhoff gave vent to his feelings about Krishna Menon. He said: "I think much of the American image of India as being 'pro-communist' would reflect an impression from Krishna Menon when he comes over here and appears on television panel shows. Now, I am wondering, is India aware of the kind of impression that this man make?" 32 Another speaker in the same conference, Lawrence E. Spivak has this to say about Krishna Menon: "The concern of American opinion is not non-alignment, but the very opposite--- the feeling of Americans has been that India has been aligned because of the actions of Mr. Krishna Menon." 33 Speaking about Indian leadership, Harrison said: "Real political powers appear to be passing into the hands of new regional leaders whose horizon are hardly the cosmopolitan horizon of the present English-educated generation and who are often, as a consequence found in the ranks of sectional movements making mutually conflicting demands on an embattled central government." 34

The illustrations cited above reveal two distinctive perceptions about Indian leaders and leadership. The American perceptions are marked by psychopathic dislike, prejudices and private interests and snap judgements while the Soviet perceptions, though not true and based on reasonable understanding in the beginning, showed an appreciable improvement in their reassessment of India's great men like Mahatma Gandhi and Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru. This willingness to 'amend' their earlier perceptions

33 Ibid., p. 129
34 Ibid., p. 29.
about Indian leaders, is indicative of a more realistic policy towards India during the years of Cold War. It also opened the doors for a closer friendship and more meaningful co-operation between the two countries.

(3) THE SENSE OF HISTORY

Most great national leaders are imbued with a strong sense of history and an acute awareness of its weight upon them. This is true, of course, of both Occidental and Oriental statesmen. We can see in Wilson, Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy, Churchill, De Gaulle, Khrushchev and Nehru a feeling for the movement of historical forces and a conception of a world order. Perhaps the Communist leaders have this sense stronger than most, for they are fortified with a theory and a doctrine that put history on their side. In Marxism "God is personified History", and the Communists are the "bearers of History's will, beneficiaries of History's guarantees, executors of History's judgements."35

Perceptions when guided by a deep historical consciousness, mould and build the approaches of nations. Their foreign policies get imbued with a great sense of history. Whether it was the American policy of 'isolationism' or 'internationalism' or the Soviet philosophy of co-existence in world affairs or the Indian policy of non-alignment---all have been greatly guided and inspired by their respective histories and their interpretations.

It is this historical consciousness that prompts the radical critics, both at home and abroad, to create a pressure group against the policies of the governments that do not confirm to historical realities. For example, the American tendency to project itself its own image and perceptions on the world at large have perhaps contributed towards damage of its own long term interests. It may be self-defeating and even morally wrong for the U.S. policy-makers to try and shape the institutions of other societies. The critics of American foreign policy like Alvin Rubinstein, Donald Smith, Hans Morgenthau, J. William Fulbright Robert Dallek and Samuel P. Huntington give turn to new perceptions and better understanding of historical forces. For example, the remarks of Grayson Kirk that "the policy of India is not a covertly pro-Russian response to American overtures as Americans may believe, but an expression of the most firmly held and long standing principles guiding their foreign policy," or of Harry Barnes that "it is important for any government to clearly understand how the other government functions and why it has certain policies. We may not like it but we must try to understand why India takes certain actions or why India has certain attitudes", underline the force of historical realities of the bipolar world.

Similarly, we notice a radical change in Soviet perception when Soviet scholars like A.M. Diakov gave the first major indication of a positive reappraisal of the Nehru's Government. Published in the very first issue of the new journal of the Institute of Orientology, Diakov's article praised India's contribution to the cause of peace in Asia and the world.

37 Gentlemen, June, 1985, p.119.
In a sharp departure from previous pronouncements on the subject, Diakov stated that: "The peace-loving policy of the Indian government is supported even by certain circles of the Indian bourgeoisie, including the big bourgeoisie, for this policy not only guarantees, India's not being dragged into war, but also secures the possibility of smashing out of the grip of economic dependence on the Imperialist powers."  

Thus, not only had the Congress Government been rehabilitated in Soviet eyes, but India could no longer be considered as a semi-colony. India suddenly became the leading example of a sovereign country struggling to attain economic independence.

These two illustrative examples of reappraisal of issues and to view them from a new angle confirm the validity of the statement that modern history is concerned with change, with the flow of events and the passage of time, with causes and consequences, and with the origins of institutions.

Both the U.S. and the USSR perceived India in terms of the past and tried to justify their arguments by referring to the historical forces that forced them to adopt a particular approach to India.

Selig S. Harrision, speaking in Indo-U.S. conferencee (May 4 and 5, 1959) said:

"It runs against the American grain even to imagine the worst because we are emotionally committed as a people to the can-do spirit. Experts disagree on when to expect India's passage into self-sustaining development. A majority would agree, it is likely to be nowhere in sight at the end of the Third Five-Year-Plan. This

suggests two guiding principles of our policy that the final responsibility of success and failures should remain clearly with India."\textsuperscript{39}

Averell Harriman voiced his opinion in the same conference thus: "We Americans have a peculiarly scanty past in relation to Indians. Comparatively little has entered from India into the main stream of American life. We have one set of notions about exotic, opulent India. These go back all the way to the European quest for the Indians, and are carried forward to our time by the images of the gem-incrusted maharajas and their gem-crested elephants. These were very powerful images indeed...We also carry from the past, the past of these scanty, fragmentary images, another set of notions which are perhaps best suggested by the phrase "the benighted heathen Hindu". We acquire this in part from our missionary traditions, which was one of the last scanty elements of our relationship to India over The past century or so. The figure of the heathen Hindu occupies a very special place in our minds. It has a lot to do with our real or pervasive differences in American and Indian culture---differences which are not to be minimised. Part of this image also came from Kipling and, I suppose, that for most people whose bits and pieces about India are from this source, it would still be mainly those tribesmen around the fringes of India against whom the Bengal Lancers kept charging across our Hollywood screens, generation after generation."\textsuperscript{40}

The U.S. perception about its policy in Asia has evoked mixed comments from the critics of the American foreign policy. The U.S.is in a serious danger of losing what

\textsuperscript{40} Ibid., p.230
friends it still has in Asia, particularly India, if it does not propose a bold social programme or support progressive leadership in that part of the world. Already grave mistakes have been made there--- errors of policy which even the cleverest political propaganda cannot gloss over or easily cure."  

Extending the same theme, William O. Douglas says: "They (the developing countries) are passionately opposed to becoming colonies either of the West or Russia. By and large, they do want frindship and cooperation with the Western world."  

In contrast to American perception of history in relation to India, the soviet Union has formulated its perceptions about India within the framework of its political ideology. Right from Lenin to Khrushchev, the soviet leaders perceived India on the strength of the historical realities. For Lenin "the chief danger of the Sepoy rising (1857) lay in the native army going over to the insurgents".  

In his fundamental work "The Development of Capitalism in Russia", Lenin noted in particular, that "capitalism is driving patriarchal agriculture of its last refuge, such as India and Russia".  

Commenting on the Indian National Congress, he said: "Formation of Indian Nation was a manifestation of India's national awakening."  

Writing about Asia in his "Asia's Awakening", Lenin wrote "World capitalism and the 1905 movement in Russia have finally aroused Asia. Hundreds of millions of the down trodden and benighted have awakened from medieval stagnation to a new life and are rising to fight for elementary human rights and democracy."  

41. Columbia Journal of International Affairs, Vol.15,1951,p.3  
43. V.I. lenin: "Collected Works," vol.38,p.498  
44. Ibid, Vol. 3,p.329  
45. Ibid, Vol. 39,p.499
The progressive-minded Russians also had their own perceptions about India. Nicolai Novikov denounced colonialism. He said, "The new history has recorded no other so important an advantage as the conquest of Bengal."\(^{47}\) Alexander Radishchev commented that "an Englishman has forgotten the Great Charter and Habeas Corpus Act in Bengal, he is worse than any small Indian ruler."\(^{48}\)

Pushkin, a great Russian poet openly spoke about the tyranny of the British in India.\(^{49}\) Gherasim Levedev wrote in the 'Unbiased Contemplation of the East India Systems, Brahmins, Sacred Rites Thereof and Popular Customs': "It is evident that Indians are nothing like savages... They do not look like idolators and regard as such strangers who infringe upon whole states for the satisfaction of their insatiable greed for enrichment, to the detriment of the human race."\(^{50}\)

Leo Tolstoy, the great Russian writer, in his famous 'Letter to a Hindu' written in 1908 in reply to the address from Indian patriot, Taraknath Das, as well as in his correspondence with Mahatma Gandhi in 1901-1910, he resolutely criticised the colonial rule in India. He called upon the Indians to resist British rule and suggested his own way to boycott it."\(^{51}\)

Maxim Gorky, the forerunner of the rising Russian Revolution, wrote that great India and its people who had given the world examples of deepest penetration into

\(^{46}\) Ibid., Vol.9,p.86
\(^{47}\) Quoted by E. Komarov in his "Lenin and the National Liberation Movement in India, New Delhi, 1986, p.2
\(^{48}\) Ibid., p.2.
\(^{49}\) Ibid., p.3
\(^{50}\) Ibid., p.3
\(^{51}\) Ibid.,p.7
human soul and who had advocated the rapprochement between the progressive people of Russia, India and all countries of the world, so as jointly to defeat all the evils of the world once and for all, should be free." 52

(4) INDIA'S FOREIGN POLICY

The perceptions of both the Superpowers about India's foreign policy are quite different. India's policy of non-alignment has been one of the major irritants to the U.S. Administration. The American perceptions are sharp, critical and guided by their own interests. However, the American critics of the U.S. Foreign Policy have made scathing criticism of the U.S. approach to India's foreign policy.

According to Selig S. Harrison:

'Neutralism' in many American minds comes down to a willingness to compromise with the forces of communism--- if need be--- at the expense of the U.S. In this uncomplicated image India today is disengaged from her whole past and the non-alignment policy with its profound basis in history becomes indeed almost beyond comprehension." 53

The former Ambassador to India, Chester Bowles opined:

"India and America have never found it particularly easy to understand each other. We have a sort of stereotyped view of India, and India has an extremely stereotyped view of us. India is inclined

52 Ibid., p.17.
53 Excerpt from the speech ed. by Selig S. Harrison in his "India and the U.S., New York, 1961, p.121
to look upon American foreign policy as overtly militaristic, as negative and purely defensive against communism. We, impatiently look upon India as a neutralist nation, unwilling to stand up and be counted in a struggle throughout the world which clearly in our mind is between the forces of freedom and those of the servitude." 54

Giving a psychological explanation as to why India's foreign policy is misunderstood, Barbara Ward says:

"I think why Indian neutralism is so misunderstood is that particular phase of the history of Asia is insufficiently understood in the West. We get our images deeply and profoundly from the past just as I believe the psychiatrists tell us we get so many of our individual reactions deeply and profoundly from our childhood. I don't think we can understand neutralism unless we see a very, very particular phase of Asia's experience in relation to the West... Asians believe on the basis of their own history, that if they are asked to take sides, this is the first step toward some loss of local autonomy and local authority." 55

Airing his views on India's policy of non-alignment Averell Harriman said:

"Some Americans are puzzled by the foreign policy of Indian government, particularly as it is expressed by Mr. Nehru. This question of nonalignment? Well, India is not neutral. Anyone who thinks India is neutral does not understand India... We don't always like everything that Prime Minister Nehru says about the Soviet

54 Ibid., p.221.
55 Ibid., p.268
Union or about ourselves. But I think it is only fair that we should be understanding the motives that lie behind what he says. He told me that it was the Gandhian philosophy to see the best in others, even in your enemies. They don't look the same way in New York as they do in San Francisco. We have very vigorous differences of opinions, not only between our two parties but between people who live in different parts of the world."  

Another critic perceived India's foreign policy in a more positive way. He says: "The policy of India is not a covertly pro-Russian response to American overtures, as Americans may believe, but an expression of the most firmly held long standing principles of guiding their foreign policy."  

Giving a historical reason, Hans J. Morgenthau said:

"No answer can do justice to this question which does not take into account the fundamental fact that India looks at the world from the vantage point of Asia and not of Europe or America. This statement itself is, of course, trivial, but it has been neglected in practice. Mr. Nehru's speeches and policies have been resented in this country for not being identical with those of Messrs. Eisenhower and Dulles."  

Commenting on the caustic comment of Dulles, Arther Lall says:

"Non-alignment immediately earned black looks for India's representatives as early as the very first session of the U.N. General Assembly."
Assembly... For example, in a speech made on 9th June, 1956, Dulles incorrectly labelled India’s foreign policy as ‘neutralism’ (he further called it) "immoral" and "short-sighted." 59

In contrast, the Soviet perception of India’s foreign policy in the first few years after the exchange of historic visits (Nehru’s to the USSR and Khrushchev’s to India) consisted for the most part of non-analytic journalistic accounts, whitewashing India’s peaceloving foreign policy even to the extent of deleting embarrassing factual details.

But, by the close of the decade, however, the aura surrounding India had dissipated sufficiently to enable the publication of a more realistic and balanced scholarly account of Indian foreign policy. Nikhmin’s work is noteworthy in that it sheds light on soviet perception of India’s foreign policy during the pre-1955 period. According to him "India did not fully take an independent foreign policy course in the first few years following independence. Nikhmin explains that "this was partly the consequence of illusions concerning the readiness of Great Britain and the U.S. to assist India’s economic development on acceptable terms which led to her making political concessions to the Western powers, such as attending a 1949 Conference of non-communist Asian States to discuss a crisis in Indonesia." 60

On the subject of Indo-Pakistani imbroglio over Kashmir, Nikhmin skirts the issue itself, but suggests that initially both sides were interested in wide economic and trade ties but that these relations became poisoned by Western interference and intervention on Pakistan’s side in the Kashmir dispute." 61

61 Ibid.,p.274
The perception of the Soviet Union of India's foreign policy can be gauged by the official statement made from time to time. N.A. Bulganin, addressing the Indian Parliament on 21 Nov. 1955 said: "The people of the Soviet Union entertain a deep respect for the efforts of the Indian Government against the policy of forming aggressive military blocs and for collective peace and the settlement of international issues by negotiations." 62

Thus the new Soviet line broadly fitted in with the view of the world which Nehru had been propagating for nearly eight years. His concept of non-alignment suited the strategic interests of the Soviet Union; it offered to the newly independent countries of Asia and Africa, an alternative to the military alliances which the United States was sponsoring to "contain" Russia.

(5) INDIA'S INTERNAL PROBLEMS

The perceptions and images of the U.S. and the USSR about India's internal problems are also important contributory factors in determining their approaches.

Commenting on India's political structure, Harrision said:

"Perhaps the most critical challenge to the present Indian Constitution and the one least understood in the West is the stress and strains of the centrifugal forces resident in the demarcation of India in the basis of her ancient linguistic regions. With the exception of the sprawling North Indian Hindi

62 Excerpt from N.A. Bulganin's Address to Indian parliament, 21 Nov.1955.
heartland, which subdivides the country into five States, the boundaries of each of India's political units are the boundaries of the separate linguistic (and political) territories which were conglomerately known as "India" in the long centuries preceeding Moghul and then British Unification. Regional patriotism rivals all-India loyalty in these desperate segments with their proud histories and highly developed literary heritage." 63

America's scepticism about India's political stability also contributes to its perceptions about India. Harrision further says: "Although India might be able to make quite fundamental adjustments within the framework of her present institutions, the odds are close to fifty-fifty. What if, to pose a specific possibility, India should in the post-Nehru period become a shambles of feuding regional ministeries held loosely together by a government in New Delhi whose writ in economic development clearly does not extend to much of the country? In such a period, should our aid be kept stable or even increased? Should we prop up a weak central regime? Or would large scale aid in such circumstances merely serve to prolong a period of political agony and do an injustice to aggrieved regions? What if, to avert the real or imagined threat of political collapse, a combination of political, bureaucratic and military leadership should be set aside the existing Indian constitution in the name of strong, confident government and the eternal importance of Indian nationalism? 64

The same speaker perceived Indian socialism thus: "Indian socialism may have

64 Ibid.,p.291
had its birth in the ideological atmosphere of the London School of Economics. It has been nurtured by the anti-Marwari bias of the high caste civil servant and the black country 'nouveau riche'. 65

Similar ignorance of India's political realities was exhibited by several other American leaders. Harold R. Issace, speaking about India's freedom movement says: "Most Americans know India's Freedom Movement in two forms: the first would be the vague general notion of a people struggling for freedom, especially against Britain. But secondly, there are two figures who emerged from this movement, who exist in rather vivid images in most of the American minds. The first is Nehru, the philosopher-statesman-king type. The other great figure that is Gandhi-- the man to be bracketed in the imaginations of many with such figures as Jesus and Buddha." 66

Another perception about India's village life and its administrative system can be gauged by the remarks of Richard L. Park. He says: "Many anthropologists who have observed Indian villages, maintain that the single least effective element has been the failure to understand local culture (as opposed to the great cultural tradition of India)...Community Development Projects have also suffered because of the district administrative system in India, a hard boiled system which is the strong arm of the state and the central legislation. The frame of the hierarchy is rigid. Collectors and their subordinates are not technically competent in the specialised field of agriculture, agriculture engineering and irrigation." 67

65 Ibid., p.379
66 Ibid., p.412
67 Ibid., p.231
About Indian bureaucracy, George F. Grant says: "One of the outstanding problems of India is the adjustment of bureaucracy to meet the challenge of Five-Year Plans. By and large, the administrative and governmental procedures have not changed for the last twelve years to suit the new development programme. India has made great progress in increasing the size of the bureaucracies which are compressed within the old, outdated and outmoded methods of administration."^{68}

Van Dusen Kennedy, Professor of Industrial Relations at the University of California and author of many studies on Indian Trade Unionism has this to say about India's industrial scenario: "From the American point of view collective bargaining is one of the underdeveloped features of the Indian industrial scene. Collective bargaining in India does not have the fullness of content and scope of subject matter that we are accustomed to in American collective bargaining."^{69}

Charles Myres of Massachusetts Institute of Technology and author of "Labour Problems in the Industrialisation of India" says "There is a divided labour movement in India and one of the strong sectors of the movement is a communist-dominated sector. I think American companies are bothered by this."^{70}

In contrast, the Soviet perceptions about India's internal problems were analytical and diagnostic in nature.

The main focus of Soviet writings on India during the post-war years was the determination of strategy and tactics towards the nationalist movement and especially

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68 Ibid., p.142
69 Ibid., p.175
70 Ibid., p.180
towards the Indian National Congress which led it. The expert on Indian nationality
problems, A.M. Diakov, writing in 'Bolshevik' in 1946, identified the Congress as "the
most influential" of the national political organisations in India which was fighting for
"full independence". Noting that the Congress constituted an amalgam of ideologically
heterogeneous elements, Diakov, in a subsequent article, viewed Nehru as something
of a progressive, although other members of the provisional government, and especially
Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, were deemed reactionary."71

However, as independence approached, the Soviet doubts about the future
conduct of the Congress government, especially in foreign affairs, increased in intensity.
Diakov, for example, characterised the Indian delegation at the Paris Peace Conference
in 1946 as "the loyal vassal of British imperialism" and doubted whether the Indian
government would be able to realise Nehru's professed desire of conducting an
independent foreign policy."72

During the spring of 1947 there took place a sharp shift in Soviet policy with the
adoption of a hostile posture towards the Nehru Govt. E.M. Zhukov found the Indian
leaders in a much too conciliatory mood, and, for the first time, attacked Nehru for his
alleged pro-British sympathies. He went so far as to suggest that India harboured
expansionist ambition of her own in Asia."73

In the Conference of Moscow, orientalists held in June, 1947, Zhukov, Diakov,
V.V. Balabushevich and S.M. Melman made sharply negative appraisal of the Indian

71 Pravda, Oct. 21, 1946, p.4
72 Pravda, Oct. 21, 1946, p.4
73 Pravda, May 12, 1947
bourgeoisie and the National Congress. To them Congress betrayed the liberation movement by accepting the Mountbatten Plan. Zhukov in reference to the Nehru Government villified "national reformists" who insist on neutrality in the Soviet-American conflict. These ‘National reformists’ were considered henchmen of the reactionary bourgeoisie and servitors of the interests of imperialism."  

In the closing years of Stalin's rule, the only subsequent modification of the operational code towards India was made at another Conference held at the Institute of Orientology in Nov, 1951. Delivering the main report, academacian Zhukov specifically "warned against emulating the Chinese revolution." 

After the death of Stalin, the Soviet scholars left their readers with the impression that Nehru’s economic policies had something in common with socialism. M.I. Rubinshtein suggested that "... in India, which is advancing along the road of independent political and economic development, the objective possibilities exist for obviating the continued growth of monopoly capital and by peaceful methods, in confirmity with the will of the majority of the people, taking the socialist path."

A landmark work in the refinement of Soviet perception on the development process was the 1958 publication of the first monograph by the innovative young research workers of the Institute of World Economy and International Relations, G.I.


Mirskii and L.V. Stepanov. The authors warned that "aid funds would be completely ineffective if dispensed on the construction of projects not having decisive significance for India, or in other words, on the construction of objects which seem more like models propagandizing the achievements of advanced countries than being of practical use."  

Whatever the precise contours of American policy in the subcontinent, the Soviets viewed the growing American influence there as a threat to their own position. The examination of scholarly literature of the early 1960s perceived this problem. Ulianovskii commenced by stating that in general the development of state capitalism in India "at present bore an anti-Imperialist character and was directed to the goal of attaining economic independence."  

Other scholars presented additional data pointing to the growing influence of Indian monopolies. Having documented the personal ties between public corporations and big business in India, A.I. Levkovskii concluded that Indian monopolies exerted a great deal of influence on the economic and political life of the country. The Soviet scholars were also alarmed that the Indian government courting foreign capital had offered important concessions, such as guarantees against nationalisation, the right to repatriate profits and the suspension of controls on foreign participation in joint stock companies. This trend, they felt, was bound to increase the effectiveness of Western pressures on Indian foreign policy. However, scholars like Bessonov sounded an optimistic note. He said that "the state capitalism in India is progressive..."

77 G.I. Mirskii and L.V. Stepanov; "Asia and Africa: A New Era", Moscow, 1958 p.67
78 Pravda, No.23 1954 p.3
79 R.A. Ulianovskii; "Problems of India". No.3,1960,p.23
80 A.I. Levkovskii; "Monopolies in India," Moscow, 1961, p.47.
since it assists the strengthening of the national sovereignty of the country. It is progressive also because in conjunction with the peace-loving and on the whole anti-colonial foreign policy of the government, it hastens the decline of the colonial system, and consequently, weakens world imperialism. 81

The Soviets were practical enough not to jeopardise Indo-Soviet relations. Their policy was one of maintaining general support for the established government, while using the C.P.I. to pressure the government, to resist concessions to the forces of the right and to continue domestic reforms. Moreover, the C.P.I. was also called upon to support the government when, for example, the latter's candidates faced serious electoral challenges from the right wing political candidates. 82

The Soviet image of India, which had been held up as a model of progressiveness for newly independent countries in the 1950s began to tarnish as the Soviet waxed enthusiastically at the radical domestic and foreign policies being conducted in Egypt, Burma, Ghana, Guinea and other developing countries. While at the beginning of the decade India ranked among the most progressive developing countries, "by 1962 she was already being relegated to a secondary category in the hierarchy of progressive underdeveloped countries. This was not so much as a consequence of the diminished regard for India as much as a result of a surge of expectations sparked by radical reforms in other developing states." 83

In the context of the emergence of socialist doctrines in the Third World, "Nehru's dictum of constructing a "society on the socialist mould" was clearly seen as a

81 S.A. Bessonov: "Philosophy of Economics", No.6, 1962, p.65
83 Ibid., p.191
slogan utilized by the National bourgeoisie to preserve their influence. Indeed, the most charitable treatment of this Indian variant of socialism appeared in a 1964 article by Iu. Ostrovitianov, in which he identified it with the struggle for independent capitalist development with a strong state sector and elements of national planning. Ostrovitianov added, however, that Nehru’s brand of socialism, which was akin to West European democratic socialism, could give way, as present circumstances indicated, to anti-Communist hysteria. 84

(6) MILITARY AID AND ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE

The record of the U.S. economic assistance to India is full of varying moods and attitudes. In response to India’s request to the U.S. in 1951 for two million tons of wheat, "the U.S. Congress, during its debates considered a series of amendments which may have required India to make certain adjustments in its foreign policy as a quid pro quo for the aid of wheat" 85

While the Soviet experts presented a very optimistic report on the availability of oil in India, the "American Oil and Gas Journal reported that "India is a second-rate country in terms of oil supplies except in the already explored Assam area. Geological Survey shows that there is little likelihood of oil in India in considerable quantity." 86

The U.S. has revealed a tendency to convert the favourable trade balance into a political weapon at India’s expense and helplessness. "The U.S. has perhaps revealed

84 Ibid, p.197
85 Chester Bowles, ; "Promises to Keep: My years in Public life" 1941-1969, New York, 1971, p.491
a propensity more often than not to assist India only to the extent to which it can toe
the U.S. economic policy of private enterprise irrespective of India’s domestic
requirements and policies. This is perhaps scarily distinguishable from an attempt
at interfering in India’s internal affairs. To quote Chester Bowles: "The assumption that
by giving India economic assistance we are at least assured of its friendship and
hopefully of its support has generated reaction in New Delhi that have further confused
our relations when they (India) assert their independence by refusing to see the world
as our government sees it. Leaders within the administration and Congress have
become, by stages, puzzled, frustrated, hurt and angered."

In short, though India has been a major recipient of U.S. economic aid, there is
an implicit assumption in the U.S. policy that economic aid can possibly be used as lever
for ensuring India’s friendship and its support to America’s position on various issues.

As regards to the Soviet Union, its willingness to aid India’s industrial
development came with Soviet decision to develop its own foreign aid programme. "In
1950s the Soviets developed the surplus industrial capacity to enable them to initiate a
foreign assistance programme. A Pravda article covering the Geneva session noted
that Soviet aid, in contrast to American assistance, would serve "to strengthen the
‘economic independence’ of recipient countries without attaching any binding
preconditions". The Bhilai offer was itself a barometer of the extent to which
Indo-Soviet relations had improved. It was preceded by a growing appreciation on the
part of the Soviet leadership of the value of the Nehru Government.

89 Milton Kovner : "Soviet Aid Strategy in Developing Countries", 1965, p. 631
90 Pravda, July 17, 1953, p. 4 in CDSP. Vol. No.29.
Establishing the ideological rationale for the Soviet aid to India, the Pravda editorial accused British and American capital of hampering India's independent development through their competitive struggle to dominate the Indian market. Soviet aid, therefore, would help resist Western economic penetration and contribute to her struggle for economic independence. Thus, whereas under Stalin, economic dependence was taken as proof of Indian political submissiveness, now, Indian political independence was acknowledged as fact with the battle for economic independence was still in the forefront. The editorial then prepared the Soviet public for signing only a few days later of the Bhilai agreement on terms more generous than those offered by other Western countries for similar projects in India.  

It was only after the Soviet Union had made its offer to build a metallurgical plant at Bhilai that Britain came forward to set up one at Durgapur and West Germany at Rourkela. Perhaps if there were no Bhilai, there would have been no Durgapur or Rourkela. In the words of Selig Harrison: "Bhilai is a showpiece of Soviet aid to India not only because it is a steel mill, a spectacular accomplishment, but because it symbolises the Indian aspiration for national progress equally shared."  

An examination of the strategy and evolution of Soviet trade and aid practices is instructive, for Soviet economic policy, as a component of overall Soviet policy towards India, tells us much about Soviet designs and intentions. We are not concerned here with quantitative data but with the qualitative aspects of those economic

91 Soviet economic aid for the Bhilai Steel Mill was given through the extension of a credit at 2.5% interest to be paid back over a 12-year period following delivery of all equipment.
relations. At the end of 1960s India was a major recipient of Soviet economic aid among non-Communist developing countries.

Whereas during the Stalinist period Western aid was disparaged as an exploitative weapon in the arsenal of "neo-colonialism", by the close of the 1950s the Soviets had revised their perceptions in response to improvement in the terms of aid offered to developing countries by the major Western States. As a 1958 'Sovetskoe Vostokovedenie' editorial recognised the Western countries had partially weakened their traditional anti-industrialisation policy and had made certain concessions to the developing countries. 'These improvements were attributed to not any change of heart, such as the impact of Soviet aid, intra-imperialist economic competition, the realisation that industrial development in the State sector could no longer be prevented and by the general desire to keep these countries within the world capitalist economy' 93

Nevertheless, these acknowledgements of the changes in Western aid did not alter Soviet hostility towards Western economic policies. To the Soviet viewpoint, imperialism had not suddenly changed its stripes, but had only adjusted to new conditions. Soviet writers argued that the exploitative essence of Western economic policies remained and warned, therefore, that capitalist countries might try to use their aid to gain control of the new branches of industry' 94

Generally speaking, Soviet scholars encouraged the developing states to make use of the more favourable terms of western aid, and, at the same time, scored propaganda points by questioning the motives underlying the extension of that aid' 95

95 Ibid.
The most forthright statement of the Soviet position may be found in Mirskii and Stepanov's 1958 book, in which the authors stress that "the underdeveloped countries need assistance and economic collaboration not only with socialist but also with capitalist countries, but the main thing is on what basis the relations with the capitalist countries will be built".96

American military aid to Pakistan contributed a lot in bedeviling relations between India and the U.S. It constituted the most single issue dividing India from the West and it coloured Indian attitudes to most of other international questions. There are mixed perceptions on this question. Some American policy-makers did realise that it was one of the major policy mistakes of the U.S.

William J. Fulbright said: "I think the decision to supply arms to Pakistan is an unfortunate mistake... I disapprove of this move and I wish the record to show clearly my disapproval because in the future when the results of this policy are evident to all, I want it to be clear where the responsibility lies".97

Chester Bowles, too, did not approve this American Policy. He said "It is a bad arithmetic to alienate 360 million Indian in order to aid 80 million Pakistanis who are split in two sections, divided by 1000 miles of Indian territory. Instead of adding to the stability of the subcontinent, this will create new tensions and suspicions and thus further contribute to its insecurity."98

96 Ibid.
97 The Hindu, March 5, 1954.
Similar concern has been expressed by Walter Lipmann when he said, "We have alienated India and Afghanistan by our meddling and we have not made secure the adherence of Pakistan".  

Selig S. Harrison called it a blunder. He said "Examined in the cold light of local realities, however, the U.S. decision to embrace Pakistan's President Zia-Ul-Haq, emerges as a monument, self defeating blunder".  

Christopher Van Hollern said, "Washington policy makers should pause and carefully examine the premises of their past actions and the implications of their present policy proposals before plugging ahead into a new relationship with Pakistan".

Several other politicians, intellectuals and decision-makers perceived American arms aid to Pakistan as a great diplomatic blunder on the part of the U.S. Foreign policy-makers. Their different perceptions can be best summed up by what Hans J. Morgenthau has to say on this issue. He says: "But certainly.. we have not realised how completely identical the interest of India and our own interests are. This identity of interests has been obscured by our alliance with Pakistan.. For I am sure, as sure as I can be of anything, that future historians will look with amazement at this policy which forces the U.S. to engage in an armament race with itself. For, with one hand, we build up the armaments of Pakistan, for a purpose which nobody can really see, and while we are doing this, we force India to divert a considerable fraction of its productive resources into armaments in order to keep up with Pakistan.... If this is a rational policy, I would like to know what an irrational policy is".  

99 The Hindu, Jan.6, 1956.  
100 Welig S. Harrison: Fanning Flames in South Asia", Foreign Policy, 45 : 45, Winter, 1981-82, p. 84  
(7) THE OVERALL IMAGE OF INDIA

What images do the Americans and Russians have about India in their minds? The answer lies both in coverage and divergence of opinions.

Speaking about India, Harold R. Issacs said: "For one thing, more Americans have met more Indians and more Indians have met more Americans in the last ten years than all the previous history of the two nations. For another thing, there has been an extraordinary complex misamalike cloud of difference and confusion over world tensions and policies, a positive fog of misunderstanding that has dogged every encounter between individual American and individual Indian.

On the whole, with certain exceptions, these encounters have been calamitous. If one could venture any kind of generalisation, it might be to say that both Indians and Americans tend to be in some measure apostles of righteousness, and when two apostles of righteousness meet it is not generally the beginning of a beautiful relationship."102

Striking the same note James T. McCrory perceives that "In America there is a tendency to view India as a country which is sort of exotic, and has only rather backward people. This may be quantitatively true, but if you have two or three million people who are already semi-skilled, who are already protoentrepreneurs, who are already able to work with their hands and use machinery, that's an awful lot of people"103

Chester Bowles has further emphasised the difference in perception between the two peoples. Says he:

102 Ibid., p.221
103 Selig S. Harrison: (ed)" India & the U.S." p. 273
"...the peoples of both countries have developed seriously distorted views of the other. Partly as a consequence of the steady flow of American movies, many Indian visualised America as a land of cowboys, gangster, CIA agents, millionairs and moview stars; while many Americans visualised India as a land of too many babies, cows and monkeys, famines, maharajas, polo-players and cobras; with economic and political problems so appallingly great that neither we, the Indian nor any one else could solve them." 104

India hardly appeared "on the horizon of American news, "lamented 'The Nation' in October, 1924. 105 Most attention to India in the next years revolved around Katherine Mayo's 'Mother India' which eclipsed Gandhi as a source of news except during his 21-day fast in 1924.

In 1929 Sunderland wrote "India in Bondage". It was a stinging attack on imperial rule and a vindication of the Congress and Gandhi. In his preface, Sunderland says: "This book is not an accident; it is a necessity. It exists because a great, historic nation, struggling for freedom demands a voice." 106

Very few names can be taken from American history that have shown interest in India or have understood her. Martin Luther King Jr. Walt Whitman and Louis Fischer are notable. Among the diplomats and individuals tied to the government, Ambassadors Bowles, Galbraith and Moynihan did try to understand India and educate governmental officials and American public on Indian ethos.

104 Chester Bowles: "Promises to Keep: My Years in Public Life," 1971, p. 465
105 Jha, 'Civil Disobedience', p. 27
In the foregoing examination of the perceptions of the Superpowers about India, it is evident that history played an important role. America, being very young as compared to India, and its political, social and economic institutions being quite different from India, could not comprehend the subtleties of Indian Political and Social thoughts. It, therefore, made several diplomatic blunders by approaching to India from the viewpoint of its own foreign policy which was based on the principle of containment of communism, collective security and pressure tactics. The American leaders were rigid and bent upon to prevail on India and denigrate its foreign policy of non-alignment. Their abject ignorance of India and its people was the root cause of strains in the U.S. India relationship.

On the other hand, the Soviet Union, though viewed India from a doctrinaire angle in the initial years of her independence, tactfully amended its stand and assumed a more friendly posture towards India after 1953. It realised the political realities of the time and approached India more constructively in her economic development. The historical similarities between the two countries also contributed to the policy of a rapprochment between the two. The divergence in perceptions about India in both superpowers, is one of the most important factors in helping to formulate their respective approaches to India.