CHAPTER - III

THE SOVIET APPROACH TO INDIA: 1947-1964: CONFLICTS AND COOPERATION
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INTRODUCTION

The qualitative changes brought about by the World War II led the Soviet Union to reformulate its foreign policy. Before 1947 the Soviet relations with India were limited to the extent that it espoused the cause of Indian liberation movement. In fact, the Soviets had little experience of dealing with Asian milieu. "The kind of unrealistic statements on situation in Asia and assertions of "revolutionary upsurge", one finds in abundance in the Soviet and Comintern literature of the inter-war period, were not entirely ideologically motivated but they were also manifestations of an ignorance gap."¹

The Soviets were expecting that China would play its historical role in triggering off a series of revolutions in Asia. But history proved that such an expectation was wrong. The preoccupation of the Soviet Union in the restoration of its war-torn economy and in evolving new strategies in face of the stark realities of Cold War, delayed its attention to the Asian scenario and the vacuum, thus, created, was tactfully filled up by the U.S. The capitalist camp was quick in bringing Asia into the orbit of its influence. Thus in the beginning the USSR had to embark her task of grappling with the realities of non-communit Asia. After the death of Stalin (1953) the Asian realities

became clearer to the Soviet Union. The Soviet diplomacy over-worked to arrange a series of visits to the USSR by the new leaders that emerged in the Asian milieu. The year 1955 was the year of visits to the Soviet Union by the leaders of India, Indonesia, Burma and North Vietnam, and in return, fact-finding missions of Bulganin and Khrushchev to India, Burma and Afghanistan. These Soviet leaders got convinced that with the attainment of political independence, what these countries need most is economic independence. It was this realisation on the part of the Soviet leaders that prompted them to draw newer strategies in respect of Asia’s aspirations for economic development, and, consequently, the economic aid programme was launched for the Third World, beginning with India and Afghanistan.

Hence the Soviet Policy towards India has its roots in the multi-dimensional nature of Asian realities which chiefly originated from their colonial past and contemporary world structure, charged with Superpowers’ rivalry. And it is this reality which underlines the historical importance of Soviet-Indian relations.

THE STALINIST BACKGROUND (1947-1953)

However, it does not mean that the start was free from any crisis whatsoever. During the fifties the Soviet approach was evidently not sympathetic and the main reason for this phenomenon was Asia’s classical nationalism, similar to what Europe witnessed during the 19th century with all its due consequences. The various factors that governed this passive phase were:
1. **India's internal situation**: Soon after the independence India faced several problems like the influx of refugees from Pakistan, the economic backwardness and misdirected leadership. Added to this was a hurried step of the Government of India in declaring Communist Party of India as illegal in 1948 and about 1,000 communists were detained without trial during 1948-51.  

2. **Inflow of U.S. Capital**: The hold of British capitalism over Indian economy was further strengthened by allowing the U.S. capital to penetrate in India through Point Four Agreement with the U.S. Government by 1950-51, the Indian market lost itself to the U.S. The new stage in the penetration of Anglo-American financial-capital in India was reached by the end of 1951 when agreements for establishing oil refineries in India were signed between the Indian Govt. and leading British and American oil trusts. The establishment of Indo-American Technical Cooperation Fund in June, 1952, brought 50 million dollar advance to India. On the other hand, India’s economic relations with the USSR were almost negligible. Towards the end of 1953 India’s trade with the Soviet bloc countries constituted only 3% of its total world trade. The promises of nationalisation of key industries and commitment to promote state sector in 1948 Industrial Policy Resolution of India remained on paper and Indian monopoly continued to grow unchecked.  

3. **Association with Commonwealth**: India’s ties with the Commonwealth meant approval of the British policies towards Western European Union against the Soviet Union. It was confirmed by the communique issued on 20th Oct., 1948: "In the  

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discussion, there was an agreement that the danger of war must be met by building up
the armed forces to deter any would-be aggressor and freedom must be safeguarded
not only by military defensive measures but also by advance social and economic
welfare.\textsuperscript{3} Nehru's support to U.S. Government in Burma, and his condemnation of
communism in Asia as "the enemy of nationalism in Asia" created suspicion in the minds
of the Soviet leaders. Further, Nehru's speech in the U.S. Congress (1949) in which he
said, "where freedom is menaced or justice threatened, or where aggression takes place,
we cannot be and shall not be neutral", was interpreted in the West as directed against
the Soviet Union.

4. The Korean Crisis: The Korean crisis was an acid test of India's Foreign
Policy. In 1950 when the Korean war broke out India had no hesitation in voting in
favour of the American resolution declaring North Korea, the aggressor. India's
support to the U.S. resolution was hailed by Anderson who assumed that India had
aligned herself on the American side in the world-wide contest between capitalism and
communism. This was quite an irritant to the Soviet Union, though, later Nehru
repaired the damages by explaining India's Korean policy in a personal communication
to Stalin. More so, in regard to the repatriation of prisoners of war, Krishna Menon's
formula was accepted by the entire General Assembly except the Soviet Union.
Vyshinsky, the fiery representative of the Soviet Union, denounced India for putting
forth this formula. "At best", he said, "you Indians are dreamers and idealists; at worst,

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{3} Quoted in I.Deutscher: "Stalin: a Political Biography, p. 581.
\end{itemize}
instruments of horrible American Policy" 4 But soon after the death of Stalin, the very formula which Vyshinsky had so fiercely denounced, was accepted and the war in Korea came to an end.

5. Internal Problems of the USSR: The tasks facing the USSR immediately after the War were stupendous. The national economy was completely disorganised; soon after the surrender of Germany and Japan. Churchill had raised the alarm about the "growing challenge and peril to civilization"; the peril of a "return of the Dark Ages". The image of red-hordes ready to swoop down upon the West began to haunt the Western capitals. People felt "as if atom bombs might start dropping on them before midnight". Then came the Truman Doctrine and few months later firmly institutionalised cold war began with the announcement of the Marshall Plan (1947) for Western Europe which left no option for Stalin than to take up the cold war challenge in full seriousness. He began to institutionalise the gains of victory in Eastern Europe. Economic consolidation of Hungary, Rumania, Bulgaria, Poland, East Germany and Czechoslovakia began, conventional army was strengthened and the U.S. monopoly of atom bomb was broken. The programme of Soviet reconstruction assumed urgency and the Soviet diplomats began to take intrasigent position in the UN.

All these problems of the USSR did not allow it to take keen interest in India’s problems.

6. The Cold War: The signing of the Brussels Treaty (1948) and the Atlantic

Pact (1949) posed a military threat to the USSR. By the close of the year 1949, the U.S.A. with the British help began to probe for entering into similar military arrangements in the Near and Middle East, close to South-East borderlands of the Soviet Union. Stalin tried to reconstruct the Soviet economy, ordered Berlin blockade, maintained an uncompromising stand in U.N., resisted Western pressure, revamped Soviet nuclear industry. In the thick of these developments, the USSR failed to grasp the historical significance of India becoming a free country in 1947. The early visits of Nehru, Tagore and a few activists of the Communist Party of India were in the nature of discovery and learning. They were neither diplomatic nor interpretative. Till then no diplomatic relations between the two were established. It was in San Francisco Conference in Sept., 1946 that Molotov was reported to have give simply "friendly ear to the subject of future exchange of ambassador".5

It was India's resolution and anti-colonial posture in the U.N. against the British stand that drew support from the Soviet delegation. So much so that John Foster Dulles, then a junior member of the US delegation to the U.N. made this pungent remark: "In India Soviet communism exercises a strong influence through the interim Hindu government".6

But India was the first non-European country which the USSR decided to establish full diplomatic relation. Pravda reproduced in full the official communiqué issued on April 13, 1947 with its proclaimed objectives of preserving and further strengthening of friendly relations between the USSR and India.7

5 The Statesman, September 30, 1946
7 New Times, No.16, April 18, 1947, p.15
7. Ukran's candidature for the U.N.: India was hustled by the USA and Britain into seeking a Security Council seat in Sept. 1947 in opposition to the candidature of Soviet Ukraine. The Soviet reaction to this contest was described by K.M. Pannikar: "Russia had become uncertain of India's attitude and was generally suspicious of our approach to questions of vital interest to her"\textsuperscript{8}

By Dec. 1947, Soviet Indologist, V.V. Balabushevich considered that the foreign and defence policies of India and Pakistan were not regarded in the Soviet Union as an integral part of Anglo-American machinations against the Soviet Union\textsuperscript{9}

8. India's role in the U.N.: In the UNO and its allied agencies, India's role of reconciliation and negotiation (e.g. the question of Indonesian freedom) differed widely from that of the USSR. Commenting on this 'Pravada' said: "The tone of this conference was set by a group of British dominions---Australia, India, New Zealand and Pakistan---and worked with the support of such British dependencies as Burma, Iraq, Yemen and others... The resolution which was adopted by the Conference did not reflect the spirit of the Conference as they were, in fact, the work of committees, composed of British dominions"\textsuperscript{10} On the other hand, the West lauded the Conference as "taking the wind out of Russian anti-imperialist sails", a comment which was registered in Moscow. Thus, during 1948-49 the Soviet Union viewed India against the cold war politicking. It maintained silence on Kashmir question throughout the year 1948. Even Gandhi's death passed unnoticed in the Soviet Union, except a small news item in Pravada"\textsuperscript{11}

\textsuperscript{8} K.M. Pannikar, op. cit., pp 10-11
\textsuperscript{9} V. Balabushevich: "India posle razdela", Mirovoe Khoziastva i Mirovaia Politika" No.12, Dec. 1947, p.46
\textsuperscript{10} Pravda, Jan 30, 1947
Like-wise, the policies of the Indian government came under fire in Soviet journals and newspapers. India was viewed as a country where national bourgeoisie are in league with Anglo-American conspiracies.\textsuperscript{12}

9. The Tibet Issue: India’s policy evoked critical reference in Soviet press,\textsuperscript{13} when India, in late autumn of 1950 exchanged sharp notes over China’s military action in Tibet. It was at this time that the Soviet Journal 'New Times' commented on India’s policy of neutrality: "It does not change the basic fact that in the present days conditions, the neutrality... profits only the U.S. and British imperialists."\textsuperscript{14}

10 Easing of Tension: Curiously enough, the Soviet Union noted with satisfaction India’s growing relation with the emergence of Communist China and its recognition by her in 1949. The Soviet appreciation was visible in the speeches of the Indian and Soviet delegates to the U.N. over the questions of colonial policies and racism.

In 1951, there began a congenial environment for the development of favourable approach of the Soviet Union towards India when the latter refused to attend the San Francisco Conference on the Japanese Peace Treaty and sign it. The storm over India-China relations was also blown off to a great extent. As a result, a barter trade agreement was signed between the Soviet Union and India. The first Soviet grain shipment arrived in Bombay.\textsuperscript{15} In 1952 the Soviet delegate for the first time broke

\textsuperscript{12} New Times, No.32, 1948.
\textsuperscript{13} New Times, No.43, 1950, p.28
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{15} V.P. Nikhmin op.cit., pp 176-177
silence over the Kashmir issue in the Security Council and attacked Anglo-American bloc for interference in Kashmir.\textsuperscript{16}

By 1951 the Soviet Press sensed Pakistan joining the U.S. sponsored military alliances and made no bones about the adverse effect of such an alliance on the security of the USSR.

Further in 1952, Russia's participation in the International Industrial Exhibition in Bombay, Soviet ambassador Novikov's readiness to trade with India in hard currency or rupee on barter basis and India's participation in the International Economic Conference in Moscow, Stalin's audience to the Indian ambassador, Dr. Radhakrishnan and CPI's participation in the first General Election, were symptomatic of the wind of change blowing over Soviet Policy towards India.

On the other side, by 1952, the Indian public opinion began to show resentment over India's excessive dependence on U.S., primarily as a result of their undisguised support to Pakistan over the Kashmir question. Internally, the pressure of the C.P.I. members and the press prompted Nehru to explain the government policy in the Parliament on June 12, 1952:

"Now it is perfectly true that our economic and some other bonds have been in the last few years more with the U.K., the U.S.A. and other countries of the West... We could not live in isolation. We wanted certain things. We could not get them from elsewhere. We are perfectly prepared to deal with the Soviet Union or other

\textsuperscript{16} Official Records of the Security Council of the U.N. meeting, 570 pp.13,15
countries.. But the fact remains that it is simpler for us, easier for us, to get things from America or England or France or other countries at the moment".17

The growing awareness of anti-imperialism in India was noted by Malenkov in the 19th Congress of the CPSU in Oct. 1952 and Stalin, in his theoretical formulations hinted at the possibility of coexistence between the socialist and capitalist camp. These developments were indicative of Russia’s favourable attitude towards India’s independent stance. Stalin’s meeting, two weeks before his death with the Indian ambassador, KPS Menon on Feb. 18, 1953 further strengthened this impression. In Aug., 1953 Soviet Premier Malenkov expressed satisfaction over India’s role in ending the Korean war. He said: "The two countries will grow stronger and develop a spirit of friendly cooperation".18 The signing of the Indo-Soviet Trade Agreement in Dec. 1953 providing for rupee-payment was a definite indication that the passive phase of Indo-Soviet cooperation was over and the groundwork for their new and active phase had begun.

Which country was responsible for this passive phase-- India or the Soviet Union? The fact of the matter was that much of Soviet assessment of Indian foreign policy and Indian society was nearer to the full truth than a half truth. During 1947-50 India’s foreign policy had no practical relevance to its proclaimed objective of acting as a third force, in between the two superpowers, while the internal situation in India did not warrant for abruptly ending the historical continuity of

17 Lok Sabha Debates, pt.2, Vol.2, No.1 Cols, 1662-63
18 Pravda, Aug 9, 1953.
relationship with the U.K. True, indeed, that during this period, on a number of occasions, Prime Minister Nehru had stressed the inevitability of following such a policy in internal and external matters and also had shown appreciation of the need for closer Indo-Soviet relation.

The point, however, was not what Nehru said in his speeches but concrete facts of the Indian situation of that time and they did have a preponderance in favour of India being closer to the Western bloc. The realisation of this state of affairs have been known, and Nehru himself had explained this more than once. But the truth was that India was not favourably disposed to developing Indo-Soviet relation. In fact, Nehru had shrewdly realised that during the formative phase of Indian polity, it was imperative that the internal class forces in India must be balanced and kept in check. Hence there was no option that to follow, at least in theory, a neutral foreign policy between the Superpowers as a formal proclamation of adherence to either of the two blocs might have upset this precarious balance between internal class force in India and between the dominant right wing trends and the expanding left wing forces. In a speech on March 22, 1949 Nehru eluded to this factor: "Any attempt on our part, i.e. the government of the day here, to go too far in one direction would create difficulties in our country. It would be resented and would not be helpful to us or to any other country."19

Nehru was also fully conscious of the raison d'être of Stalin's policy towards India as mainly determined by the exigencies of the Cold War. When K.P.S. Menon

19 J.L. Nehru: "Independence and After", New Delhi, 1950, p. 257
showed some sheets of extracts from Radio Moscow broadcast rebuking India as a tool of British imperialism, Nehru said: "The heat is not against us, it is against the British."\textsuperscript{20}

Besides, there were psychological barriers prevailing in the Indian Foreign Ministry. Referring to these, K.P.S. Menon wrote: "Some Indians still suffered from the fear, a relic of the British days, that the USSR was out to turn the world red by hook or crook."\textsuperscript{21}

Yet the Soviet leadership did look at India as she appeared from Moscow. Nehru’s explanations and clarification on foreign policy and India’s internal compulsions, however, appeared irrelevant to the Soviet Union in the face of the most important issue, western threat to USSR. India’s image in Moscow coincided with the reality of what she really was during the period 1947-50. In fact, what Nehru said, carried little conviction in Moscow which was in the thick of cold war.

But that does not mean that Soviet Union was totally indifferent or insensitive to India’s internal and external policies and by 1950 they began to gradually understand and appreciate India’s historical compulsions. "Hence the Soviet Union may be accused at its worst of viewing India as she looked from Moscow, and its best, they may be hailed for not entirely failing to notice favourable changes in India’s policies at home and abroad and for responding if not always favouring and matching, to them even in spite of Stalin and the fury of the Cold War."\textsuperscript{22}

\textsuperscript{20} HVR Ienger: "Evolution of Soviet Attitude toward India", the Indian Express, Jan 29, 1966
\textsuperscript{21} KPS Menon: "Lenin Through Indian Eyes", New Delhi, 1970, p.67-68
\textsuperscript{22} Zafar Imam : "Ideology & Reality in Soviet Policy in Asia," New Delhi, 1975, p. 55
From 1950 onwards, the Soviet Union's approach to India began to show some awareness of the purposeful role of free India in the comity of nations. And when India did manage to inaugurate a new era in her internal and external policies from mid 1950 onwards, the Soviets responded. Events amply prove that even before Stalin's death, an active phase in Indo-Soviet relations had begun.

Hence the onus of responsibility for a lukewarm approach of the Soviet Union toward India, must be shared equally by both the countries-- India, for being what she was during the early phase of her independence, and the Soviet Union for what she did not believe in words for she was conditioned to watch the actions and not mere words. It is, in fact, the shift in India's internal and external policies marked since mid 1950, that initiated the process of change in Soviet attitude toward India.

POST-STALIN PERIOD OF RAPPROCHEMENT (1954-56)

From 1954 a new phase of friendship and cooperation between India and the USSR began. The factors which determined this phase were:

1. Foundation of Mutual Understanding: The visit of a cultural delegation of the USSR in Jan. 1954 was followed by the willingness of the Soviet government at the Sixth meeting of the UN Economic Commission for Asia and Far East, held in Cylon, to provide technical aid "with no political strings attached to Asian nations." 23 The Indian and Soviet journals began to recall the importance that Lenin attached to national revolutionary movement in India". 24 But the great landmark was the

23. Pravda, Feb 8, 1954
24. Pravda, April 21, 1954
Indo-China Conference held in Geneva in 1954, the attitude of the Soviet delegation towards Indian delegation was notable. Both Molotov and Chou-En-lai consulted Krishna Menon and encouraged India to play a role of an honest broker. Inspired by this changed and favourable attitude of Soviet and Chinese delegation, Prime Minister Nehru’s invitation to Chou-En-lai to visit India was a visible expression of his approval. On the Soviet side there was a general appreciation felt at India’s helpful role during the Indo-China Conference. Molotov Proposed India’s name for the Chairmanship of Neutral Nations Commission to supervise the ceasefire agreement in Indo-China and "paid tribute to India’s growing role in maintaining peace in the world." 25

2. Visit of Chou-En-lai: Another landmark was the visit of Chou-En-lai to India in the summer of 1954. The Soviet Press hailed the visit and the communiqué was issued after the visit. The Soviet leaders attached great significance to the "Panch Sheel". Commenting on it, Pravda wrote: "There can be no doubt that the acceptance of these important principles by the Asian as well as other countries would diminish the possibilities of war, serve to lessen tension in world community and improve the valuable cooperation between the countries." 26 It was a clear indication that the Soviet Union was moving towards the position of accepting not only coexistence but of developing friendly relations. Later, in Feb 1955, the Supreme Soviet issued an unprecedented declaration recommending the adoption of the Five Principles (Panch Sheel) by all countries.

3. Cultural Exchanges: During 1954 wide coverage of the Soviet press of the

25. Pravda, April 30, 1954
26. Pravda, July 1, 1954
important statements of Soviet leaders paying tribute to India, renting of traditional slogans—'May the friendship and cooperation between The peoples of India and the Soviet Union grow and strengthen for the protection of peace in the world; presence of prominent Soviet leaders in the programme of Indian music by a visiting Indian cultural team at the Bolshoi Theatre, exchange of about ten delegations and exchange of military attache between Moscow and New Delhi— all underlined the changing Soviet approach to India.

4. Cooperation on Global Issues: On global issues like disarmament, representation of Peoples' Republic of China, in the U.N.; liquidation of the colonial system, East-West dialogue, opposition to military pacts and alliances—there was a complete support of the Soviet Union to India. So much so that the shower of praise coming from Moscow embarrassed Pt. Nehru for it might not be construed as a compromise of India’s policy of non-alignment. Hence, to counterbalance his criticism of the U.S. policies towards Pakistan and growing praise of India in the Soviet Union, Pt. Nehru made a pointed reference to the Cominform: "It is something like an old Cominform in a different garb and its activities have cost a great deal of apprehension and disturbance in various countries and nations." 27

Moreover, the CPI became an object of ridicule; was called "obsolete and reactionary" and charged with "extra-territorial loyalty."

The reasons for Nehru's restraint response to Soviet overtures were thus not far to seek. In 1953 he made efforts to improve India's relations with the U.S. But during his visit to India in June, 1953, the U.S. Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, was

convinced that this country was not neutral in the conflict between democracy and totalitarianism. Characteristically enough, the worsening of Indo-American relations had a relative influence of India's warmer attitude to communist countries.

5. Economic support: On Feb 2, 1955 the Soviet Union signed an agreement with India providing a credit of Rs.647.4 million for the construction of India's first public sector steel plant at Bhilai. The credit was at the lowest interest rate so far. Molotov, speaking in the Supreme Soviet declared: "The people of the USSR desire from the bottom of their hearts, economic progress of this ancient and great country."  

It was followed by a close consultation and mutual agreement between the two countries.

6. Role in the Third World: The Soviet leadership noted India's role in the historic Afro-Asian Conference in April, 1955 with great satisfaction. Nehru declared in the Lok Sabha: "Whatever views may be held... on relationship that may exist between the Soviet Union and them (Soviet bloc countries) they could in no way be called colonies; nor could their alleged problems come under the classification of colonialism."

7. Nehru's visit to the USSR: Though Nehru on the eve of his departure for the USSR on May 31, 1955 made some crucial remarks like "Cominform is not compatible with the principle of non-interference" and "The Warsaw Pact added to world tension and thereby more difficult to seek peaceful solutions" but Moscow extended an

29. Pravda, April 17, 1955
30. Lok Sabha Debates, pt 2. Vol IV, No.53, cols.6962-6974
31. Hindu, June 1, 1955
32. Ibid.
unprecedented welcome to him. Nehru had still lingering doubts and suspicions about the bonafides of the Soviet Union and he just wanted to see, listen and understand. But Moscow accorded a touching reception by installing the statute of Afanassi Nikitian (the Russian traveller who visited India in the 15th century) by publishing laudatory biographical notes on Nehru and by featuring articles on India. In fact, "Nehru had become," recalled KPS Menon, "a household word by the time he set his foot in the Soviet Union."\textsuperscript{33}

The joint communique issued after the visit included problems of bilateral relationship between the two countries, affirmation of the Five Principles, the acknowledgement of "each country following the system which is moulded by its own genius", traditions and environment should be no bar to cooperation; faith in coexistence and peace, mutual cooperation in economic, cultural and scientific fields.\textsuperscript{34} The Communique was a great personal triumph for Nehru.

8. The Bulganin-Khrushchev Visit to India: On 18th Nov., 1955, Bulganin-Khrushchev visit to India was a great event in the history of the Indo-Soviet relations. The major theme of their speeches and statements were: (i) both stressed that the countries of different social, political and economic systems can coexist and develop; (ii) they condemned the policy of interference in the internal affairs of other countries; (iii) they accused the reactionary circles of trying to slander that the Soviet Union was determined to export communism to other countries; (iv) they emphasised

\textsuperscript{33} KPS Menon: "Flying Troika", p.114
\textsuperscript{34} India-USSR Declaration: Foreign Policy of India, Texts and Documents, 1947-64 Lok Sabha Secretariat, New Delhi, 1966, pp.486-89
the friendly nature of relationship, based on solid foundation of identity of views on the
great issues of war and peace; (v) they commended the principles of Panch Sheel; (vi)
they focussed attention on the identity of Soviet and Indian views on such issues as
opposition to U.S. sponsored military pacts and foreign military bases; (vii) they
patiently explained the Soviet foreign policy, and in particular the circumstances
leading to signing of the Warsaw Pact; (viii) they not only paid tributes to India's
growing peaceful role in world affairs and affirmed India's sovereignty and her foreign
policy but also declared unequivocal support to vital issues of India's interests--
Kashmir, Goa, US-UK military pacts and (ix) they expressed their full readiness to help
India in her economic reconstruction without any strings attached. "On our part", said
Bulganin, "we are prepared to share our experience in the construction of industrial
enterprises, electric power stations, hydroelectrical projects and utilisation of the
atomic power for peaceful purposes." 35

The themes of Nehru's speeches were: (i) while India values Soviet friendship
and cooperation, she would approach to world affairs as shaped by her own traditions
and needs and (ii) India sought to achieve her objectives (a socialist structure of society)
entirely by peaceful means as she abhorred violence.

Both the leaders conspicuously avoided even an implied comment on the
internal political situation in India. The Communique also omitted the Soviet support
to India's stand on Kashmir and Goa at the instance of India, though it was
unequivocally declared by both Bulganin and Khrushchev. Nehru's comments about

35. Hindu, Jan 4, 1956
Soviet support on Kashmir were: "some very good things" and "the correct things" and "we are naturally pleased." 36 Later, he emphatically said that the statements of the Soviet leaders were "legally, constitutionally and practically completely correct." 37

9. Admiration for Gandhi: A congenial receptive environment was created by Bulganin's speech in Bombay on Nov. 4: "You had an outstanding leader (Gandhi) who did much for your country. We, Lenin's pupils, do not share Gandhi's philosophical views, but we consider him an outstanding leader who did much for the development of peace loving attitude in your people and for the struggle for independence." 38 Thus Bulganin's correction, therefore, was timely and augured well for Indo-Soviet friendship and cooperation. Here it is pertinent to point out that the academician E. Zhukov, the well-known orientalist, who in his earlier writings had branded Gandhi as "reactionary", wrote an article on "Gandhiji's Role in History" in the "New Times" coinciding 20th Congress. He admitted that most Soviet orientalists, himself including, had an incorrect assessment of Gandhi's activities in the past and stated that "despite certain defects, Gandhism was genuinely popular anti-imperialist movement." 39

10. The Historical Compulsions for Friendship: What were the historical compulsions of the Soviet Union and India that culminated into the second phase of their relationship? The answer needs a dispassionate examination of these factors.

(A) The Soviet Factors: The Soviet factors were characterised by their internal

36. Ibid,
37. Hindu, April 3, 1956
38. Visit of Friendship, p.65
and external problems. Internally, soon after Stalin’s death, the Soviet society looked forward for a new era of liberalisation and humanisation of Russia’s Iron Age. As a result, rationalisation of economy, expansion of agriculture, reinvigoration of the Party and streamlining of government machinery were some of the important issues with which the collective Soviet leadership grappled with. They could not, therefore, devote much of their time and thought to their foreign policy. Externally, in the U.S. the fury of the Cold War continued. The establishment of SEATO (1953) and the Baghdad Pact (1954) were realities of the Cold War. The Soviet Union, though explored her first hydrogen bomb, was not sure of her ability to match the U.S. in the production of nuclear weapons till 1954. However, in 1955 she caught up with the U.S. and launched a drive to bring about a thaw in the Cold War.

It was, thus, in the logic of things that while formulating her own global strategy, the Soviet Union should look towards the Asian countries and particularly to India because (i) since the mid 1950 India’s foreign policy had registered the point in Moscow that it was mainly concerned with peace, (ii) geopolitical considerations and India’s size, being a neighbour, dictated the Soviet priorities in the light of the U.S. strategies in Pakistan, (iii) India’s eagerness to reconstruct her economy and get herself freed from the bondage of Anglo-American bloc and (iv) the Indian government’s desire to develop friendly relations with the USSR and untenable position of the CPI.

The Soviet Union approached to India (i) by laying emphasis on cultural relations, (ii) by promoting trade and commerce and (iii) by diplomatically, promoting personal contacts and exchange of visits between the leaders of the two countries.
(B) The Indian Factors: There were two main factors for India's favourable response to Soviet overtures: Firstly, the growing resentment and anger in the U.S. about India's foreign policy and its efforts to bring Cold War into Asia, called for a slight reorientation in India's foreign policy which manifested itself in the desire to promote wider and friendly relations with the Soviet Union. Secondly, India was in great need of economic assistance but her pride did not allow her to take it 'with strings' or 'on unfavourable terms'. Her experience with the U.S. motivated her to accept Russian aid which had no preconditions whatsoever.

These factors gave a new turn to the Soviet approach towards India.

THE EARLY KHRUSHCHEV ERA (1956-1959)

The third phase of Soviet Union's approach to India was an eventful phase characterised by (1) Suez Crisis, (2) Hungarian uprising (3) 20th Congress of the CPSU, (4) Dulles' visit to India, (5) the U.S. economic help to India under PL 480 programme, (6) Nehru's scathing criticism of communism, (7) 21st Congress of the CPSU and (8) Friendly approach of the USSR towards India.

The Soviet approach to India stood well the stress and strains of the two great international crisis in 1956--- the Suez and Hungary.

In the Suez crisis the tripartite attack on Egypt by Britain, France and Israel evoked community of interests and close consultation, mutual support and appreciation of each other's moves. As both the USSR and India were firmly committed to the
liquidation of the colonial system and its staging a come-back in for and against the use of force in solving disputes among nations, this crisis did not come in the way of these two countries. The USSR was all praise for the role played by Nehru and India’s representatives in the U.N.O.

However, the gains registered by the Indo-Soviet relations as a result of the Suez crisis were somewhat offset by the Hungarian crisis which came close on the heels of events in the Suez in 1956. The Hungarian crisis was the first major event involving traditional and vital geo-political and ideological interests of the Soviet Union on which India had to take a stand. As far as the Soviet Union was concerned India’s stand on the Hungarian uprising had all the hall-marks of a test case of non-alignment reaching to vital Soviet interests. Not that the Soviet Union would not have been pleased by India’s support to her policies and actions during the Hungarian uprising, but it appeared that the Soviet expectations were not high as far as India’s response to them was concerned.

Indeed, there was no anger or resentment in the Soviet Union over India’s stand on the Hungarian question; on the contrary, there was some satisfaction at India’s initial restrained responses. These were confirmed by the facts that no criticism, even indirect one, was ever made in public by the Soviet government or the press of India’s role in the crisis, and that the Soviet veto on Kashmir in the UN Security Council was cast in India’s favour three months after the Soviet troops brought the situation under control in Hungary. From the Soviet viewpoint India’s stand on the Hungarian uprising, thus, could not have been better; hence Soviet relations with India remained friendly inspite of this crisis.
The 20th Congress of the CPSU (1956) made laudatory references to India. Khrushchev said: "The great Indian Republic had made a big contribution to strengthening peace in Asia and the whole world". 40 He laid down that one of the main tasks confronting Party in the sphere of foreign policy was "to consolidate untiringly the bonds of friendship and cooperation with the Republic of India." 41 Thus the in-built suspicion of India's leadership over the bonafides of the Soviet leaders were set at rest by the decisions of the 20th Congress. 42 Stressing the import of the Congress on the growth of USSR-India relation, the then Indian ambassador to Moscow, KPS Menon, in a speech broadcast said:

"In the past certain distortions stood in the way of our relationship. These obstacles now have been removed by the courageous decisions taken at the 20th Congress of the CPSU in regard to certain fundamental principles. Among these decisions is the recognition that there can be different varieties of socialism; that violence is not essential for the transformation of society and that parliamentary institutions can be a means to the establishment of socialism. These decisions are welcome to India." 43

Nehru used this opportunity for correcting the imbalance in India's image felt in the West by the fast moving developments in Indo-Soviet relations. Dulles, during his visit to India "complimented India on her contribution to world peace." 44 In 1956,

40. Report of the 20th Congress of the CPSU, p.31
41. Ibid., p.47
42. Ibid., p.47
43. Foreign Policy Record, New Delhi. Vol II, No.6, June 1956, p.93
44. Hindu, March 11, 1956
the Indo-US Agricultural Commodities Agreement under the U.S. Public Law 480 was signed. Parallel to this, the Soviet commitment to provide economic aid for India’s heavy industry, and that too, in public sector of national economy, eminently suited to Nehru’s own conception of socialism. The USSR assured a "credit of Rs. 63 crores for the first year of the Second Five Year Plan out of Rs.800 crores of external assistance."45 On April 2, 1956, the Soviet Union had already signed a contract for Soviet equipments for the steel plant to be built up at Bhilai.

In Aug. 1958, Nehru bluntly criticised communism in his article "The Basic Approach" in which he clarified some of the basic concepts of his views on socialistic pattern of society. The Soviet leaders were sensitive to it. A Sharp rebuttal of Nehru's views emanated from Soviet sources. Pavel Yudin, a former Soviet ambassador to China, under a signed article in "World Marxist Review" published in December 1958 sharply countered Nehru's views about Socialism and Marxism.46 He said: "Nehru's socialism should not be confused with real socialism, the socialism being built in a number of countries and which is already a reality in others."47 He concluded: "India has still much to do to abolish the remnants of feudalism in the countryside."48 He assured Nehru that despite "our ideological differences, we are united by a fundamental and decisive factor of our time-- the struggle for peace..."49

45 Second Five Year Plan--- A Draft Outline, Govt. of India, 1955, p.104
46 "J.L. Nehru and Academician Yudin on the Basic Approach" Communist Party Publication, New Delhi, 1958, p.4
47 Ibid., p.32
48 Ibid., p.33
49 Ibid., p.47
Later, in the concluding speech to the 21st Congress of the CPSU, Khrushchev viewed the ideological orientation of the leaders of the emergent nations. He said: "Many leaders in these countries say they want to build socialism. True. They say ‘communism' with difficulty and it is not always clear what they mean by socialism. But one thing is unquestionable. These leaders look with goodwill upon the socialist countries. They do not regard the socialist countries as antagonists... That is why the socialist countries have good friendly relations with these states and normal economic relations are developing between them."\(^{50}\) Obviously among the Asian leaders, it was in reply to Nehru’s criticism of communism.

The main reasons as to why Nehru indulged in such theorizing about the Soviet system and Communism as an ideology were: (i) to counter the domestic pressure---notable success of the CPI in 1957 General Election in Kerala and its opposition to his domestic policies, (ii) to counterbalance the U.S. economic aid and investment in India ($ 175 million. in 1958 and $ 300 million. under PL- 480) and (iii) to neutralise the resentment of the West over Nehru’s attitude to the Soviet Union.

Thus, throughout the years 1957 and 1958, the Soviet Union, inspite of India’s stand on Suez and Hungary and Nehru’s criticism of Soviet system and Marxism, the Soviet leaders reaffirmed the continuity of the Soviet policy to the emergent nations, including India.

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\(^{50}\) Report on the 21st Congress of the CPSU, Moscow. p.95
THE LATE KHRUSHCHEV ERA (1959-69)

This phase was very significant for it witnessed two historical events of great consequence---the Indo-China Crisis and the open breach between two communist countries---China and the USSR. Both these events influenced the Soviet approach to India to a great deal.

Characteristically enough, the Soviet leadership endeavoured to find a solution of the impending crisis by ensuring the continuity of its hitherto followed policy in Asia without reexamining its theoretical framework. But in this process Soviet Asian policy as well as the USSR-India relation were confronted with an unprecedented crisis which eventually led to the end of a well defined phase of the beginning and a steady development of Soviet policy in Asia and finally to its qualitative transformation to a truly Asiatic character. China played a crucial role in such a transformation of Soviet Asian policy. The brief period in Soviet approach to India from the late summer of 1959 to the mid summer of 1960, assumed a new significance.

The fissures in the Sino-Indian relationship beset the Soviet Union with confusion and almost total disarray. On the one hand, Communist China's overt nationalism was difficult to explain in ideological terms while, on the other hand, its rejection of Soviet assessment of the purposeful role of non-alignment as well as non-capitalist path of development posed a challenge to theory itself. The Soviet problem was, firstly, that the basic contradiction with hitherto between the socialist and imperialist camps, yet, by the mid 1959, it looked more apparent than real. Secondly, in this basic contradiction the non-aligned countries of the Third World were
considered to be potentially capable of being led to non-capitalist path of development with active help and cooperation from the socialist camp, yet one of its leading members had become unequivocal in standing up against the bourgeois national aspirations of one of the main actors in the comity of Afro-Asian and Latin American nations. And finally, the antagonistic vibrations generated by the imperialist bloc were steadily being matched by the originating from a segment, and an important one, of the socialist bloc in so far as the strategy and tactics of Soviet policy in Asia was concerned.

Soviet response to these problems were marked by a cautious approach to contain them. On the one hand it endeavoured at localising the Indo-China border dispute as manifestation of antagonism between classical bourgeois nationalism (India) and its accursed past, to use Lenin’s phrase in another context, yet relevant to Communist China; and on the other hand, it had the objective of solving the crisis by quiet diplomatic efforts. Both these apparently contradictory responses naturally resulted in divergent approaches.

To India, the Soviet leadership stressed the continuity of support and help through increasing economic aid and by growing convergence of international aims and objectives of India and the Soviet Union. To China, it emphasised the fundamental homogeneity of interests, yet it sought to impress upon the Chinese leadership to diffuse the issue.

The cumulative thrust of the Soviet policy was directed at minimising the danger of armed conflict between India and China and maximising the possibility for a negotiated settlement. So long as the Soviet leadership hoped of exercising some
influence over the Chinese leadership against the background of growing differences between them over other vital issues, Soviet diplomacy was active in impressing upon India the need for a negotiated settlement with China. In this endeavour, the Soviet leaders maintained a posture of neutrality in public, which, in private, they conveyed to the Indian leadership the imperative need for a negotiated settlement so as to reinforce their leverage with China. From Aug., 1959 till the failure of Nehru- Chou meeting in Delhi during April, 1960, Soviet attitude in essence was based on the assumption that the shadow of China over Soviet policy towards Asia in general and India in particular, must not linger but it should fade out.

During the first few months of the crisis Soviet leaders were usually active behind the scene in promoting their policies in India, while Soviet news media studiously maintained neutrality by giving publicity to both India and Chinese version of the crisis. The Tass commentary, made public in Sept., 9, was the first definite indication of emerging Soviet policy. Of particular significance in the commentary was the wider view of the crisis within the general framework of East-West relations, particularly the emerging dimensions of peaceful co-existence of the two opposing social systems. In other words, the frame of reference of classical clash of national interests was not yet adopted.

As quite Soviet diplomacy and persuasive ideological debate gradually reached a dead end against the solid wall of Indian and Chinese nationalism, coupled with the sudden and sad demise of the "Spirit of Camp David", the Soviet leadership was constrained to view the India-China crisis more and more in terms of the classical clash
of national interests between the two giants in Asia. Yet special relationship with both
the parties in dispute and China's rejection of the theory of clash of nationalism added
further complexity to such a simplified view of the crisis. And thus, gradually by the
early summer of 1960, the Soviet leadership had to settle down for a long drawn-out
exercise of attracting India towards the Soviet Union and of parting of ways with China;
thereby it had to cope with a new antagonist verifiable in its hitherto much simpler
ideological paradigm of ideology and reality equation.

The year 1959 added a new dimension to Soviet approach to India as China's
occupation of Indian area continued. Significantly, growing tension between China and
Russia also came to the surface in the same year. China, thus, became a source of
common concern to both the countries and this became an important and dominating
factor in the development of India's relations with the Soviet Union since then.

However, it would be incorrect to assess that the containment of China was a
new phenomenon as Brecher points out:

"No Indian statesman can ignore the compelling fact that
the two great powers of the communist world stand at the gate of the
Indian sub-continent."

Following the open breach between Peking and Moscow and the consequent
emergence of China as a rival to the Soviet Union, fundamental changes had taken
place. These changes altered the inter-triangle relationships and had affected the levels
of interaction of the three concerned powers.

51 Brecher, M.: "India's Foreign Policy," New York, 1957, p.4
One of the basic assumptions of India's foreign policy was that the communist world is not only monolithic but hopes must be placed on its ultimate disintegration. Nehru greeted China's rise to power. In Dec., 1950 he stated in the Parliament: "China is in a position to shape her own destiny and that is a great thing. It is true that she is controlled by the communists as Russia is. It would be interesting to know whether or not their type of communism is the same as Russia's, how she will develop and how close the association between China and Russia will be."  

As a result of growing Indo-China rivalry and conflict, Nehru had anticipated that the USSR would look upon India as a potential ally against the expansionist China. During his visit to the US Nehru said: "Khrushchev sees India as a future bulwark against China and it is in the Soviet interest to help restrain Peking."  

In mid 1959 border clashes took place between India and China. After maintaining a long silence on the Sino-Indian conflict, the Soviet Union came out with a cryptic statement on 8th Sept. 1959 in the Tass. According to it, the USSR had friendly relations with both China and India, built respectively on "fraternal ties" of international socialism and "friendly" collaboration in accordance with the idea of peaceful coexistence. It expressed the hope that "India and China with both of whom Soviet Union enjoyed friendly relations, would settle their disputes peacefully." A month later in the Supreme Soviet, it called "for friendly negotiations for solving the disputed frontier question." A week later Khrushchev termed the entire dispute "sad and

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52 Nehru: "India's Foreign Policy," p.52
53 Harrison, S.: "Troubled India and her Neighbours", Foreign Affairs, Vol.43, No.2, Jan 1965, p.325
54 The Hindu, 12 Sept. 1959
55 Pravda, 1, Nov. 1959
"stupid" in as much as the area under consideration had no strategic importance nor was it even habitable." 56  

The Soviet press adopted a completely neutral stance towards the incident. But on 22 Dec., 1959, the Soviet Union departed from its normal procedure and for the first time published an Indian allegation without working for the Chinese rebuttal." 57  

While the Soviets had not expressed any opinion publicly on the merits of the dispute, they had not supported the Chinese stand. The Government. of India realised the significance of the Soviet attitude and Nehru commented on the Tass statement: "Considering everything, the statement was a fair one and an unusual one for the Soviet Government. to sponsor." 58 Krishna Menon too stressed that "Soviet Union had come out speaking about peaceful settlement between the Communist and non-Communist countries." 59 Dutt pointed out that "Indo-Soviet relations strengthened and not weakened as a result of the conflict between Communist China and India over the border issue." 60  

Comparing the attitudes of China and the USSR, Nehru told a press conference on 21st Oct:  

"I consider the USSR first of all as having reached normalcy after a revolution. Secondly, I consider the USSR a territorially  

56 Ibid.  
58 The Hindu, 12th Sept. 1959  
59 Ibid  
satisfied power... But China has not gathered over the first flush of its revolutionary mentality." 61

Further speaking in the Indian Parliament Pt. Nehru declared: "there is a marked difference between the broad approach of the USSR to world problems and the Chinese approach. I do not think there is any country in the world which is more anxious for peace than USSR". 62

The approach of the Soviet Union was put to test when hostilities broke out between India and China in Oct. 1962. The Soviet press maintained a complete silence for two days. On 25th Oct, both Pravda and Izvestia praised in the editorials the 3-point Chinese proposals of Oct. 24 as "constructive" even after India's outright rejection of them and implicitly blamed India for its insistence on the vacating of 'China's aggression' for its territory before agreeing to negotiate with China. The initial Soviet reaction caused widespread dismay in India. However, it is worth noting that the Chinese aggression took place in the context of the Cuban crisis when the Soviet Union was locked in a very grave confrontation with the U.S. This must have influenced the Soviet decision. Because, as the Cuban crisis began to recede, indication of Soviet Union taking a "neutral" stance began to emerge.

The second editorial of Pravda avoided any direct reference either to the McMohan Line or the Chinese proposals, nor did it take offence over the Indian instance that before agreeing to negotiations, the Chinese forces should withdraw.

61 The Hindu, Oct. 12, 1959
62 Lok Sabha Debates, Pt. 2, Vol.25, No.10, 27th Nov. 1959, col. 2206
behind the Line of actual control. It only spoke of ceasefire and started negotiations."

The same editorial described India as a "great force in the large group of sovereign states actively participating against communism for peace and international security."\(^{63}\)

It had an electric effect on Indian people. Nehru expressed confidence that the Soviet Union would fulfil its precious pledges of assistance, including the consignment of MIG scheduled for delivery in Dec. The authoritative and comprehensive address of Khrushchev in the Supreme Soviet on 12 Dec. 1962 further established that Soviet approach to India on Sino-Indian problem was quite constructive. He said: "Since the Chinese are withdrawing, would it not have been better not to have moved forward at all from the position on which they stood at that time."\(^{64}\) The Soviet stand not only adhered to neutrality but it advanced an ideological attack against the entire Chinese political and ideological standpoint and, of course, its unsocialist attitude towards nonaligned India. Thus, the Indo-Soviet friendship which was put on trial during the Sino-Indian confrontation not only survived but also emerged stronger.

This period witnessed further consolidation of cordiality between the USSR and India. New agreements were signed to extend trade, technical assistance and cultural relations.

Welcoming the Indian President in June 1960, the Soviet President said: "Warm friendship and wide co-operation between our governments and peoples is very bright evidence of the fact that nothing can stop the irresistible longings of the progressive

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63 Pravda, 5 Nov. 1962
forces from establishing new relationship based on principles of peace and coexistence between countries." 65

During this phase, the USSR continued its efforts to include India in Committees and Conferences concerning disarmament. It was largely at the initiative of the USSR that the ten-member Disarmament Committee appointed by the General Assembly had to include eight uncommitted nations including India. Khrushchev attached great importance to India in disarmament talks. He wrote: "The Soviet Government views highly the contribution of the Government of India in strengthening the force of peace-loving governments and people and helping the realisation of the great object in life. Your statements, Mr. Nehru, in supporting the general and complete disarmament, imbied with the conviction that the earlier solution of this problem would help remove tension in mankind, has always been receiving understanding and respect in our country." 66 The Soviet Union promptly supported the Test Ban Treaty in 1962 which was the handiwork of eight nonaligned delegations and which had the imprint of many crucial ideas advanced by the Indian delegation.

The Soviet approach to Goa was in complete accord with India's stand and was happy at the resolute action of India to do away with the outposts of colonialism in its territory. 67

65 Hindu. 21 June, 1960
67 Keesings Contemporary Archives, p. 186
When Pakistan asked the Security Council to reconsider Kashmir issue in 1963, the Soviet delegate pointed out that "no new situation had arisen in Kashmir which warranted any fresh discussion by the Council."  

To sum up, during this phase the Soviet Union gave an unqualified support on Goa operation, the use of Soviet veto on Kashmir issue, economic and military assistance and identities of views between Moscow and New Delhi in the context of Sino-Indian dispute. The period was chiefly dominated by the China factor. The USSR's stand to "contain" China as the power most likely to upset the delicate stability of the bipolar balance and its firm stand to uphold the territorial status quo were the indication of the principles and modalities of nonalignment.

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