Chapter II

SOVIET POLICY IN SOUTH ASIA - I

The post-war Soviet policy in Asia is to underline the qualitative changes that have come about in international politics since the end of the World War II. The beginning of the process of the liquidation of the colonial system, the assertion of political independence by former colonial and semi-colonial countries and later their struggle to achieve economic independence, all these factors combined together with other new world developments, have led to the transformation of international politics of our times. Likewise, they have also hastened the process of imparting an Asian content in the external norm and conduct of Soviet Society. ¹

Upon capturing power in November 1917, the Bolsheviks for some time were concerned with putting their house in order and were obsessed with ideology. They believed that when the time came they had only to give a little push and the capitalist world would come down crashing and that "the colonial slaves of Asia and Africa" would have to wait for their liberation until the victory of "proletarian dictatorship in Europe". When the desired 'inevitable' did not take place, the theory was modified to forge an alliance of 'the three basic revolutionary forces, namely, Soviet Russia, the working class of the developed capitalist countries and the national liberation movement of the oppressed peoples.'²

Asia saw great political and social ferment during this period. For example, in Afghanistan, Emir Amanullah raised the banner of revolt against British imperialism. J.V. Stalin considered the Afghan struggle for independence "objectively revolutionary" in spite of the monarchical outlook of the Emir and his followers, for it weakens, disorganises, and undermines imperialism." In India, the Soviet declaration on the right of nations to self-determination created considerable interest. An Indian delegation, led by Mohammad Hadi, met Lenin on November 23, 1918, appraised him of the impact of this declaration on India and expressed the hope that "our brothers in great free Russia will extend their hand in the cause of liberation of Indian and all peoples of the world".

The fundamentals of the political course the Soviet Union is following in the international arena, were set forth immediately after the October Revolution in Russia. The Soviet government declared its breaking with the foreign policy of tsarism. The Soviet government recognised the independence of Finland, and declared unequal treaties, which the Czar concluded with the countries of the East, null and void. Having denounced these, the Soviet government also published all the secret treaties, among which there was the 1916 agreement between Russia, Great Britain and France on the division of Turkey and Iran and others.

In the conduct of Soviet foreign policy, a distinctly western orientation became more and more marked although the liquidation of the colonial system in all its forms remained

4 The Hindustan Times, Delhi, 20 November, 1968
5 Yuri V. Gankovsky, "International Relations, Peace and Security: Problems of South Asia in the works of Soviet Orientalist", Strategic Studies, Quarterly Journal of the Institute of Strategic Studies, Islamabad, VI(2 & %).
one of the primary objectives of Soviet Society and the international communist movement. It can be legitimately argued that such an orientation was called for in view of the predominant character of international politics of the inter-war years, and also because of the weak position of socialist Russia in the community of Nations.\footnote{Zafar Imam, \textit{op.cit.}}

Lenin strived to restructure the system of international relations on the principles of equality of all nations and peoples, so as to open possibilities for the removal of mistrust and conflicts, the establishment of a spirit of mutual understanding and the successful development of everything valuable that the contemporary civilization has obtained through joint efforts. These principles of foreign policy of the Soviet Socialist state found their reflection, in particular, in the treaties signed by Soviet Russia with Turkey, Iran and Afghanistan in 1921, which were based on equality and respect of the sovereignty of the parties involved. The 1921 treaties were, as is known, the first equal treaties these three countries of Asia signed with a great power in modern and contemporary history.\footnote{Yuri V.Gankovsky, \textit{op.cit.}}

Lenin put down the achievement of a democratic universal peace as the priority task of the Soviet government. War was condemned as the greatest strife against humanity in the very first legal act of the Soviet State, "The Decree on Peace." Lenin put forward the principle of peaceful coexistence of states with different social structures as a fundamental principle of the Soviet state's foreign policy, allowing the attainment of lasting peace between peoples and rejecting war as a means of solving conflicts in the international arena.

\footnote{Zafar Imam, \textit{op.cit.}} \footnote{Yuri V.Gankovsky, \textit{op.cit.}}
(A) Soviet Involvement: The Background

Roosevelt and Stalin had several discussions on the future of the colonies of Japan as well as of Britain, France and the Netherlands. At Teheran they pondered over the future of Indo-China and India, and both seemed to agree that India presented a complicated problem. Roosevelt expressed himself in favour of political reform in India "from the bottom, somewhat on the Soviet line". Stalin stressed the complexity and ambiguity of Indian class relationships and warned that reforms from the bottom might mean revolution.

Both the United States and the Soviet Union appeared to be in broad agreement on how to tackle the post-war colonial problems, until differences began to emerge at the San Francisco Conference of the UN. The differences, however, were not serious. The Soviets appeared to understand that the American retreat from "independence" to "self government" as the explicit goal of UN trusteeship was an unavoidable concession to the British. The Soviet Union accepted permanent membership of the Trusteeship Council, a reversal of their decision not to have anything to do with the League of Nations mandate system in the thirties.

At San Francisco the Soviet delegation fought for a more radical trusteeship charter. Soviet publicists did not fail to point out the contrast between Moscow's progressive colonial perspective and the American retreat to "self government" but they were not overly critical of the U.S. position.


9 Pravada, 8 and 9 June, 1945. Also see New Times, 15 Dec., 1945, pp. 3-6
The Soviet Union got the reward it was aiming at. Their labours impressed the colonial countries of Asia and Africa. The Asian sentiment was voiced by Jawaharlal Nehru: "There is no doubt that during the last few years there has been some disillusionment in India with regard to American championship of freedom", he said, "At San Fransisco, the Soviet Union took the lead in championing independence for subject peoples but other powers fought shy of this and tried their utmost to choke it down". 10

The Soviet Union came in contact with India in 1946 at the Paris Peace Conference and at the UN Conference at San Francisco. The Indian delegation to the Paris Conference consisted of officials who hardly represented the political changes that were imminent and the Soviets were highly critical of its performance. In a report Pravada described all members of the Indian interim government of which Nehru was the defecto head, as "representatives of the right wing, with the sole exception of Nehru himself"; the Indian delegation at Paris was just the "loyal vassal of British imperialism". It was even doubtful that the Indian government would be able to translate into reality Nehru's aspiration for an independent foreign policy. At the Paris Conference the Soviet Union expected more objective voting on the part of the Indian delegation, but,"we have been confronted once again with the impossible situation wherein the Indian delegation simply fulfilled its colonial obligation to vote in accordance with the will of another country — according to the will of Great Britain." 11

Molotov had obtained in Paris some idea of Nehru's foreign

10 Jawahar Lal Nehru, Before and After Independence, A Collection of Speeches, 1922-1954, New Delhi, p.376
11 Pravada, 21 October, 1946
policy aspirations from his personal representative V.K. Krishna Menon. At the San Francisco Conference, India was able to play an independent role especially on the colonial question and the Soviet delegation often found the Indian delegation voting with it and against the western powers. Issues on which the Soviets and India voted together included trusteeship, military bases in trust areas, and racial discrimination. At a luncheon for the Indian delegation at San Francisco, Molotov now said that this expectation that the "authentic voice of India" would be raised on behalf of "progressive causes" had been "so completely fulfilled." 12

The visits which Khruschev and Bulganian made in 1955 to India, Burma and Afghanistan marked the beginning both of the Soviet foreign aid programme and of the Soviet Union's special relationship with India, while the arms deal with Egypt in the same year was the first to be concluded as part of a new policy of military aid to non-communist countries. It has been estimated that by the time of Khruschev's fall about 3 billion dollars worth of arms had been supplied to thirteen such countries in the preceding decade amounting to nearly half the total of all Soviet economic aid to underdeveloped countries in the same period. 13

The Soviet stance on India and Pakistan began to harden in early 1947. A strong Soviet delegation attended the Asian Relations Conference in New Delhi in February. One of its members was E. Zhukov, who also travelled extensively in India after the Conference. The Soviet delegation looked at the conference with suspicion, many of the delegates were surprised when it rose to oppose a resolution to create an

12 *The Hindu*, Madras, 8 December, 1946.

Asian block. The report on conference that Zhukov made to a Moscow meeting of Soviet experts on the colonial question revealed an astonishing hostility towards India. The New Delhi Conference as a whole did play a useful role, said Zhukov, who had words of praise for Egypt, Indonesia, Indo-China and Burma. But he attacked Nehru for his "pro-British sentiments, his pan-Asianism, his failure to organize Asia in opposition to western imperialism".

Zhukov found the Indian Nationalist leaders eager to conciliate the West. Nehru had failed to give a class interpretation to Indian independence. Zhukov suspected India of harbouring expansionist ambitions in Asia and was quite alarmed by the prospect of India and China, either separately or in collaboration, filling up the power vacuum in Asia created by the defeat of Japan.

Zhukov found the leadership of the Indian National Congress as "big capitalist". The British had neither departed from India in reality nor did they intend to do so. "Asia is heavily burdened with feudal remnants, and a purifying thunderstorm for her, undoubtedly was not only useful, but necessary". In his travel accounts Zhukov painted the picture of an India that was "weighed down by centuries of backwardness", where the proletariat was becoming a "more and more important factor in the political life", and a "considerable element" in the youth had an admirable "fighting spirit".

As the Soviets did not believe that India was independent, it was impossible that they should make an objective assessment of India's non-aligned status or its position in the

14 "The Asian Conference", International Affairs, Moscow, July, 1947, p.303
15 Pravada, 12 May and 16 May, 1947
newly emerging Asian-African world. Zhukov came down heavily on the policy of non-alignment, which he chose to describe as the so-called "theory of third force". He denounced it as "an imperialist device for slandering the Soviet Union by placing it on the same level with American imperialism."\textsuperscript{16}

In the Soviet scheme of things, there were only two paths — the path of "Socialism and progress" followed by the Soviet block and the path of "imperialism and decay" adopted by the West. The Soviets could not conceive of a third course. They dubbed Nehru reformist when he talked of a middle course for India's economic and industrial development and its foreign policy. To them Nehru's line of argument meant compromising with the "enemy", instead of destroying him altogether. Indeed, in all Soviet writings during the Stalin period India was never presented to the Soviet readers as a non-aligned country.\textsuperscript{17}

A few months later, on June 2, 1950, \textit{Pravada} reported that the United States insisted on "forming an aggressive block", that a conference of the representatives of a number of Asian countries, including Pakistan, India and Ceylon, was convened in the Philippines in May 1950 for this purpose at the "initiative" of the United States and that the participating governments had long been "collaborating with Anglo-American Imperialism". However, it was observed that India, Pakistan and Ceylon had refused "open declaration of allegiance to the aggressive American plan", since they feared "opposition of their peoples to such a plan."\textsuperscript{18}


\textsuperscript{17} Raghunath Ram, \textit{Super Powers and Indo-Pakistan subcontinent: Perceptions and Policies}, op.cit.

\textsuperscript{18} \textit{Pravda}, 2 June 1950
India’s decision to remain in the Commonwealth of Nations, even after the coming into force of the new constitution which declared India a republic, was criticized. It was argued that the membership of the Commonwealth made it obligatory for the Indian government constantly to "consult" with London on questions of foreign policy.19

As India’s first ambassador to the Soviet Union, Mrs. Vijayalakshmi Pandit experienced Soviet suspicion and hostility during her stay in Moscow. The Kremlin cold-shouldered her, believing that Nehru "being too pro-Mountbatten", could not be very different from "the ordinary run of imperialist lackeys."20 There was little response from Moscow to Nehru’s articulated desire for close, friendly relations. Pakistan presented the Soviets with an additional problem — the Marxist aversion for religion and Moscow’s failure to understand until very recently, what an American scholar has termed as Islam’s "instrumentality in politics".21

However, India’s position on Korea highlighted the authenticity of India’s policy of non-alignment and led to a little warmth in the relations between India and the Soviet Union. In his efforts to stop the Korean war, Jawaharlal Nehru wrote personal letters to J.V. Stalin in July 1950. Stalin replied immediately and his reply was considered to be "favourable" and conciliatory in the West.22 Yet, on the whole, India’s mediatory efforts during the Korean War were suspected in both Peking and Moscow. Chou En-lai called Nehru "The running dog of British imperialism". Vyshinsky, though less abusive, was more sarcastic, when he observed: "At best you

19 New Times, 15 March, 1950, No.11, p.3
20 The Hindustan Times, New Delhi 22 Nov 1955
are dreamers and idealists. At worst you do not understand your own position and camouflage horrible American policy" - Broadcasts from both countries contained this theme, and the Chinese particular indulged in such personal vilification of Nehru. 23

In the mid-fifties, the Kremlin had neither the wish nor the opportunity to begin its new South Asia policy with Pakistan, the latter was already a military ally of the U.S. Khrushchev and Bulganin undertook their Asian journey in late 1955 and determined to offer economic and political support to India, which no Indian government, in identical external and internal environment, could possibly decline. In contrast with this India based South Asia policy of the Soviet Union in the mid-fifties, was the tentative gesture of friendship Moscow had extended to Pakistan in the late forties. Soviet neutrality on the Kashmir issue as it came to the Security Council in 1948 was, in itself, an ambiguous move; it pleased the Indians, particularly because it was couched in language strongly condemning imperialist manoeuvres to "turn Kashmir into an American base". 24

India's refusal to sign a Japanese Peace Treaty in San Francisco in 1951 evoked an even more positive, though indirect, response from the Soviet Union. During the summer of 1951 there began a limited cultural exchange programme. More significantly, the Soviets started shipping wheat and other food-stuffs to India with much fanfare to help it tide over food crisis in 1951. 25 They also called upon the CPI to work within the parliamentary framework of the Indian system. This was undoubtedly to the Congress government's advantage.

23 "India", Round Table, March, 1953, XLIII(170), p.170
25 Pravada, 10 June 1951
Also, on the diplomatic front, the Soviet delegate to the United Nations, Jacob Malik, rejected the idea of a UN plebiscite during a debate on Kashmir in the Security Council in 1952, thereby perceptibly moving closer to the Indian position. At the session of the Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East (ECAFE) held in Singapore in 1951 the Soviet delegate indicated the willingness of the Soviet Union to assist in the industrial development of the newly independent states. Other perceptible signs of change in the Soviet attitude towards India in 1952 included Soviet participation in the International Film Festival and the International Industrial Exhibition held in Bombay in that year. In April 1952 India participated in the International Economic Conference in Moscow, where the Soviet Union made an offer to increase Indo-Soviet trade. However, negotiations were not consummated in the form of a trade agreement until after Stalin's death.

The Soviet Union as a global power is primarily interested in holding its allies in Eastern Europe, undermining NATO and extending its influence in the Third World. As compared to Europe, Asia is clearly of secondary interest to the Soviet Union. The evolution of Soviet South Asian policy has been of decent origin, a few decades old. The Soviet Union started taking interest in South Asia only after the emergence of People's Republic of China, creation of SEATO and the establishment of American bases in South Vietnam, Thailand, Phillipines and Pakistan. It was Khrushchev who came to recognise the pressing need for securing a firm foothold in South Asia for neutralising the power thrust of U.S.A. and China.

Khrushchev's changes in the doctrine of Soviet foreign

27 Pravada, 7 Jan, 1952
policy, coupled with his claim for Soviet ballistic missile technology, contributed to the great schism in the communist world, which became public the year before his fall. Although both sides trace the origin of the Sino-Soviet dispute to 1957, the Chinese leaders seem unlikely ever to have forgiven the Russians for their ambivalent attitude to their cause from 1920 onwards. Nevertheless, according to Khrushchev's impetuous nature, his conduct of the dispute by public abuse, and his attempt to have Chinese doctrines condemned by the majority of the international communist movement may well have loomed large in the minds of his colleagues when they finally decided to remove him from power. 28

The world situation took some amusing turn in the early 1960s with the thawing of East-West relations. Within the world communist movement, the first break between the Soviet Union and China took place in June 1960 at the Romanian Communist Party Congress. The watershed was reached at the meeting of eighty-one communist parties held in Moscow in December 1960, when in another confrontation Albania supported China, while the Indonesian, North Korean, and North Vietnamese delegates remained neutral, although inclined towards Chinese.

In October 1961, at the XXII Congress of the CPSU, to which Albania had not been invited, Khrushchev attacked Albania — implicitly China — for opposing the line agreed at the XX Congress. Only two-thirds of the parties represented at the Congress endorsed the attack on Albania; all the Asians remained silent. In the following year, when by a remarkable (but genuine) coincidence the Sino-Indian border war broke out two days before the Cuban missile crisis began, the two communist governments for a few days lent each other moral support. But by the 5 November 1962 the Chinese had

28 Robin Edmonds, op.cit., pp. 13-14
begun to criticize the Soviet withdrawal of missiles from Cuba, and the Russians had reverted to their earlier attitude of neutrality towards the Sino-Indian dispute, urging the need for a negotiated settlement and continuing to provide military aid to India.²⁹

War between India, the befriending of which had enabled the U.S.S.R. to gain much influence in the third world, and China, fraternal member of the communist block, initially strained the Indo-Soviet relations that had developed so well during the preceding eight years. Khrushchev described the border fighting as "an outright godsend for the imperialists",³⁰ and he had good reason to despair about a conflict in which he did not have to favour one side over the other.

Prior to the War, India had hoped that the U.S.S.R. would restrain China and in the event of a major armed conflict, remain neutral. This hope was not entirely without foundation: The Soviet Union did not want to lose friendship of India and made it look to the West for help. The U.S.S.R. made its position clear in September 1959, three years before the outbreak of war, declaring for the first time that it took a neutral position in conflict between a communist and a non-communist country. But when the War erupted in the midst of the Cuban crisis, unity within the communist block against the western countries was vital, and the Soviet Union felt compelled to show some fraternal feeling towards Peking.

On October 25, 1962, Pravada and Izvestia praised as "constructive" China's three point peace proposal of October 1-24, a proposal already rejected by India, and

²⁹ Ibid., pp. 17-18
³⁰ Pravda, 13 and 25 December, 1963
implicitly blamed India. The Soviet press did not condemn what India regarded as Chinese aggression, and it endorsed the Chinese views on the McMahon line, India's eastern boundary with China.

During the period that followed not only Sino-Indian relations deteriorated, but the relations between India and Soviet Union were strengthened considerably. From now onwards more Soviet leaders began to visit India and among those were Khrushchev, Brezhnev, Kosygin, Suslov, Kozhlov, and Nikoyan. Indeed, Khrushchev preferred to be in India on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the Sino-Soviet Agreement of Friendship and alliance of 1950, which incident according to a leading expert of Chinese affairs, tended to add to Mao's irritation against Khrushchev and India. 31

When the Sino-Indian dispute could not be resolved peacefully, Mao, for his own reasons, launched a large scale aggression on India in October 1962. There was nothing to show that Russia exhibited either pro-India or pro-China behaviour instantly. No Soviet paper carried any news of the Sino-Indian war in the following two days. When the Chinese forces were on the Indian soil, the American President declared the Cuban blockade from 24 October 1962 to the ships carrying war material to Cuba. The Cuban blockade, more than the Sino-Indian war, was a big embarrassment to the Russians. Unlike clashes on the Indian frontier, it came up suddenly and unexpectedly, and it placed the Soviet leaders in an unenviable predicament. Under the compulsion of developments on the Cuban front, Russia made quick moves in the Sino-Indian War too. 32

31 Sisir Gupta, "India and the Soviet Union", Current History, March 1963, p.146; Also see J.A.Naik, Soviet Policy towards India:From Stalin to Brezhnev, Vikas, Delhi, 1970, p.152
32 J.A. Naik, op.cit., p.159
This turn in the Soviet policy towards India, however, came to an early end when the cause which brought it into existence had subsided. Pressed with the American confrontation on Cuba, the Russian policy to rely her allies round her continued so long as it had a mind to meet the U.S. challenges. When, however, its Cuban policy changed and Russia decided to withdraw the missiles from Cuba, its policy in the Sino-Indian war once again underwent a change. When thus the Soviet authorities decided the Cuban policy once for all they made up their mind to restore the earlier Soviet policy of neutrality in the Sino-Indian conflict. 33

Russian Offer of Friendship to Pakistan

While supporting India on the Kashmir issue, Khrushchev also said in Srinagar that the Soviet Union would like to have friendly relations with Pakistan and "it is no fault of ours if such relations have not so far developed. In the interest of peace, however, we shall steadily strive for an improvement of these relations." 34 In the Supreme Soviet, Khrushchev observed that Moscow was willing to meet Pakistan half way in establishing friendly relations. 35 This did not mean that Moscow wanted Pakistan to travel halfway by extricating itself from SEATO and the Baghdad Pact.

Pakistan's participation in the western sponsored military alliances and the open Soviet support for India and Afghanistan on the Kashmir and Pakhtoonistan issues respectively generated bitterness and hostility between Pakistan and the Soviet Union. Yet even at this stage, the Soviet Union did not

33 Ibid., p.155
34 Bulganin and Khrushchev, Speeches During Sojourn in India, Burma and Afghanistan, Tass, New Delhi, 1956
35 New Times, 5 Jan 1956, No. 2, Documents, p.23
appear to wish to write off Pakistan altogether. In an article published in August 1956, Izvestia observed that Pakistan was not altogether lost to the West in spite of its membership of the South East Asia Treaty Organisation (SEATO) and Central Treaty Organisation (CENTO). 36

The Soviet Union wanted Pakistan to accept as few commitments as possible under the western-sponsored alliance system and thereby prevent itself from becoming a source of serious tension in the region. Pakistan, it held, "need not go the whole hog with the Western countries in its anti-communism, or, at any rate, anti-Sovietism in view of the willingness of the Soviet Union to develop mutual trade and cultural relations." The motivation behind the endeavour of the Soviet Union to develop friendly relations with Pakistan in spite of the latter's openly pro-Western orientation appeared to be its concern for its own security. Pakistan's strategic location in the subcontinent and the Indian Ocean region and its proximity to Soviet Central Asia were facts that the Soviet Union could not ignore. In Soviet strategic thinking both India and Pakistan were equally important, and that is why, in the speech made at a public reception at Srinagar on 10 December 1955, Nikita S. Khrushchev, while announcing Soviet support for India's stand on the Kashmir question, was nevertheless careful to keep the door open for normalizing relations with Pakistan. He said that the Soviet Union would like to have "friendly relations with Pakistan (and) we shall persistently strive to improve these relations." 37

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36 Izvestia, 14 August 1955; also see "Political Changes in Pakistan", International Affairs (Moscow), September 1955

37 N.A. Bulganin and N.S. Khrushchev, Visit of Friendship to India, Burma, Afghanistan, Moscow, 1956, p.114; also see Pravda, 11 Dec 1955
Later, in the Supreme Soviet, he again declared: "We on our side are ready to meet attempts to establish friendly relations with Pakistan."  

The Soviet offer to Pakistan in February 1956 to share technical knowledge on the peaceful uses of atomic energy was an indication that Pakistan lay well within the scope of the Soviet aid programme. Premier Bulganin clearly told Pakistan that "there are adequate opportunities for mutually beneficial economic cooperation between the Soviet Union and Pakistan if only there was willingness on both sides." On trade, he said, "there exists a practical possibility for promotion of trade relations between the two countries". He even suggested that it might be desirable to have a trade agreement between Pakistan and the Soviet Union.  

In Moscow, the Republic Day celebrations in the Pakistani embassy were attended by the Soviet Foreign Minister, V.M. Molotov, who, in a toast to the new Republic, said: "For our part we drink to the establishment of good neighbourly relations between Pakistan and the Soviet Union." In Karachi, the Soviet Union was represented by A.L. Mikoyan, First Vice-Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the U.S.S.R., at the Republic Day festivities. During his stay in Karachi, he, among other things, delivered an invitation to the Speaker of the Pakistan Constituent Assembly for a Parliamentary delegation to visit the U.S.S.R. The invitation was gladly accepted.

38 Ibid., p.291
39 Izvestia, 7 February 1956
40 Pakistan Times, 25 March 1956
41 "World Events", New Times, 29 March 1956 (No.14), p.31; Also see Dawn, 30 March 1956
After the coming into power of General Ayub Khan, Pakistan started negotiating with the United States for a new military agreement. The Soviet government held that the conclusion of a new agreement would complicate the situation in South East Asia and the Middle East and warned Pakistan that this could involve her in the military ventures of the Western powers.\textsuperscript{42} Though Pakistan assured that foreign military bases on its territory could not be used by the foreign military powers against the Soviet Union and the peace loving neighbour of Pakistan without the wishes of the Pakistani government, the Soviet government again warned that the government of Pakistan bore full responsibility for the consequences of any steps Pakistan undertook "to transform her territory into a foreign military base."\textsuperscript{43}

It shows that the Soviets might have known that the United States was sending spy planes into Soviet Russia from its military bases in West Pakistan. A few months later, on May 2, 1960, when the Soviet Union shot down one such plane, the Kremlin sent a strong protest to Karachi, and Khrushchev threatened to destroy the Peshawar military base from which the U-2 plane (spy plane) was said to have flown.

Change in Soviet Policy Towards South Asia

India's military reverses in its border clashes with China brought into sharp focus the limitation of the South Asia policy that the Soviet Union had followed till then and which was almost exclusively India-centered. The Soviet Union seemed to have believed till then that India was in a position to defend its borders with China. The humiliating defeat

\textsuperscript{42} "Soviet Government Statement to Government of Pakistan", CDSP, March 25, 1959, XI(8), p.32 (from Pravda and Izvestia, 20 February 1959

\textsuperscript{43} \textit{Ibid.}
that India suffered caused great anxiety in Moscow. Indeed there was much greater anxiety in Moscow than in Washington, because India appeared to be drifting towards the Western camp. India's debacle and its drift towards the Western camp signified for the Soviet Union a qualitative change in the international situation, particularly in Asia. The Soviet Union made an attempt, though half-hearted, to build-up India as a counter weight to China.44

By striking a severe blow at India, China upset the balance of power in Asia and raised its own prestige at a time when there were no signs of improvement in Sino-Soviet relations. The Chinese action, therefore, threatened to checkmate Soviet policy in the region. And it looked as though Soviet interests were now going to be undermined by China rather than by the United States. The widening Sino-Soviet rift, which coincided with the final breach between China and India, was an important development which made a great impact on the Soviet thinking on the South Asian region.

China's growing close relations with Pakistan caused concern in Moscow. The Soviet Union did not want a hostile Pakistan backed by China. Thus it became essential for the Soviet Union to establish its presence in Pakistan and counter China's growing influence there, especially when India had shown how weak it was vis-a-vis China.

The growing detente between the super powers, especially after the Cuban missiles crisis of October 1962, also contributed to some extent to a re-orientation of Soviet policy.

Moscow stepped up its efforts to improve its relations with Pakistan. The agreement on the exploration of oil was concluded in the summer of 1961. It provided for, among other things, a Soviet loan of Rs. 150 million to be used for the purpose of exploring the sources of oil in Pakistan. Moreover, just as on the eve of improvements in relations with India and Prime Minister Nehru's visit to the U.S.S.R., Moscow started translating important Indian books in 1961, Soviet Russia began to translate into the Russian language works of all major Pakistani writers. Perhaps Moscow was preparing the way for playing host to the President of Pakistan.  

For Pakistan, Kashmir was the touchstone to test the friendship of the Soviet Union. The 1962 Security Council debate on Kashmir provided this opportunity to Pakistan. Moscow did not give any assurance to Pakistan. In fact, Pakistan invoked the Security Council for the solution of the Kashmir dispute with a belief that it would get strong support from the West. But the Soviet Union's stand in the Security Council did not give any comfort to Pakistan.

However, the Soviet Union continued to strive resolutely to realize its set objective. On 7 October 1963 it concluded with Pakistan an air agreement providing for the operation of Aeroflot and Pakistan International Airways in each other's territories. The two countries also agreed to provide the necessary traffic facilities at specified points located in their respective territories. Pakistan and the Soviet Union signed a credit agreement on 17 June 1964. This agreement provided for a credit of $ 11 million to Pakistan. Though the amount involved was small, the credit agreement was

45 Vijay Sen Budhraj, op.cit., p.135
46 Izvestia, 8 October 1963
47 Dawn, 18 June 1964
significant in the sense that it indicated the willingness of the Soviet Union to participate in Pakistan's efforts to accelerate its economic recovery and development. A few days earlier, on 11 June 1964, Pakistan and the Soviet Union had signed an agreement on a cultural and scientific exchange programme for 1964.\textsuperscript{48}

In spite of all these events, Pakistan was not too happy with the terms of trade offered by the Soviet Union. Pakistani leaders expressed unhappiness about the Soviet arms aid to India. Commenting on Soviet announcement of large-scale arms to India, President Ayub Khan observed that Pakistan was seeking to normalize its relations with the Soviet Union, but it depended on whether or not the Soviet Union continued to arm India against Pakistan.\textsuperscript{49}

There was thus a reshaping of Soviet policy towards the South Asian region in general and towards Pakistan in particular. In May 1964, when the Kashmir issue was again debated in the Security Council, the Soviet representative while reaffirming his government's stand that Kashmir was a part of India refrained from condemning Pakistan. This was in marked contrast with previous Soviet practice. In fact, for the first time in many years, the Soviet Union recognized the existence of a dispute over Kashmir and called upon India and Pakistan to settle it peacefully. The Soviet leaders also started discreetly avoiding public pronouncement on the issue. In September 1964, when the Indian President S. Radhakrishnan visited Moscow, the Soviet Union failed to endorse in the joint communique India's position on the Kashmir issue.\textsuperscript{50}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{48} Ibid., 12 June 1964  
\textsuperscript{49} Ibid., 2 October 1964  
\textsuperscript{50} Indian Express, Delhi, 26 September 1964}
leadership made significant modifications in the Soviet policy towards the Third World in general and towards South Asia in particular. The Soviet Union wanted to wean Pakistan away from China and United States. For this purpose, the Soviet Union adopted a flexible attitude towards Pakistan. The Soviet Union welcomed the formation of the Regional Cooperation for Development (RCD) organisation which came into existence in July 1964 with Iran, Pakistan and Turkey as members. Pravda stated: "Turkey, Iran and Pakistan have started to emerge from the isolation imposed on them by the U.S.A. and Britain and have developed their dependence and (have) simultaneously (manifested) their desire to solve problems on their own."

Pakistan's External Affairs Minister Z.A. Bhutto visited Moscow in January 1965. He held high level talks with the Soviet leaders on international relations in general and on Soviet-Pakistan relations in particular. In 1965, President Ayub Khan visited the Soviet Union. This was the first ever visit of a Pakistani head of government to Moscow. Premier Kosygin described Ayub Khan's visit as "a momentous event in the history of Soviet-Pakistan relations", and expressed the hope that the visit "will contribute to the further strengthening of mutual understanding and good neighbourliness between our two countries."

Paying warm tributes to the visiting dignitary, he noted that President Ayub Khan's policies had greatly contributed to an improvement of his country's relations with the Soviet Union.

The Soviet leaders described the joint communique issued

51 Pravda, 15 November 1964
52 Ibid., 13 and 14 January 1965
53 Ibid., 4 April 1965
54 Ibid., 6 April 1965
towards the close of the Pakistani President's visit (11 April 1965) as "A milestone in the Pakistan-Soviet relations". The Soviet press hailed the communique as indicative of the "dawn of a new era in Pakistan-Soviet relations."\textsuperscript{55} To quote \textit{Dawn}: "The first important outcome of President Ayub Khan's state visit to the Soviet Union was the signing of an agreement on Pakistan-Soviet trade, economic cooperation, and cultural exchange."\textsuperscript{56}

Thus President Ayub Khan's visit to the Soviet Union was a milestone in Soviet-Pakistani relations. The talks between the Soviet leaders and the Pakistani President scattered the clouds of misunderstanding that had rendered the relations between the two countries gloomy for a long time and set them on the path of normal relations. \textit{Dawn} noted that "they broke the barriers which Indian diplomacy had succeeded in erecting between Pakistan and the Soviet Union over the past decade."\textsuperscript{57}

During Lal Bahadur Shastri's visit to the Soviet Union more evidence became available on the shift in the Soviet attitude. The Soviet Prime Minister, Alexei Kosygin appeared as though he did not wish to be drawn into any discussion of his country's relations with Pakistan. It is said that whenever a controversial issue in Indo-Pakistani relations came up in the talks, he would only suggest to the Indian Prime Minister that "ways must be found leading to a political settlement" of the issue.\textsuperscript{58}

\textbf{(B) Soviet Approach to the Indo-Pak Conflict, 1965}

During the Indo-Pak War 1965, the Soviet Union got the opportunity to expand its influence in South Asia. It regarded

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{55} \textit{Pravda}, 11 April 1965
  \item \textsuperscript{56} \textit{Dawn}, 8 April 1965
  \item \textsuperscript{57} \textit{Ibid.},
  \item \textsuperscript{58} \textit{Ibid.}, 15 May 1965
\end{itemize}
Pakistan's growing friendship with China almost as a betrayal of the U.S.-Pakistan alliance. China's emergence on the South Asia scene ostensibly as a friend of Pakistan but with the ulterior motive of understanding Soviet interests in the area gave an impetus to Soviet diplomacy. The Soviet Union played its cards with admirable skill. The Soviet Union and United States made significant changes in their South Asian policies. Both the super powers had come to recognise that stability in South Asia and the arresting of Pakistan's drift towards Peking were more important than either the strengthening of US-Pakistani ties or Indo-Soviet bonds. United States suspended its arms supply to India and Pakistan in September 1965, and made it clear that Washington would not give military assistance to Pakistan which could lead to Chinese intervention. The Soviet Union adopted a neutral stand and gave clear evidence of its decision to keep itself out of any Indo-Pakistani armed conflict and to treat India and Pakistan equally.

The Soviet attitude towards the grave situation in the Indian subcontinent, which ensued in the spring and autumn of 1965 could be first seen in a Tass statement on the deteriorating situation on the Indo-Pakistan border in the Kutch area. This statement underscored that solution of problems between India and Pakistan by means of war would not help the imperialists in developing the already existing tension in other parts of Asia. While citing Shastri Ayub's statements on 9 May 1965 regarding peaceful solution of the existing issues, it laid emphasis on the importance of direct and peaceful negotiations for India and Pakistan.

59 Pravda, 12 August 1965
60 Ibid., 9 May 1965, Translation from materials available in Russian language by Dr. S.P. Singh, The Quarterly Review of Historical Studies, Calcutta, Apr-June 1983, p. 54
Throughout the period of War, Soviet news and publicity media used the utmost caution in reporting or commenting on the developments on the subcontinent. There was no mention of Pakistani infiltration into Kashmir till 6 September 1965. Thereafter, too, the event was reported only in the form of Soviet media quoting Indian sources, and quotations from Indian sources were carefully balanced off with quotations from Pakistani sources.61

The Soviet concern for peace in South Asia was fully contrasted by an incendiary statement of the Chinese government on 4 May 1965 which expressed its full sympathy with and support to, Pakistan in her fight against "Indian expansionism".62 Similar was the substance of Sino-Pak joint communique, issued earlier at the end of President Ayub's visit to Peking on 7 March 1965. It is needless to observe that Peking's open encouragement to Pakistan certainly shaped, to a larger extent, the latter's policy towards the occupation of Kashmir by means of war in the following months.63

To prevent an escalation of the conflict, the Soviet government initiated intense diplomatic activity to that end. On 4 September, 1965, in bold and unprecedented diplomatic initiative, Kosygin urged India and Pakistan to cease military operations immediately by withdrawing their armies behind the ceasefire line of 1949.64

Towards the end of August 1965, the border situation in Kashmir became extremely tense after into this state of India and the latter's action against them. The Soviet

61 Dawn, 29 August 1965
62 People's Daily, 5 May 1965
63 See Daily Telegraph, 27 April 1965
64 Pravda, 12 September, 1965
Union called upon both the countries to find out ways to liquidate the conflict which would only further aggravate their economic problems. In a leading article in the *Pravda* on 24 August, 1965, an observer rightly elaborated the Soviet stand on the Indo-Pak War. While referring to Soviet respect for India's policy of peaceful coexistence and non-alignment, her fight against colonialism and respectable place in the world, the observer underlined that Soviet aspiration for developing its relations with Pakistan proceeded from the assumption that her good neighbourly relations with Pakistan would not weaken her friendship with any third country. Maintenance of relations between the Soviet Union and Pakistan, the observer added, was the part of the Soviet general policy directed towards ensuring peace in Asia and the world. Soviet relation with Pakistan, like her traditional friendship with India, would be a stabilizing factor for normalisation of relations between India and Pakistan as well as for situation in Asia.

On 7 September 1965, through an officially authorized *Tass* statement, the Soviet Union once again displayed its deep concern about the conflict, which was taking place "in an area in close proximity to the frontiers of the Soviet Union", and reiterated its appeal for an immediate ceasefire. While Soviet delegates were discussing adoption of immediate measures for restoring peace in Kashmir, Chinese foreign Minister Chen Yi paid a surprise visit to Karachi on 4 September for pledging China's moral and material support to Pakistan. The Soviet leadership directed all its energy to maintaining Peace in South Asia and thereby preventing any escalation of the conflict. The *Tass* statement warned against exploitation of the conflict by certain forces which intensified the conflict.

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65 *Pravda*, 24 August 1965
66 *Ibid.*, 1 September 1965
by issuing instigating statements and maintained that, if the conflict deepened many governments would be involved, the conflict would spread over distant regions and such forces would have to bear full responsibility for their policies and actions.  

On 19 September 1965 Tass released an identical message sent by Premier Kosygin to both President Ayub Khan and Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri, specifically proposing a meeting of the two leaders in a conference to be held on "Soviet soil" to resolve peacefully the issues dividing their two countries. Kosygin said that he would be willing to participate in such a conference if the two sides wanted him to do so. 

In the hope of direct Chinese intervention against India, Pakistan did not pay any heed to two unanimous Security Council resolutions (4 September, 6 September) asking for ceasefire and withdrawal. This was what China had desired. To embolden Pakistan to keep on fighting, China condemned India's "naked aggression" and warned her that "she must bear the responsibility for all consequences." China denounced the UNO, Soviet Union and U.S. which it contended, were "helping" India. 

This was the background of the Tashkent Conference, which opened on 4 January 1966. The Prime Minister of India and the President of Pakistan held bilateral talks for nearly a week to thrash out the differences between their countries. In his inaugural speech Kosygin said that he was aware of the difficulties entailed in normalizing Indo-Pakistani relations. 

68 Pravda, 18 September 1965
69 Ibid., 20 September 1965
70 Cited in Peking Review, 1965, 8(37), p.6
He, however, still hoped that the meeting would prove to be a turning point in the relations between India and Pakistan and create a climate of trust and mutual understanding facilitating an eventual achievement of normalization. During the conference Lal Bahadur Shastri stressed the importance of signing a "no war pact" and following it up with a gradual elimination of differences and disputes. Ayub Khan pointed out that a 'no war' pact between nations would work only if it was adopted after taking concrete steps for settling the disputes that divided them.

However, on 10 January 1966 the historic Tashkent Declaration was signed.

Soviet Disappointment - The Soviets were soon to suffer several disappointments. The President of Pakistan and the Prime Minister of India did not meet again. The ministerial level meetings held on March 1 and 2, 1966 in Rawalpindi, too proved to be failure. Both sides reiterated their respective points of view and found themselves as part as ever. The joint communique that followed the meeting described the talks as exploratory leading to a useful exchange of views. Moreover, the two countries blamed each other for their strained relations and complained to Moscow of one another's alleged breaches of the Tashkent Declaration. Secondly, the Tashkent Declaration was not well received in Pakistan. Z.A.Bhutto described it as a betrayal and it began to be argued that it was merely a "no force" declaration which did not prevent Pakistan to resort to war over the Kashmir dispute if it was not settled peacefully. The hate India campaign received official blessing when the government of Pakistan decided to observe 6 September, the

71 Pravda, 5 January 1966
72 Ibid.
day India attacked the Lahore and Sialkot sectors in 1965, as the Defence of Pakistan Day.\textsuperscript{73}

Secondly, Prime Minister A.N. Kosygin in his opening speech, and the Soviet press subsequently, reminded both India and Pakistan that they achieved victory over colonialism through "their common efforts", that jointly they could keep their enemies away from the subcontinent, that the normalization of Indo-Pakistani relations would strengthen peace in South East Asia, and that "an atmosphere of mutual trust and understanding", and economic cooperation between them could benefit the two countries. It was argued that the economies of India and Pakistan constituted "a single whole and that intercourse between them and expansion of trade would benefit both.\textsuperscript{74} But the atmosphere of hostility and mistrust continued; all attempts to establish good neighbourly relations remained unsuccessful.

The Soviet Union went ahead with demonstrating to Pakistan that it had adopted the policy of treating India and Pakistan equally and that it sincerely wished to improve the relations with Rawalpindi. Following the Tashkent meeting, Soviet Union and Pakistan signed, in January 1966, a barter agreement, providing for the exchange of Pakistani rice for Soviet vehicles and road-building and engineering machinery. In the same year the two countries signed an agreement on economic cooperation, which was a positive indication of the fact that Moscow had decided to treat India and Pakistan alike in the matter of economic aid. Under this agreement, the U.S.S.R. undertook to render technical and financial assistance in the construction of twenty-one projects, including two plants for the production of

\textsuperscript{73} Vijaysen Budhraj, \textit{op.cit.}, p.171
\textsuperscript{74} Kessings Contemporary Archives, Jan 22-29, 1966, p.21187 A.
electrical machinery, the Guddu Thermal power station, fifteen broadcasting houses, a high voltage transmission line, and a railway-cum-highway bridge across the river Rupsa. It was indeed a major economic assistance agreement. Moreover, a number of Soviet delegations and officials ranging from a Soviet tennis star to the Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister, visited Pakistan in 1966, indicating thereby the importance Moscow attached to its friendship with Pakistan. 75

But all this did not effect Sino-Pakistani ties in any way. If the Soviets considered India a counterweight against China, the Chinese believed that Pakistan was a counterweight against India. The Chinese Head of State, Liu Shao-Chi visited Pakistan in March and again in April 1966. During his first visit, he stated that "when Pakistan resolutely fights against foreign aggression in defence of its national independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity the 650 million Chinese people will stand unswervingly "on its side and give it resolute support and assistance." 76

The growing China-Pakistan relations caused much uneasiness in Moscow. Rawalpindi was not satisfied with the new Soviet policy because India was still getting Soviet arms and sophisticated weapons. When Britain and the United States placed an embargo on the shipment of arms to India and Pakistan in September 1965, the Soviet Union became India's primary supplier of aircraft. It is said that while the fighting was on, the Soviets agreed to supply India with four submarines, destroyer escorts, and naval patrol craft. 77

76 The Times, London, 28 March 1966
77 Indian Express, 7 September 1965
At the invitation of Soviet government, President Ayub Khan visited the U.S.S.R. from September 25 to October 4, 1967. Pakistan, at one time considered to be a "bastion of the free world", announced in Moscow that there was "need for the immediate ending of the War in Vietnam, in acknowledgement of the right of the Vietnamese people to settle their own destiny without foreign interference as envisaged by the 1954 Geneva Agreement".  

It was clear that to please Moscow, Pakistan had moved closer to the Russian view than to that of American on the Vietnam issue. President Ayub Khan assured the Soviet Prime Minister that his country remained ready and willing to negotiate with India on all issues in the spirit of the Tashkent Declaration.

For India, the crucial problem was the arms supplies to Pakistan and its implications for Soviet policy towards the subcontinent. In an editorial in The Times of India, Nanporia commented that there persists a tendency in New Delhi, to act with alarm and bewilderment to any suggestion of a Soviet deviation from its earliest posture and more particularly in relation to Pakistan. This can be explained only in terms of a failure to grasp the essentials of Soviet policy in Asia and to realise that Soviet friendship is not an absolute created for the country's convenience ... the entire basis of Soviet policy seems to be to encourage the 'containment' not only of Chinese Communist influence but also that of the United States. It does not hope to achieve this by establishing any kind of a 'Soviet

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79 "Pakistan President Ayub Khan's to visit to the Soviet Union and France", Keesing's Contemporary Archives, Nov. 4-11, 1967, p. 22345B.
presence' but by creating conditions in which it is hoped nonalignment will acquire an Asian presence, Moscow's openly expressed desire for friendlier relations with Pakistan, adds Nanporia, should be no cause for hysteria in New Delhi. Similarly the possibilities of a minor Soviet arms deal with Rawalpindi must be seen in this context before surrendering to the infantile conclusion that this would be a Soviet 'betrayal'. What could be described as Soviet 'tactical neutrality' was implicit in its role in Tashkent. Moscow's patient cultivation of Rawalpindi is an extension of Mr. Kosygin's well calculated political initiative in this part of the world. 80

Notwithstanding such a great contribution to the political stability in South Asia at such a critical juncture, both in India and abroad, various sorts of misapprehensions regarding changes in Soviet policy towards India were inspired in some circles. 81 British journals took the lead in providing food to India's rightist parties by undernoting the lack of Soviet support to India, 82 the Jana Sangh seized the wind out of the British sail. 83 While advocating the need for reassessment of India's foreign policy, the Swatantra Party mouthpiece Swarajya blamed the Soviet Union for equating India with Pakistan.

General Yahya Khan, Commander-in-Chief of the Army of Pakistan visited Moscow from June 27 to July 8, 1968. Prime Minister Kosygin informed Prime Minister Indira Gandhi on July 7, 1968 that the Soviet Union intended to supply arms

80 N.J. Nanporia, The Times of India, Delhi, 14 July 1966
81 Times, 14 Aug 1965; also see Pakistan Horizon, XVIII(4), p. 326
82 New Statesman, London, 3 Sept 1965, p. 307
83 Organizer, New Delhi, 19 Oct 1965
to Pakistan. The news about the Soviet decision created an uproar in India. When informed of the decision, Mrs. Gandhi wrote to Premier Kosygin on 10 July 1968 protesting against the Soviet decision and pointing out that a Soviet supply of arms to Pakistan would bring the close, friendly Indo-Soviet relationship under tension and strain. The Indian government continued to mount diplomatic pressure on Moscow and in August 1968 the Indian President Dr. Zakir Husain went on a visit to the U.S.S.R. Apparently a goodwill visit, the circumstances of the timing could not be discounted and the use of the opportunity to forcefully put forward India's apprehensions could not have been passed up.

When the Indian Parliament met in July 1968, the Jan Sangh organized a protest demonstration in front of the Soviet Embassy's information centre in New Delhi, the first of its kind against the Soviets. The following day the Lok Sabha rejected Piloo Mody's (Swatantra) adjournment motion which sought to ensure the government for failing to safeguard India's interests "as signified by the Soviet decision to sell arms to Pakistan" by 200 votes to 61. The Prime Minister observed that she was not surprised by the Soviet decision, that the supply was not big enough to strengthen Pakistan to the extent of injuring India's interests, that the Soviets had assured her that Pakistan would not use Soviet arms against India and that she had no reason to believe that the Soviets "would want to injure us in any way," she philosophically rationalized; "friendship is not exclusive. If you are friends with one you cannot prevent that person from having other friends." 

85 Keesing's Contemporary Archives, 2-9 Nov 1968, p.23001A
Subsequently she told a group of Congress members of Parliament that the world was no more rigidly divided into blocs as had previously been and that the Soviet Union was also trying to improve its relations with Turkey, Iran and Pakistan. No one could object to it. 86

If Soviet diplomacy ran into heavy weather in Pakistan, certain events in India in the second half of 1969 rehabilitated New Delhi's image in Moscow, assured the Soviets that their massive investments in Indian economy and defence had not gone to waste and created the hope in Moscow that political polarisation, then going on in India, would ultimately strengthen the hands of the progressive forces. The resignation of Morarji Desai, considered to be the most outspoken representative of the big monopoly houses in the Indian cabinet, nationalization of fourteen Indian banks with deposits exceeding Rs. 50 crores; the defeat of Sanjeeva Reddy, put up by the rightwing Congress leadership and supported by the Swatantra, etc., in the presidential election, and the Congress split — all created good impression and retrieved New Delhi's stock in the Kremlin.

(C) Diversified Role in South Asia in the 1970s

Since the 1970s the Soviet Union started getting more involved in the affairs of South Asia than the United States or China. One result of this deepening involvement is that the Soviet role in the region has become diversified. The Soviet Union is now as much involved in the security of South Asia as it is in its economic and political development. This diversified role has been acquired, according to Bhabani Sen Gupta, by successful and inexpensive intervention in

86 The Tribune, 20 July 1968
three wars in South Asia — the Sino-Indian border war of 1962 and the India-Pakistan wars of 1965 and 1971.  

Vast and significant changes occurred on the Indian subcontinent in 1969, necessitating a reappraisal on the part of the Soviet Union of its policy towards this area. From the Soviet perspective the situation in Pakistan was somewhat gloomy: anti-Ayub riots and demonstrations had, in both East and West Pakistan, become the order of the day since the last quarter of 1968. These demonstrations disapproved the thesis of the Soviet experts that President Ayub Khan's firm leadership had created something akin to political stability in Pakistan.

Something had to be done to restore normalcy in East Pakistan and to prevent deterioration in Indo-Pakistan relations. The Soviet President, therefore, appealed to President Yahya Khan to "stop the bloodshed and repression" and "to turn to methods of peaceful settlement." In his message he spoke out against the army's action, advised that complicated problems in Pakistan "must be solved by political means, without the use of force" and warned that the "continuation of repressive measures" would make the solution of Pakistan's problems more difficult and might prove to be "highly detrimental to the vital interests of all the Pakistani people". He showed his sympathies for the Awami League leaders when he spoke of them as having "received such convincing support from the overwhelming majority." The


88 New York Times, 19 Feb 1969

reasons were clear enough: the Awami League's economic programme was progressive; its leaders were against Pakistan's membership of SEATO and CENTO and desired closer links, economic and cultural, with India. Broadly speaking, the government of the U.S.S.R. understood the danger posed by military action, sympathized with the Awami League leaders, and felt that the refugees would return home only if and when the military regime in East Pakistan transferred power to the representatives of the people. Later, the Indian Foreign Minister expressed his sincere gratitude to the Soviet government on this occasion during his visit to Moscow in June, 1971.¹⁰

SOVIET PLAN FOR ASIAN SECURITY

The Indo-Soviet Treaty for 20 years was concluded in a sensational situation faced by India. The war between the two wings of Pakistan over the Bangladesh issue had forced more than 10 million refugees from East Bengal to seek shelter in India. India tried in vain to persuade the international agencies and the U.S. to prevail on Pakistan to facilitate the return of the refugees. Pakistan was encouraged by the U.S. and China in its attempt to crush the revolt in East Pakistan. In 1970 the U.S. supplied arms to Pakistan in violation of embargo. Henry Kissinger went to Peking and Nixon's visit to China was announced in July 1971. All these events made India panicky and it began to search for security. Thus the price of better relations between Washington and Peking was an improvement in relations between Moscow and New Delhi.¹¹

Prime Minister Chou En-Lai's promise of support to Islamabad in case "Indian expansionists dare to launch aggression against Pakistan", continuation of U.S. military supplies to Islamabad and the warning of the Special Assistant for National Security Affairs to President Nixon, Henry A. Kissinger, to the Indian Ambassador to the United States, L.K. Jha, that in case China helped Pakistan in a war with India, New Delhi, should not count on U.S. support, emboldened Pakistan to threaten India with war. In an interview with the correspondent of the Financial Times (London), the Pakistan President talked of declaring "general war" on India. Later, on July 30, when the President repeated this threat, the Soviet press gave it wide publicity. On August 1, Tass quoted President Yahya Khan as saying in an interview to foreign television companies that Pakistan was very close to war against India. It also quoted the Indian press and a French news agency to give details of war preparations on the Pakistani side of the eastern borders.

Suspecting Washington-Peking-Rawalpindi collusion over the Bangladesh issue, India was forced to enter into a treaty agreement with the Soviet Union. This treaty marked a new phase in Indo-Soviet cooperation. As the title suggests, it does not merely involve a commitment to peace, friendship and cooperation, but to some extent it is a treaty of military cooperation. This treaty marked a turning point in India's foreign policy. It formalised the Indo-Soviet friendship and according to Gromyko it gave a durable international legal basis.

This treaty made India more dependant on Soviet Russia. The Statesman described the treaty as "virtually a military

92 The Times of India, July 20, 1971
93 Ibid., 2 Aug 1971
arrangement.\textsuperscript{94} Though Article 4 of the treaty stated that Moscow respected New Delhi's policy of non-alignment, "there is every evidence of alignment in the treaty almost indistinguishable from a defence pact."\textsuperscript{95}

Besides, it could be argued that this was the first step towards the realization of the Soviet plan for Asian security. It may be recalled that following the March 1969 armed conflict between Soviet and Chinese border troops on a small disputed Island on the Ussuri River boundary between the two major communist powers, Moscow renewed its efforts to convince the states on the southern periphery of China that Peking was a threat to their security. It also tried to bind them together in regional economic cooperation, and in June 1969, it publicly stated that the time was ripe for building a collective security system in Asia. Though India, at that time made it clear that it was not interested in anything more than regional economic cooperation, the Soviets did not abandon all hopes. Negotiations about the terms of a security pact between the countries continued through diplomatic channels. Ultimately in August 1971, finding itself isolated and threatened, India accepted the Soviet offer. The Soviets perhaps hoped that other countries in the region would, in course of time, fall in line, for it should not go unnoticed that the day India signed the treaty, Foreign Minister Sawaran Singh stated in the Indian Parliament that it "will provide a pattern for similar treaties between India and other countries in the region."\textsuperscript{96}

The Soviet Prime Minister Kosygin visited India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan in May 1969. During his visit he not only

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{94} Editorial, \textit{The Statesman}, Delhi, 10 Aug 1971
\item \textsuperscript{95} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{96} \textit{The Times of India}, N. Delhi, 10 Aug 1971
\end{itemize}
assured India of his country's support in its conflict with China but stated that India should become strong economically, politically and militarily. He seemed to have reverted to Khrushchev's policy of building up India so that it could shoulder the responsibility of defending the subcontinent from "adventurist encroachments on the part of outside forces which are out for a hegemony in Asia."  

During his visit to Afghanistan and Pakistan later in the same month, he urged a speedy settlement of differences between Afghanistan and Pakistan and between Pakistan and India. He also urged increased regional economic cooperation among the three countries on a tripartite basis and promised that the Soviet Union "would do all it can on its part to promote this." It is said that General Yahya Khan gave the visiting Prime Minister to understand that he was enthusiastic about the idea of a regional conference on economic cooperation involving Iran, India, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Soviet Union.

The clear possibility of China expanding in the direction of the Indian ocean made the Soviet Union propose a system of collective security in Asia. The first exposition of this system came from Leonid Brezhnev himself at the international conference of Communist and Workers' Parties held in Moscow in June 1969. Thus by mid-1969 the Soviet Union had evolved two plans to ensure peace and stability in this region; regional economic cooperation and a collective security arrangement. Brezhnev did not spell out clearly what kind of security arrangement the Soviet Union had in mind. He, however, underplayed the military aspect of it by repeating that the

97 The Indian Express, New Delhi, 8 May 1969; also see Patriot, New Delhi, 17 May 1969
98 The Times of India, New Delhi, 1 June 1969
99 Ibid., 7 April 1971
100 Text of Speech, Soviet News, New Delhi, No.5498, 10 June 1969, p.132.
arrangement was not directed against any one nation and stressed the economic and political aspects.

At the same time the Soviet Union has claimed the subcontinent, because of its geographical closeness to the U.S.S.R., virtually as its sphere of influence — a claim that is contested by China, although China is not in a position to hurt Soviet interests too much. In the 1970s, says Sen Gupta, the Soviets had a spatial large strategic design for the interlinking regions of South Asia and the Persian Gulf, which none of the regional actors had so far accepted. The design is for the security of the two regions, to be brought about by multilateral economic cooperation; by bilateral settlement of inter-state differences and disputes; and, over time, by political and strategic collaboration, all of these with Soviet participation and involvement, though not formally under Soviet leadership. The Soviet policy makers, then, have given themselves the long-term task of establishing a broad strategic symmetry in the two inter-meshing regions.101

Soviet analysts believe that only by the establishment of multifaceted regional and interregional cooperation under the benign protection of the socialist system, can the two regions insulated from imperialist and Chinese intervention. This strategic design has introduced a new dynamism into Soviet relations with the two major regional powers, India and Iran, neither of which is willing to subscribe to the Soviet strategic design nor ready to reject it altogether; each has its own power interests and ambitions in South Asia. The Soviet strategic design for the region has also begun to be reflected in its conflict with China and its competitive coexistence with the United States in the Third World.102

101 Bhabani Sen Gupta, Soviet-Asian Relations in the 1970s and Beyond, op.cit.
102 Ibid., pp. 137-38
The border crisis with China spiralled the defense expenditure of India upwards and after the border war of 1962 defence became its first priority. The need for U.S. military aid to the anti-China defence efforts of India betrayed, in Pakistani eyes, the tenuousness of Washington's military commitment to Pakistan. In Pakistan perceptions, the two super powers were now working together to strengthen India, "the mortal enemy of Pakistan". In 1963 Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, then Foreign Minister of Pakistan, asserted that "the largest power in Asia", would come to his country's rescue if it were attacked by India. In the early 1960s, however, a promise of strategic symmetry in the subcontinent came from parallel Soviet and American aid to build up India as a countervailing power in Asia in relation to the People's Republic of China and from a U.S. initiative, in conjunction with Britain, to resolve the deadlock on Kashmir. According to Chester Bowles, then U.S. Ambassador in New Delhi, Nehru agreed to "support a genuine effort by the U.S. government to negotiate a political settlement that could end the fighting in South East Asia" that is in Vietnam, as well as to "negotiate a ceiling of military expenditure with Pakistan."

The promise proved to be fleeting. The Indian government resented the arm-twisting by the United States and Britain to force it to make concessions to Pakistan on the Kashmir issue, and India abandoned its halfhearted conciliatory moves when China, in a tour de force, concluded a border agreement with Pakistan, conferring tentative sanction on Pakistan control of two thirds of the state of Jammu and Kashmir.

103 New York Times, 18 July 1963
105 For details, see Bhabani Sen Gupta, The Fulcrum of Asia: Relations among China, India, Pakistan and the USSR, New York, 1970, pp. 131-33
The main reason for the withering of the promise probably lay in a shift in U.S. priorities after the death of John F. Kennedy. This expectation was confirmed in the war between India and Pakistan in September 1965. For the first time United States remained officially neutral in a war involving one of its allies. The U.S.S.R. and China faced each other as direct contenders in the subcontinent. In a major strategic initiative, Moscow intervened in the India-Pakistan war, armed with the theory of geographical propinquity. The conflict, as Kosygin told the Prime Minister of India and the President of Pakistan, was taking place in an area close to the borders of Soviet State, compelling Moscow to offer its diplomatic services to bring the two warring parties together. At the same time, the Soviet government warned other countries to keep out of the conflict. Inherent in the Soviet diplomatic initiative was the claim that South Asia, being geographically close to the U.S.S.R., was a natural sphere of Russian interest. 106

The United States lost interest in India on the political and developmental planes. Increasing involvement in the Vietnam war led to a general U.S. disengagement from the uncommitted nations of the Third World in terms of economic aid. By the mid-1960s, anxiety to avoid direct military conflict with Chinese evidently persuaded Lydon Johnson to lower the U.S. anti-China profile in South Asia also. According to Sen Gupta, Washington found it wiser to conceded to Moscow the primary diplomatic and strategic role in South Asia because of the greater Soviet stake in containing China and because of the relative political unimportance of India to the United States. India turned to the Soviet Union and got every thing it had asked from the United States, having conceded to the Soviet Union the major role in controlling

106 Bhabani Sen Gupta, Soviet South Asian Relations, op. cit., pp. 139-140.
conflict in the subcontinent, could not possibly come to the help of Pakistan in an Indo-Pakistan military conflict. After the Tashkent Agreement, Moscow gradually unfolded its own strategic design for South Asia. The visit by the Shah of Iran to the Soviet capital in 1965 had led to an improvement in Soviet-Iranian relations, and in 1966 a programme of Soviet economic and military assistance to Iran was initiated.  

After the Tashkent accord the Soviets ceased to support the Indian position on Kashmir and adopted a posture of "Neutrality", which paved the way for a diplomatic initiative to improve relations with Pakistan. The transfer of Soviet military aid to Pakistan, however, small in quantity, involved the risk of alienating India. The Soviets, however, took that risk. The 1964-67 period was also one of increasing Indian dependence on the United States. The military reverses against China followed by the economic crisis had sent India scurrying to Washington for military and economic aid. Although both Lal Bahadur Shastri and Indira Gandhi, showed keenness to maintain the Soviet option, the rightwing swing in the policy during this period was patently obvious and was generally regarded as the inevitable consequences of the turn towards the United States. Possibly, the Soviet interest in Pakistan was a reminder and a response: a reminder to India of Soviet options in case the Indian tilt towards Washington went too far, and a response to Indian domestic and foreign policy developments.  

The problem was very much with India and only acquired more serious dimensions in these two years. The Soviet strategy clearly was to gradually raise the level of relationship with Pakistan while simultaneously expanding assistance.

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107 Ibid.
108 Dev Murarka's despatch from Moscow, Indian Express, 17 Dec 1966
to India in order to quieten Indian misgivings and soften her opposition to a limited amount of arms supply to Pakistan. The Soviet media and public pronouncements also underlined the desirability of an Indo-Pak rapprochement. As for instance, as early as December 1965, a Pravda article had claimed that a settlement of the conflict with Pakistan was vital to India's economic advance and success in mastering her present problems and difficulties.109

These themes were repeated in the next two years but the issue became more serious for India. The Minister for External Affairs, M.C. Chagla told the Rajya Sabha on 8 August 1967 that the Soviet Union had repeatedly assured India that it would not sell lethal weapons to Pakistan and that the helicopters reportedly sold to Pakistan could be purchased by any country on a commercial basis. He said helicopters did not fall within the category of lethal weapons. He held out the assurance that "there is absolutely no change in the U.S.S.R's attitude towards U.S. Our friendship continues without being lessened or being surrounded by doubts of suspicious the U.S.S.R. is most anxious that tension in this area should be reduced."110

There was resentment and anger in India, but the times had changed, and it did not cost Moscow too much. Kosygin personally assured the Indian leaders that the Soviet Union continued to regard India as the kingpin of its South Asian policy and explained that a Soviet presence in Pakistan was the only way to diminish Chinese influence and block "Imperialist intervention" against Indian interests.111

109 Asian Recorder, 8-14 Jan 1966, p.6863
110 The Times of India, New Delhi 9 Aug 1967
111 Dawn, July 12 1968
The Indians were reassured in 1968 when Kosygin proposed, almost immediately after the first transfer of military equipment to Pakistan, an economic cooperation conference of Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India, with Soviet participation. It was suggested in the Soviet press that the four countries could have profitable trade with the U.S.S.R. through the roadways and rail links already existing and likely to be constructed between the Soviet Union and Afghanistan on the one hand and the Soviet Union and Iran on the other. The Afghan government, prompted by the Soviet Union, offered to host the proposed conference which never took place because of the Pakistani refusal to attend. Thus the first attempt to unfold the Soviet strategic design came to nothing, although as a price for economic and military aid, Pakistan agreed to close down the extensive U.S. intelligence facilities in Peshawar. 112

During the latter half of the 1960s there was considerable anxiety in the Soviet Union about the drift of internal politics in India and about a possible pro-American shift in Indian foreign policy. During the brief Prime Ministership of Lal Bahadur Shastri, the primary Soviet concern as judged from writings on India in the Soviet press, was to prevent the right wing from dominating the Congress party and the Indian government. The Soviet media welcomed the election of Indira Gandhi as Prime Minister after Shastri's sudden death in Tashkent. Within a short time, however, Soviet analysts began to note "the growing strength of the (Indian) capitalist monopolies with their close foreign ties." 113

After the 1967 general elections, in which the Congress party lost power in as many as nine states, a Soviet analyst

112 Bhabani Sen Gupta, Soviet South Asian Relations, op.cit., p.140
113 New Times, Jan 19, 1965
identified the cabinet of Indira Gandhi as "a coalition of the ruling party's centrist and rightist elements".  

The Soviet concern stemmed not only from the analysis perception of the rightward drift in the Congress party leadership but more particularly from the confrontation between the central government in New Delhi and the leftist-democratic coalitions that ruled West Bengal and Kerala. Both coalitions were dominated by the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI-M), the parallel communist party which had been formed in 1964 after a split in the CPI. The Marxists were independent of Moscow and Peking but were nevertheless generally seen to be pro-Chinese. What placed the CPSU in an embarrassing situation was that the pro-Soviet CPI was also a partner of the two coalitions, and the confrontation between these two state governments and the centre was creating a polarization between the Congress Party and the CPI and undermining the CPSU line of a broad united front of "democratic and left forces", meaning the "progressives" in the Congress Party and the CPI. 

When Kosygin made a suddenly announced visit to New Delhi in February 1968, one leading Indian commentator linked its significance to that of the Khrushchev-Bulganin tour of India in 1955. His talks with Indira Gandhi covered the whole gamut of subjects from economic affairs to political developments in India to foreign policy. The communique issued at the end of the talks indicated that the Soviet government remained fully committed to help India restore its economic health and remain steadfast to its foreign policy. Much of the conversation centered on China, which had built a sizeable presence in

114  *New Times*, March 29 1967
Pakistan since Tashkent and was supporting several "revolutionary communist" groups in India in 1968 and projecting to these groups a Maoist line of protracted armed struggle from rural bases. Kosygin reportedly pointed out to Indira Gandhi that Pakistan was almost the only country with which Chinese relations had not been affected by the Cultural Revolution, and he impressed upon her the urgency of a parallel Indian and Soviet effort to loosen the Chinese hold on Pakistan. The Soviet Premier also told her that Moscow would like India to fill the vacuum to be created in the Indian Ocean region by the British withdrawl from the Persian Gulf by 1971. India could not do this without internal stability and without some force of coexistence with Pakistan.

The Soviet attitude towards Pakistan has never been hostile, writes Kalim Bahadur. And this was in spite of the fact that the Soviet leaders could not understand and accept that religion could be the basis of a state in the modern world. They also overlooked the paranoidal anti-communist and anti-soviet policies of Pakistan's successive rulers. In the years after independence, Pakistan's policy makers and leaders were more anti-communist than even the Americans.

Until 1962, ideology was an important element in Pakistan foreign policy, and translated into practice it meant preference for the western countries and dislike of communism.

The new policy won India's friendship readily because it professed to be neutral in the East-West cold war and had worked for good relations with the communist countries from

118 Dilip Mukherji, op. cit.
the outset of independence. With Pakistan it was not so easy to effect a change. Added to the ideological barrier was the difficulty that it had been palpable pro-west in her foreign policy, and in 1954 had openly subscribed to the western system of defence alliances. It was not till Pakistan's alliance with the west had cooled off in the wake of the latter's arms aid to India in 1962, that the requisite climate for a real improvement in Pakistan's relations with the communist world was created. 120

A survey of Pakistani opinion after independence will vividly illustrate how seriously Pakistanis viewed the threat from communism to their spiritual and physical existence and will refute the notion that Pakistan tricked a gullible America but in reality for use solely against India. On 12 April 1950 Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan proposed that the United States should encourage the idea of territorial guarantees to India and Pakistan to allow them to spend more on economic improvement, "which would keep out the potential menace of communism." 121

Moscow's image of Pakistan was more unfavourable in comparison to India, Pakistan's bid to assume leadership of Pan-Islamic forces proved a stumbling bloc for the improvement of relations with the Soviet Union. Moscow condemned the convening of the first Islamic Conference in Karachi. The growing pro-west orientation of Pakistan also made the Russians suspicious, and there were adverse comments in the Soviet press: "Pakistan was being converted into a British bridgehead in the East", into a "Second Trans-Jordan of enormous dimensions", by allowing the continuation of British military bases in its territory under the reactionary ruling

120 S.M. Burke, Pakistan's Foreign Policy, Oxford Univ. Press, London, 1973, p.91
121 The New York Times, 13 Apr 1950
circles. The Soviet press suspected a "secret agreement of Pakistan with the British for military bases and speculated about the United States negotiating for similar facilities in the NWFP and elsewhere." Visits by the Americans to Pakistan, particularly to the northern areas close to the frontier of the Soviet Union and Pakistan's attitude towards Korean War also came in for severe criticism in the Soviet press. Its support for the US-sponsored resolution on Korea in the U.N. General Assembly and the supplies and equipment rushed by it to the assistance of the U.N. press in Korea were described as the "Service Zeal" of Liaquat Ali Khan.

In 1953 and 1954, Pakistan was drawn into the U.S.-sponsored military alliances, CENTO and SEATO. The anti-Soviet objectives of these military pacts was not obscure. Not only that, Pakistan opened its territory for use by U.S. forces for actions against the Soviet Union. One example of this was the use of Peshawar base by U.S. spy planes on their way over the Soviet territory, which culminated in the famous U-2 incident in 1961. Not only this, the Pakistani leaders went on making anti-Soviet statements particularly after the Rawalpindi Conspiracy Case in 1951 and after banning the Pakistani Communist Party in 1954. Actually, these two actions had been to legitimise growing Pakistan collaboration in the military field. Pakistan's successive rulers during this period failed to reciprocate all Soviet gestures and initiatives to improve Pak-Soviet relations.

It was only after the military coup by General Ayub Khan and when Zulfikar Ali Bhutto joined the government that some

123 Ibid., 21 Nov 1948
124 Ibid., No.28, 12 July 1950, pp. 19-20
125 Kalim Bahadur, op.cit., p. 69.
breakthrough was achieved in Pak-Soviet relations as indicated by the agreement signed in 1960. Under this agreement, Moscow agreed to help Pakistan in exploring oil and other natural resources. This was followed by grant of loans by the Soviet Union to Pakistan. Cultural and trade ties were further expanded in 1962-65. In 1965, President Ayub Khan visited the Soviet Union. This was the first ever visit of a Pakistani head of government to Moscow. During the visit comprehensive agreements on the expansion of cultural exchange, economic cooperation and trade were signed.  

A Pakistani military mission led by the then Commander-in-Chief of the army, Gen. Yahya Khan, paid a ten day visit to the Soviet Union during 28 June-July 1968 and it was indicated on 8 July that before the delegation left, it had secured Moscow's promise for military assistance.

The Soviet Union was the first country outside the subcontinent Sheikh Mujibur Rahman visited after being installed as the executive head of Bangladesh. Moscow agreed to give Bangladesh fifty railway locomotives and offered to clear Dhaka and Chittagong ports of mines, the latter move had obvious strategic implications. But the Soviets kept their aid commitments to a minimal and prudent level.  

The Simla Agreement of 3 July 1972 between the Prime Minister of India and the Pakistan President was welcomed by the Soviet Union. Pravda, in an article on the situation in Pakistan, called the Simla Agreement "an important step along the road of normalisation of Pakistani-Indian relations and the whole situation in South Asia."  

Soviet Union might have assumed a bigger role in the

126 Ibid.
128 Pravda, 15 Aug 1972
development of Bangladesh if the new nation had adopted the Soviet model of "noncapitalist development" under a mobilization system of government. Soviet analysts came to the conclusion in 1972-73 that Bangladesh with its extremely small and highly fragmented bourgeoisie, its lack of an entrepreneurial and managerial elite and its preponderance of peasants with small holdings, was unsuitable for capitalist development and parliamentary democracy.129

129 For a detailed study of Soviet analysis of the social and economic structure of Bangladesh, see Yun V. Gankovsky, "The Social Structure of Society in the People's Republic of Bangladesh," Asian Survey, 14, No. 3, Mar 1974