

# **BHUTAN AND THE UNITED NATIONS**

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**SUDHIR SINGH PARIHAR**

INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATION DIVISION  
CENTRE FOR INTERNATIONAL POLITICS AND ORGANISATION  
SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES  
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY  
NEW DELHI-110067, INDIA  
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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Sudhir Singh Parihar

**INTRODUCTORY NOTE**

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This study attempts to examine Bhutan's role in the United Nations from 1971 to 1981 .

It should be noted that Bhutan, a land-locked kingdom lying between India and China, was under British Protectorate until 1947. After the withdrawal of the British from the Indian sub-continent in 1947, Bhutan signed a treaty with India in 1949. The 1949 Treaty established special relations between India and Bhutan and the latter agreed to be guided by the advice of the former in regard to its external relations.

It is also noteworthy that Bhutan's emergence on the international scene is a recent development. Till the end of 1950s, due to geopolitical reasons and its contentment with its traditional way of life and economy, Bhutan kept itself isolated from the outside world with hardly any interest in the politics of the world at large. However, changes in political environment began to show its impact on the Kingdom in the 1960s and the urge to modernise itself and participate actively in international politics became quite pronounced.

Bhutan began to emerge gradually on the international scene. It joined the Colombo Plan for Co-operation and Economic Development in South and South East Asia in 1962,

and also became a member of the Universal Postal Union in 1969. It was admitted to the United Nations in 1971, and this demonstrated its willingness to play its part and gained recognition for the same in the international community.

What kind of role Bhutan, a tiny State, economically under-developed and vulnerably land-locked between two Asian giants, can play in the world organization? To what extent can UN membership benefit Bhutan, both politically and economically? What difference, if any, has its UN membership made on Indo-Bhutanese relations? To what extent, if any, has the membership influenced, or is likely to influence the 1949 Treaty relations with India? What has been the interaction and the voting pattern of Bhutan in the United Nations? These inter-related questions are the subject of this study.

The first chapter attempts to provide a brief account of the major determinants of Bhutan's external relations and its foreign policy objectives. In the second chapter, Bhutan's relationship with India in the context of the 1949 Treaty, the implications of the Treaty on its international status and the developments leading to Bhutan's admission to the United Nations are examined.

The third and the fourth chapters deal with Bhutan's participation and interaction at the United

Nations. In analysing Bhutan's role in the United Nations the focus is on the voting pattern and interactions. The third chapter is concerned with three major conflict situations, namely, the Indo-Pakistan, 1971; the Kampuchean and Afghanistan Crises, 1979 and the fourth examines three important issues, namely, the special problems of the land-locked countries, Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace, and South Asia as a nuclear-weapon-free zone, which have a bearing on Bhutan's national interests as well as provide a reflection on Bhutan's role as an independent nation.

The last chapter attempts an overall assessment of Bhutan's role in the United Nations and the achievements it made through UN membership.

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**CHAPTER I**

**BHUTAN'S EXTERNAL RELATIONS : DETERMINANTS  
AND OBJECTIVES**

## CHAPTER I

### BHUTAN'S EXTERNAL RELATIONS : DETERMINANTS AND OBJECTIVES

For a perceptive analysis of Bhutan's international behaviour and its role in the United Nations it is pertinent to examine the determinants of Bhutan's external relations. The basic framework of Bhutan's foreign policy, as of any country, is largely conditioned by its history, geography, economics, socio-cultural composition and its political system.

Geographical determinism may be taken up first as there is much truth in the remark that "the foreign policy of a country is determined by its geography",<sup>1</sup> and in the case of Bhutan geography does play an important role as its size, location and topography has always had an important bearing on its external relations.

Bhutan has an area of only 17,800 sq. miles and a small population of 1.2 millions.<sup>2</sup> It is bounded on the north by Tibet (now a part of Communist China), on the east, west and south by the Indian States of Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh

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<sup>1</sup> Napoleon Bournaparte, quoted by Norman D. Palmer and Howard C. Perkins, International Relations (Calcutta: Scientific Book Agency, 1976), edn 3, p. 35.

<sup>2</sup> World Development Report, 1984 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), p. 110.

(NEFA) and West Bengal respectively. Thus the geographic location of Bhutan is disadvantageous to it in three ways; (a) Bhutan, being land-locked, does not have access to the sea except through its neighbours. This makes import and export highly expensive owing to additional transport charges; (b) it is sandwiched between two vastly larger, richer and stronger nations--India and China--which are hardly ever friendly, a fact which renders Bhutan's "external relations crucial not only to its survival as an independent country, but also to its internal politics";<sup>3</sup> and (c) the kingdom does not have the option to develop equidistant relations with both the immediate neighbours, as geographically Bhutan is more a part of India which surrounds it from three sides and also provides it with the easier outlet to the outside world at large.

Another important geographical factor is its topography--extremely rugged terrain with high ranges, thick forests and wild rivers. While the mountain peaks rise as high as 24,000 feet, the valleys are situated as low as 3,000 feet. Even in central Bhutan where the variation between the height of different valleys is limited to the range of 6,000 to 8,000 feet, one valley is separated from the other by mountains as high as 12,000 to 15,000 feet.<sup>4</sup> Hence topographically the

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<sup>3</sup> Leo E. Rose, The Politics of Bhutan (Ithaca, N.Y. Cornell University Press, 1977), p. 55.

<sup>4</sup> Manorama Kohli, India and Bhutan (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt Ltd., 1982), p. 2.

state lies divided into many parts of these mountain ranges. Apart from the rugged terrain the various river systems are also wild and so overflowing in the rainy season that routes into central Bhutan along the bottom of the deep gorges are not feasible.<sup>5</sup> The terrain makes development of transport system highly expensive with the result that before 1962 the country did not have even a single paved road.<sup>6</sup> Even now there are no rail-roads. Thus the topographical features of land are such as <sup>they</sup> not only proved to be hurdles in the way of the country's economic development and the unification of the people into a strong centralised system of administration, but also cut off the country from the outside world for centuries.<sup>7</sup>

In the economic field Bhutan has traditionally been self-sufficient in agricultural products except for salt and wool (which previously came from Tibet but now are imported from India). Otherwise also Bhutan, in comparison with its

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<sup>5</sup>Rose, n. 3, pp. 21-22.

<sup>6</sup>"The first paved road from the border town of Phunto holding to the capital, Thimphu, was completed as recently as 1962 making it possible to undertake a journey a seven hours that previously took twice as many days." V.H. Coelho, Sikkim and Bhutan, p. 56, quoted in Nagendra Singh, Bhutan: A Kingdom in the Himalayas (New Delhi: Thomson Press India Ltd., 1977), p. 11.

<sup>7</sup>"Bhutan was cut off contemporary civilisation, as we understand it, until a few years ago. It evolved its own pattern of existence curiously without the impositions of religious or political reformers. Sparse population, rugged terrain and poor communications discouraged the ferment of ideas. Down the centuries there were a few travellers, hardly more than a dozen or so, who introduced novelties from the world outside...." Coelho, p. 55, cited in Singh, *Ibid.*, p. 11.

neighbouring countries, is reasonably well off being "the only country in South Asia with an overall favourable land-population ratio 24 persons to a sq. kilometer".<sup>8</sup> When the General Agreement between Bhutan and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) was signed, the UN Resident in Bhutan, John McDiarmid, observed that "there was no pollution, no starvation and no unemployment in Bhutan".<sup>9</sup> In regard to natural resources Bhutan has large deposits of limestone, marble, dolomite, graphite, lead, copper, coal, talc and gypsum; rich river valleys in the highlands particularly in the western and central Bhutan; and immense forest wealth. Nevertheless, Bhutan happens to be one of the least developed countries. As per 1990 estimate, its GNP per capita is US \$90.<sup>10</sup> According to modern standards Bhutanese have very few of the material indices of prosperity. All its natural resources remain under-utilized and underdeveloped. Thus just as its geography, Bhutan's economy is a double-sided coin. Self-sufficiency, in the traditional sense, makes it capable of maintaining isolation but underdevelopment compels it to invite huge economic and technical assistance from other countries.

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<sup>8</sup> B.N. Banerjee, India's Aid to its Neighbours (New Delhi: Select Book Publishers and Distributors, 1982), p. 477.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> See World Development Report, 1984, n. 2, p. 110.

One aspect of foreign economic assistance to Bhutan, which needs particular attention, is its heavy dependence on India for its development and modernisation programme. Initially the primary responsibility for economic development of the country was handed over entirely to India to the effect that the Development Secretariat in Bhutan looked like a Government of India enterprise.<sup>11</sup> This became a major concern for the Bhutanese political elite who started looking for a shift in the country's international economic strategy to diversify sources of economic aid. Even after the Government's decision to make its way to the "Bhutanisation" of the Development Ministry a high proportion of subordinate and technical posts in the development departments are staffed by Indians and the bulk of the foreign aid still flows from India. The first two Five Year Plans were wholly financed by India involving expenditure of Rs.30 crores on the one hand and Rs.20 crores on the other. The Third and the Fourth Five Year Plans were partly but heavily financed by India. India's contribution went up to the extent of Rs.70 crores for the plans respectively. To the very ambitious Fifth Five Year Plan (1981-86) India's contribution is again going to be substantial. It may bear three-fourth of Bhutan's expenditure.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Rose, n. 3, p. 91.

<sup>12</sup> Kapilleshwar Lohb, India and Bhutan (New Delhi: Sindhya Publications, 1974), p. 60.

As a determinant of its external relations, Bhutan's history is also very important. In ancient times Bhutan belonged to the Assamese Kingdom of Kamarupa. Kamarupa's control over Bhutan ended with the death of its King Bhaskarvarman in 650 A.D.;<sup>13</sup> however, its links with India continued to grow. In the eighth century Padmasambhava, a teacher at Nalanda University of India, visited Bhutan and meditated there to perform the consecration ceremony of the land. He, therefore, came to be reverentially regarded by the natives as their "Guru Rinpoche, the Precious Spiritual Teacher".<sup>14</sup> Though these historical and religious linkages with India do not affect much the present relations between the countries, they do incline Bhutan favourably towards India.

More importantly, the ancient history of Bhutan lays foundation of the deep and extensive cultural and religious links with Tibet. Not long after the end of the Kingdom of Kamarupa over Bhutan, Tibetans invaded the Bhutanese territory in the eighth century and formed a colony there though without any organised administration. The Tibetan invaders were followed by groups of Tibetan priests. The Tibetan farmers and herdsmen, who settled in Bhutan, married

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<sup>13</sup> See, Kapileshwar Labh, India and Bhutan, n. 12, p. 4.

<sup>14</sup> See, Ram Rahul, Royal Bhutan (New Delhi, 1983), p. 60.

the local people and converted them to Lamaistic Buddhists. Thus Tibet became "the source of religious and cultural tradition of Bhutan".<sup>15</sup> Because of this religious and cultural affinity with the Tibetans the Bhutanese were much disturbed and agitated when in the late 1950's China ruthlessly crushed and occupied Tibet. This made China yet more repulsive to Bhutan and India more acceptable. It may also be mentioned here that China's foreign policy had ever been a threat to Bhutan's territorial integrity and sovereignty.<sup>16</sup>

Another aspect of Bhutan's history is the fact that as a nation-state it is very young. In ancient times it was neither a single nor an independent entity. As said earlier, formerly Bhutan was a part of the Indian Kingdom of Kamarupa. Later, it fell under the control of Tibet. In the beginning of the seventeenth century, it came under British Indian protectorate. Even when the British withdrew from the Indian sub-continent, its international legal status remained dubious under the Indo-Bhutanese Treaty of 1949. The history of Bhutan's frequent subversion and its rather very late recognition of its fully sovereign status has made the Kingdom develop a "status consciousness"<sup>17</sup> which culminates occasionally

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 56.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 52.

<sup>17</sup> T. T. Poullose, "Bhutan's External Relations and India", International and Comparative Law Quarterly, vol. 20, 1971, p. 204.



in minor strains in Indo-Bhutan relation.

The socio-cultural composition of Bhutan also affects the foreign policy of the country to some extent. The loyalties of the people are divided and "the physical elements of nationality are diffused and loose-knit".<sup>18</sup> Ethnically it consists broadly of four categories: (1) people of Tibetan (Bhotia) origin; (2) people similar to Indo-Mongloid groups in the Assam Himalayas; (3) small tribal groups; and (4) Nepali Bhutanese. The first three categories of people look more towards Tibet for inspiration and do not have much differences amongst themselves. But the Nepali Bhutanese in southern part of the country, who have been residing there for not more than three or four generations, "represent a new, still somewhat alien element in the political structure" of Bhutan and are more attached to India sentimentally and otherwise. Being Hindu, the Nepali Bhutanese are susceptible to ideological penetration from India.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> L. S. Rathore, The Changing Bhutan (New Delhi: Jain Brothers, 1974), p. 88.

<sup>19</sup> See Ross, n. 3, pp. 45-49. "In 1952 an organisation by the name of Bhutan State Congress was formed by a small group of 'refugees' which had fled from the country in 1950 and settled down on a temporary basis in the districts of Assam and West Bengal. In the beginning, these 'refugees' demanded the redress of their grievances but very soon they started asking for more broad-based political reforms internally in Bhutan and a closer association with India externally." Ibid., p. 110.

This ethnical cleavage coupled with multiplicity of languages spoken in the land<sup>20</sup> undermine the national unity and reinforces the country's traditional policy of isolation or at least demands a cautious attitude towards a wider opening of the nation to India. It might explain the imposition of tight restrictions on permanent immigration into Bhutan. Perhaps, Bhutan views permanent immigration as a threat to the country, which might make it another "Sikkim" in which "sons of the soil" may be overwhelmed by a flood of Nepali immigrants.<sup>21</sup>

Another important influence in the decision-making process of the nation is its political system. Although there is monarchy in Bhutan, there is some degree of public participation in the policy formulation. The second hereditary Monarch King (Druk Gyalpo) Jigme Dorji Wangchuk introduced so many administrative and political reforms that there is no more an autocratic monarchy. The King established the National Assembly in 1953 with complete freedom of speech. The King so strengthened the Assembly from year to year that by 1968 it became almost a sovereign body with full powers to formulate policy, legislate on any subject, appoint and

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<sup>20</sup>In Bhutan four languages are spoken: Hindi, Nepali, Tibetan and Dzongkha. See Rathore, n. 18, p. 88.

<sup>21</sup>Rose, n. 3, p. 48.

remove Ministers and officials.<sup>22</sup> The King permitted the National Assembly to have extreme constitutional powers of deciding the fate of monarchy itself. Monarchy in Bhutan is now subject to vote of confidence by the Assembly every three years and besides this tri-annual trial of confidence, the King can be removed any time by the three-fourth majority of the Assembly. Thus the National Assembly is capable of exercising considerable influence over Bhutan's external affairs, which are not the exclusive preserve of the whims and fancies of the Monarch although he still enjoys considerable confidence, respect and influence over his people.

From the above discussion of the geographical, historical, political, social, cultural and economic determinants of Bhutan's external relations it follows that in the decision-making and execution of its foreign policy Bhutan cannot afford to ignore the following facts:

- (a) that it has all the drawbacks of being a small land-locked country;
- (b) that it is economically one of the least developed countries needing considerable financial aid from outside;

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<sup>22</sup>For instance, there was a strong opposition to the appointment of Nari Rustanji, an Indian civil servant, as an adviser to the Government of Bhutan. The Bhutanese saw it as Indian interference in Bhutan's internal administration, though he was appointed on the request of the King. With the transfer of Rustanji in 1966, the post was abolished. See, T. K. Roy Choudhary, "The India-Bhutan Relationship: Some New Trends", in Liliane Brisby, ed., The World Today (London, 1961), p. 479.

- (c) that it is a very young nation-state, ethnically not very well knit; and
- (d) that there exist two very strong neighbours, India and China, as political rivals of each other.

Along with the consideration of the determinants of Bhutan's external relations it shall, perhaps, not be out of place to enlist below the foreign policy objectives of Bhutan which the Royal Government claims to pursue:

- (i) To play an active role in the international community, shedding its age-old policy of isolation which until recently characterised Bhutan's attitude towards the outside world;<sup>23</sup>
- (ii) To promote international peace and reduce tension between States, adhering to the principles enshrined

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<sup>23</sup>The Bhutanese delegate to the United Nations, Prince Namgyal Wangchuck said in the General Assembly of the United Nations at the time of Bhutan's admission to the Organization:

It is only a decade or so since we ended our age-old policy of national isolation and opened our country to the outside world. The policy of national isolation was motivated in the past by self-interest due to geopolitical considerations and not because of lack of desire or capacity to play an active role in the international community. The policy served its end and was instrumental in preserving our country's sovereignty and independence. With the changing of the circumstances in the world and our desire to participate actively in the functioning of the international community, the policy lost its relevance when we joined the Colombo Plan for Co-operation Economic Development in South and South-East Asia in 1962.

Cited in Singh, n. 13, p. 210.

in the United Nations Charter and following the policy of non-alignment;<sup>24</sup>

- (iii) To support elimination of colonialism, racial discrimination and apartheid;<sup>25</sup>
- (iv) To modernize the country and to that end seek bilateral as well as multi-lateral assistance;<sup>26</sup>
- (v) To project a positive, independent and distinct identity of itself on the international level.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>24</sup>Bhutan joined the non-aligned group at its 4th Summit in 1973, at Algiers. Bhutan regards the policy of non-alignment as a "practical policy", "consistent with the objectives of the United Nations to reduce tensions and to build a world in which relations between countries are based on the principle of mutual respect, sovereign equality and non-interference in each other's internal affairs." See Singh, n. 6, p. 214.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 215.

<sup>26</sup>In 1971 the Bhutanese delegate said in the General Assembly: "Our Government and people are fully committed to a policy of modernisation." See Singh, n. 6, p. 210.

<sup>27</sup>For details see Chapter II, infra pp. 19-21.

**CHAPTER II**

**EMERGENCE OF BHUTAN ON THE INTERNATIONAL SCENE**

## CHAPTER II

### EMERGENCE OF BHUTAN ON THE INTERNATIONAL SCENE

As noted earlier, emergence of Bhutan on the international scene is a recent development that started taking shape not earlier than 1960. Its vulnerable land-locked location, small size, mountainous terrain, thick forests, lack of adequate means of communication, almost self-sufficient agrarian economy, satisfaction with its traditional way of life, deep sense of preservation of its cultural and political identity, and the politics of the region -- all acted as deterrents to Bhutan's emergence as a modern State and an active partner in the world comity of nations. It remained slumbering in isolation for a long period of hundred years or so, keeping "its doors shut to the entry of all foreigners"<sup>1</sup> and maintaining only limited contacts with its Himalayan neighbours.

The immediate *raison d'etre* of Bhutan's recession into isolation may be said to be the Second Anglo-Bhutanese War, 1865. In the first half of the eighteenth century,

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<sup>1</sup>Manorama, Kohli, "The China Factor in Indo-Bhutanese Relations", in Surendra Chopra, ed., Studies in India's Foreign Policy (Amritsar: Guru Nanak Dev University, 1983), edn 2, p. 162.

when the Mughal and Ahom empires were at the decline, Bhutan was practising expansionism into the Indian plains area: to its south.<sup>2</sup> However, with the rise of British power in the area, Bhutan had to sublimate its "exuberant expansionist and interventionist instincts"<sup>3</sup> and assume a basically defensive posture. The threshold was reached at with the 1865 War and the ensuing Sinchula Treaty which was no more than a treaty between the conquerer and the vanquished. Under the provisions of the treaty, Bhutan had not only to cede back what remained of the plain areas it held in the Bengal and Assam duars, but also to part with some of its own territory.<sup>4</sup> The Bhutanese authorities attributed the war and the disaster to the free intercourse between the peoples of the two countries. The "war heightened the tendency of the Bhutanese authorities to insulate their country from all contact with the outside world. Bhutan became a forbidden land and no European was allowed to enter."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>In northern Bengal, the principality of Kuch Bihar had to accept what might best be described as Bhutan's 'paramountcy', conceding to the Bhutanese the right to intervene in Kuch Bihari politics on a formalised basis. In north western Assam also, Bhutan formed a succession of weak Ahom rulers to make a series of concessions." Leo E. Rose, The Politics of Bhutan (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977), p. 56.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 57.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 65.

<sup>5</sup>Kapilleshwar Labh, India and Bhutan (New Delhi: Sindhu Publications, 1974), p. 101.



This policy of isolationism no doubt ensured and preserved Bhutan's national identity, but it could not long help in keeping its sovereignty intact. Because of the increasing Chinese threat to the country and the interest of the British in preventing China from establishing its influence in Bhutan, it was mutually considered advantageous that British India should provide protection to Bhutan. Hence, on 8 January 1910, an amendment was made to Article VIII of the Indo-Bhutanese Treaty of 1865. The amended Article reads:

The British Government undertakes to exercise no interference in the internal administration of Bhutan. On its part the Bhutanese Government agrees to be guided by the advice of the British Government in regard to its external relations.

Though the term "protectorate" was not mentioned in the Treaty, the Political Department of the British Indian Government came to regard Bhutan "in effect as a protectorate of Britain",<sup>6</sup> and legally it was not wrong to do so as "a protectorate arises when a weak State surrenders itself by a treaty to the protection of a strong State in such a way that it transfers the management of all its more important

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<sup>6</sup>T. T. Poulse, "Bhutan's External Relations and India", International and Comparative Law Quarterly, vol. 20, p. 203.

international affairs to the protecting State".<sup>7</sup> The Bhutanese Government also did not care to challenge this view and, instead, took pride in receiving titles from the British Government, attending Delhi Durbars of 1905 and 1911, and behaving like other 'feudatory chiefs' of the native Indian States.<sup>8</sup>

When India won independence in 1947, the Bhutanese Government tried to put its country on an equal footing with India, but it was not in a position to exert sufficient pressure on the Government of India which was in favour of maintaining the integrity and autonomy of Bhutan but was not prepared to abandon its right to control the external relations of the Kingdom. Hence, the fresh treaty signed in 1949 retained the "guidance phrase" of the Treaty of 1910. Article II of the new Treaty reads:

The Government of India undertakes to exercise no interference in the internal administration of Bhutan. On its part the Government of Bhutan agrees to be guided by the advice of the Government of India in regard to its external relations.

Although the Government of India signed the treaty in a manner that indirectly elevated the status of Bhutan to

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<sup>7</sup>L. Oppenheim, International Law, edn 8, ed. Lauterpacht (London: Longman, Green & Co., 1974), p. 148.

<sup>8</sup>Labh, n. 5, p. 201.

some extent<sup>9</sup> and never referred to Bhutan as its protectorate, it also did not recognise Bhutan as a sovereign state as it did in the case of Nepal under the Indo-Nepalese 'Peace and Friendship' Treaty, 1950.<sup>10</sup> However, since neither India nor Bhutan ever publicly stated that the kingdom was a protectorate it is obvious that the exact legal status of Bhutan remained a moot point.

In these circumstances, the Royal Government found no reason to make any change in its policy of isolation and continued to have only formal relations with India. However, the Chinese offensive against independent Tibet, launched in 1950 and its strategic and security implications compelled Bhutan to give up its isolation under pressures from India to open up the nation. Though the Bhutanese Government was "reluctant to formally and publicly align itself with India",<sup>11</sup> as it apprehended that this would further undermine the

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<sup>9</sup>India signed the Treaty with Bhutan in a manner in which two sovereign States do it. For arguments in favour of this view see Nagendra Singh, Bhutan: A Kingdom in the Himalayas (New Delhi: Thomson India Limited, 1979), ed. 2, pp. 105-7.

<sup>10</sup>Article I of the Indo-Nepalese Treaty reads: "The two Governments agree mutually to acknowledge and respect the complete sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of each other."

<sup>11</sup>Rose, n. 2, p. 78.

nation's status, it accepted a "broad-scale alignment" with India in the form of several economic-aid agreements and a formal entrustment of the training of the Royal Army by the Indian Army. By implication at least this brought the country "within the Indian security and defensive system".<sup>12</sup>

However, in the wake of the 1962 Sino-Indian border war the Bhutanese Government was forced to make a fresh appraisal of its strategy of survival for doubts were expressed over India's capability to assist Bhutan. The wisdom of continued heavy and singular dependence on India, in such a situation, was also questioned. For the first time, some support was expressed in Bhutanese elite circles for emulation of the Nepali foreign policy model based upon equal friendship with India and China combined with a balance of power strategy.<sup>13</sup>

The Bhutanese Government, however, did not approve of the idea. The reasons for such a decision have been very well put forward by a prominent scholar on South Asian studies,<sup>14</sup> who argues that one of the reasons why the Bhutan

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 78.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., pp. 81-82.

<sup>14</sup>Rose, n. 2, pp. 82-83.

Government did not approve of the Nepalese kind of foreign policy was "the basically different Bhutanese and Nepali perception of China policy in Tibet". While the Bhutanese were "appalled at the wanton and deliberate destruction" of an ancient, Buddhist culture, the Nepalese felt little sympathy towards the Tibetans. Moreover, Bhutan feared that it might have to share the Tibetan fate as the "justification advanced by the Chinese for their aggressive policy in Tibet was largely based upon historical claims (which the Bhutanese consider spurious)". The 1949 Treaty also stood in the way of the adoption of the Nepali model of foreign policy, as Bhutan did not find itself in a position to get the Treaty cancelled or suitably revised.

Further according to the same scholar, "perhaps the key factor in the Royal Government's decision against embarking on any novel foreign policy adventures ... was its reservations about the long-run viability of the Nepali model for Bhutan". It had the impression that Nepal was pulled into big-power confrontation and had "often sacrificed long-range interests in its relationship with India for short-term gains that were primarily intended to pander to the nationalistic sentiments of the articulate Nepali public. For Bhutan felt convinced that Nepal was paying a greater price economically as well as politically for its positive international image abroad."

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The Bhutanese Government, therefore, felt the need of embarking upon such a policy that would not spoil its relations with India but at the same time fetch international recognition to Bhutan's distinct, independent and sovereign identity. Such international recognition could be attained through expanding bilateral diplomatic ties with various countries but the Government knew that New Delhi would not be willing to permit it.<sup>15</sup> Hence, instead of venturing directly into bilateral relations at the displeasure of India, the Royal Government decided to seek membership of international organizations which were perceived as the most plausible, non-controversial institutions towards which India was expected to respond much less sensitively. Moreover, international organizations could fulfil Bhutan's need of diversifying economic aid sources at a lower political price as well as get the nation a greater and faster recognition to its sovereign identity and thus secure a more effective guarantee to its independent existence.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>As early as 1959 Bhutan had thought of establishing relations with the third countries, including the U.S.S.R, the United States, Great Britain and a few Buddhist neighbours, but Nehru wrote to the Bhutanese Government that "it would be inadvisable to establish direct contact with foreign powers". The Hindustan Times, 3 June 1960.

<sup>16</sup>"Bhutan believed that Tibet could not have been occupied by China had it been a member of the UN". Nirmala Das, "Bhutan", World Focus, no. 47-48, Fourth Annual Number, November-December 1985, p. 90.

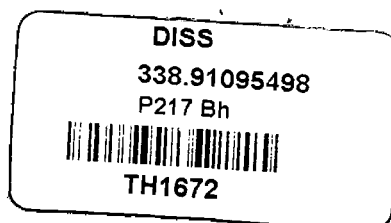
Bhutan made its debut on the international scene in 1962 with its admission to the Colombo Plan for Co-operation and Economic Development in South and South-East Asia. Bhutan's first entry into a regional group of States has a bearing on the Kingdom's legal status, according to a prominent jurist.<sup>17</sup> He argues that "as the Colombo Plan is an international programme of sovereign States receiving economic aid on a co-operative basis, Bhutan's admission may be said to have attained recognition from the States"<sup>18</sup> of the region. Also because Colombo Plan operates bilaterally in practice, there was clear admission of the sovereign equality of Bhutan on the part of other member States of the Plan. Further, the Colombo Plan membership also gave opportunity to establish direct bilateral economic relation with States other than India.

The second step on its way to the comity of nations was Bhutan's admission to the Universal Postal Union in 1969. The most positive aspect of this membership was that the Union being one of the oldest inter-governmental organisations in the world further strengthened the recognition to Bhutan as an independent country. Moreover, this was important also because

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<sup>17</sup> Nagendra Singh (President, International Court of Justice), n. 9, p. 193.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.



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it was Bhutan's first admission to a regular international organisation of a world-wide character.

Bhutan's most ambitious plan of the greatest priority was to acquire membership of the United Nations. Eliciting India's consent and co-operation in this endeavour was a "delicate task" as it had broader implications for both the countries. In the period of 1967-69 several discussions were held on this question on various levels of the two governments and finally the issue was settled in Bhutan's favour.<sup>19</sup>

In 1969 Bhutan sent observers to the UN sessions "in order to familiarize themselves with UN procedures and operations and, more discreetly, to lobby for Bhutan's admission to the United Nations. On 10 December 1970, King Dorji Wangchuck of Bhutan applied for admission to the world body.<sup>20</sup> Under Rule 59, the Committee on Admission of New Members<sup>21</sup> met on 9 February 1971, and submitted its report, recommending Bhutan's admission to the Organisation. The Security Council unanimously accepted the recommendation under resolution S/10109 of 9 February 1971.

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<sup>19</sup>See Rose, n. 2, p. 90.

<sup>20</sup>See Singh, n. 9, p. 195.

<sup>21</sup>Under rule 59 all the members of the Security Council met as "Committee on Admission of New Members", and generally, the agreement arrived at in this Committee is approved by the Council later.



The recommendation of the Security Council was placed before the General Assembly on 21 September 1971, of the 26th Session. On 24 September 1971 the Assembly unanimously adopted resolution 2751 (XXVI), sponsored by 47 States from all continents of the world, admitting Bhutan to the world body.<sup>22</sup>

The debate that followed the adoption of the resolution admitting Bhutan to the United Nations concluded with the speech of the leader of the Bhutanese Delegation, His Highness Prince Wangyal Wangchuck who declared this occasion of the admission to be "a historic occasion" for the Bhutanese as it marked the realization of one of "their most cherished dreams".<sup>23</sup> Commenting upon the usefulness of the United Nations to his country he observed:

That we should today have succeeded in gaining admission to this Organisation whose aim represents the highest aspirations of mankind, whose

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<sup>22</sup>Resolution 2751 (XXVI) reads:

The General Assembly

having received the recommendation of the Security Council of 10 February 1971 that Bhutan should be admitted to membership in the United Nations,

having considered the application for membership of Bhutan Decides to admit Bhutan to membership in the United Nations.

<sup>23</sup>cited in Singh, n. 9, p. 210.

contribution to the maintenance of international peace and security has been substantial, and whose work in nation-building has done so much for the progress of mankind, is an occasion of greatest happiness and rejoicing in my country. 24

However, far more significant are the concluding words of the Address of the King himself delivered to the National Assembly of Bhutan within a month of <sup>the</sup> "historic occasion":

Two or three years back, there were some who had got hold of the misconception that we had sold Bhutan to the Indians and several officers and Members of the National Assembly were entertaining such doubts as I had been coordinating all national activities with the guidance of the Indians. Now that we have become a full member of the United Nations, we have proved our sovereignty and independence and there need no longer be any doubts in this respect. 25

It is gratifying to note that Bhutan has been a member of the United Nations for a little more than a decade, yet it has distinguished itself by its active association with various major problems and issues dealt with in the Organisation. For instance, Bhutan has persistently opposed colonialism and racial discrimination demanding a dynamic and effective action on the part of the world body against it.<sup>26</sup> Bhutan has also shown keen interest in the establishment of the new international economic order (NIEO) and is eager

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 211.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 176.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 215.

for the alteration of the present status quo in the economic sphere.<sup>27</sup> Thus the field of Bhutan's participation in the United Nations is considerably wide. But because of the limited scope and space of the present study, the analysis of Bhutan's interaction at the Organisation, which follows, has to be confined to those few select issues which have a greater bearing on its most vital national interests or which shed a greater light on its actual operation of its foreign policy.

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<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 217.

CHAPTER III

BHUTAN AND CONFLICT SITUATIONS IN SOUTH  
AND SOUTH-EAST ASIA

## CHAPTER III

### BHUTAN AND CONFLICT SITUATIONS IN SOUTH AND SOUTH-EAST ASIA

The present chapter attempts to examine Bhutan's interaction at the United Nations in three conflict situations in South and South East Asia, all arising in the 1970's, namely, the Indo-Pakistan War of 1971, and the two crises of 1979, one occurring in Kampuchea and the other, in Afghanistan. These situations have been selected mainly for two considerations. First, they are all the result of armed intervention for one reason or the other. This common factor can help analyse Bhutan's degree of consistency in her attitude towards armed intervention, the fear of which Bhutan has always felt on its borders. Secondly, in all the three cases, India's views did not coincide with those of the majority of the UN Member States. A study of Bhutan's voting pattern in these issues, therefore, provides an opportunity to examine the extent of India's influence upon the Kingdom's international behaviour, which is one of the aims of the present study.

#### (1) The Indo-Pakistan War, 1971

##### The Issue

On 3 December 1971 war broke out between India and Pakistan (the third in the history of Indo-Pakistan relations).

Three widely divergent views have been expressed on the causes of the war. According to one view India was dragged into the war by Pakistan because of its internal trouble. West Pakistan was accused of practising "intra-state imperialism" in its eastern part.<sup>1</sup> As a consequence of the exploitation and suppression of the people's wishes expressed through the free elections of 1970, a liberation movement started to establish a new independent State, Bangladesh. When, because of the movement, chances of Pakistan remaining united became bleak and emergence of Bangladesh seemed inevitable, Pakistan launched an air offensive against India to internationalise the situation trying to project that it was Indo-Pakistan dispute.<sup>2</sup>

The second view does not hold India as innocent as the first. It admits that there is no shadow of doubt that India was deeply involved in supporting the cessationist movement in East Pakistan by recruiting, arming and training the refugees and also giving combat support through Indian soldiers in civil dress.<sup>3</sup> However, on the other hand, this

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<sup>1</sup>For an example of this point of view see K.P. Misra, The Role of the United Nations in the Indo-Pakistani Conflict (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House Pvt Ltd., 1973), pp. 1-61.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 60.

<sup>3</sup>"Impelled by economic and strategic necessity India first trained, then armed and then gave combat support to Bangladesh refugees. By the third quarter of 1971, the Border Security Force and RAW had become seriously involved in such operations." J. Bandyopadhyaya, The Making of

view finds the Government of India justified in its intervention, for nothing was done despite India's repeated appeals to the international comity to get the problem of Pakistan solved so that India could be relieved of the unbearable burden of about 10 million refugees which this developing country had to feed and to provide shelter for.<sup>4</sup>

The third view does not condone the involvement of India in the cessationist movement of East Pakistan on the basis of the refugee problem. What is more, this view, which is supported by some Indians and Pakistanis alike,<sup>5</sup> maintains that as soon as the crisis in East Pakistan began India decided to dismember Pakistan "to satisfy the nationalists and consequently the popular view that dismemberment of Pakistan was in the long-term interest of India".<sup>6</sup> Therefore, India "presumably after due deliberations decided not to close the

India's Foreign Policy (New Delhi, 1984), pp. 333-4. Also see Saifdar Mahmood, "Indian Involvement in the 1971 Crisis in Pakistan", Strategic Studies (Islamabad), vol. 6, no. 1, Autumn 1982, p. 74.

<sup>4</sup> During her foreign tour before the war had commenced, Mrs Indira Gandhi had strongly hinted that unless the world moved quickly to secure a settlement acceptable to Bengalis, India would have "to take its own action". The Financial Times, 1 November 1971.

<sup>5</sup> Saifdar Mahommed (a Research Associate of the Institute of Strategic Studies, Islamabad) is one of those Pakistanis who strongly uphold this view. See his article on the issue, n. 3.

<sup>6</sup> Subramanyam Swamy, Organiser (Delhi), 13 July 1974.

borders, but to allow the refugees to come in<sup>7</sup> to aggravate the refugee problem to such an extent that it could serve as an excuse for intervention in East Pakistan.

On the basis of a dispassionate analysis of the views summarized above, it will, perhaps, not be wrong to conclude that Pakistan was forced to wage war with India as the latter was militarily intervening in East Pakistan.

### The Issue at the United Nations

The question of Indo-Pak situation came up to the Security Council at the request of nine Member States on 4 December 1971 and was discussed till the sixth of the month. The Representatives of India and Pakistan were invited for discussion. The representative of Pakistan charged India with aggression on the territory of his country which, he said, was the victim of acts of sabotage and terrorism as well as armed incursions by the bands organised by India. He added that India openly demanded dismemberment of Pakistan.<sup>8</sup> Denying these charges the Representative of India counter-accused Pakistan of internationalising its internal problem to make it an Indo-Pak dispute in the hope that people would forget

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<sup>7</sup> Director of the Indian Institute for Defence Studies, cited in Mahmood, n. 3, p. 76.

<sup>8</sup> Year Book of the United Nations, 1971 (New York, N.Y.: Office of Public Information, United Nations, 1971), p. 146. India had already recognised East Pakistan as Bangladesh, an independent State on 5 December 1971.



what Pak army was doing in East Pakistan. He also emphasised that since the problem was essentially between West Pakistan and the people of East Bengal the participation of the representatives of the latter was necessary to obtain a proper perspective of the situation.<sup>9</sup>

For lack of unanimity of opinion among the permanent Members the Security Council could do nothing but refer the question to the General Assembly in accordance with the Assembly Resolution 377A(V) of 3 November 1950 also known as the 'Uniting for Peace' resolution.

The General Assembly discussed the question at two plenary meetings both held on 7 December 1971. To India the cessation of hostilities and withdrawal of forces stood linked with political settlement between East Pakistan and West Pakistan. Therefore, arguing that "India could not ignore what was happening just across its border and the effect on its national integrity amounting to civil aggression against India", the Representative of India demanded that "any withdrawal of forces had to include the withdrawal of Pakistan occupation forces from Bangladesh",<sup>10</sup> which India had already recognised as an independent State. Though it was largely realised that West Pakistan was guilty of

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 151.

repression and violation of human rights and that India unduly suffered the burden of refugees, yet most of the Member States were not prepared to link the political settlement between East and West Pakistan with cessation of hostilities. Moreover, they also did not think Indian armed intervention in East Pakistan justifiable and did not share the Indian view that East Bengal had ceased to be part of Pakistan.<sup>11</sup>

Hence, Resolution 2793 (XXVI), which was adopted by the Assembly on 7 December, called upon India and Pakistan to cease-fire immediately and withdraw the forces to their own side of the border. It further urged that efforts should be intensified to speedily bring about conditions necessary for the voluntary return of East Pakistani refugees to their homes and appealed for full co-operation of all States with the Security Council for rendering assistance to, and relieving the distress of, the refugees. It also called upon the Security Council to take appropriate action in the light of the present resolution. The operative part of the resolution made no reference whatsoever to the problem existing between East and West Pakistan and its solution.

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<sup>11</sup>For example, the Representative of Iran observed that "the conditions which led to this tragedy are extremely complex.... This is the regrettable situation that developed in East Pakistan and that provoked human tragedy of the refugees... which led to armed intervention on the part of India against the national territory of a Member State.... This action on the part of India, whatsoever the reasons for it, is hence entirely unjustifiable." UN Doc. A/PV. 2003, 7 December 1971, p. 5.

The Resolution was adopted with 104 Powers supporting, 10 abstaining and 11 opposing it. Bhutan was among those few States which joined India in opposing and voting against the resolution. Taking a view similar to that of India, Bhutan advocated the removal of the "basic cause of tension" which, according to its view, was suppression of the will of the people of the East Bengal as expressed in the free elections held under the auspices of the Government of Pakistan in December 1970. In this connection, the following few words from the statement made by the Representative of Bhutan in the General Assembly are worth quoting:

My delegation will support any move which aims at removing the basic cause of tension in the area. It is the hope of my delegation that reason will prevail and this Assembly will permit the will of 75 million people of East Bengal...for ultimately it is the people who matter and they should have the right to shape their future destiny in accordance with their views. 12

#### (11) The Kampuchean Crisis

##### The Issue

There is a long history of conflict between Vietnam and Cambodia (now known as Kampuchea).<sup>13</sup> But since 1975,

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<sup>12</sup>UN Doc. A/PV.2003, 7 December 1971, p. 4.

<sup>13</sup>For a brief history of Vietnam-Cambodia disputes see Seldon W. Simon, "New Conflict in Indo-China", Strategic Digest (New Delhi), vol. 9, no. 2, February 1979, p. 125.

Democratic Kampuchea, under the Pol Pot regime, has had serious dispute with Vietnam, the root cause of which, as suspected in 1978 by the then Prime Minister of Kampuchea, Ieng Sary, lay in the Vietnamese "intention of swallowing Kampuchea, subverting and aggressing it, attempting to engineer a coup de' tat and forcing it to join an Indo-China federation under its [Vietnamese] domination".<sup>14</sup>

To the advantage of Vietnam, atrocities were committed by the Pol Pot regime in which, reportedly, there was gross violation of human rights and killing of millions of Kampucheans. Just a month after the signing of the USSR-Vietnam Friendship Treaty a Kampuchean National United Front for National Salvation (KNUFS) was formed allegedly "sponsored, aided and likely armed by Hanoi".<sup>15</sup> It was feared that very soon Vietnam would invade Kampuchea "under the convenient camouflage of the front [KNUFS] and in the name of Cambodian dignity and independence".<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Sary's address to the Japan-Cambodian Friendship Society in Tokyo, Ibid., p. 136.

<sup>15</sup> This was learnt through diplomatic sources as mentioned by Abbas Rashid in "The Indo-Chinese Conflict: Vietnam, Kampuchea and the Great Powers", Strategic Studies (Islamabad), vol. 3, no. 7, Autumn 1979, pp. 75-96.

<sup>16</sup> The Daily Telegraph (London) correspondent stationed at Singapore. Ibid., p. 72.

The expected tragedy did take place. Less than a month after the formation of the KNUFS, the Vietnamese armed forces, having a strength of more than a million personnel equipped with modern Soviet tanks, artillery and weapons, invaded Kampuchea, and on 7 January 1979 succeeded in establishing a puppet regime in Phnom Penh under Heng Samrin.<sup>17</sup> They renamed the country as People's Republic of Kampuchea.

Internationally, few countries outside the Soviet bloc recognised the Heng Samrin regime which still needed support of a large Vietnamese army and was still fighting on the borders with a coalition opposition consisting of Khmer Rouge, the Khmer People's National Republic Front (KPLNF) and the Moulinke Party aided by China and the ASEAN.<sup>18</sup>

#### The Issue at the United Nations

The issue came up to the United Nations first as a question as to which government should be seated in the Organisation. While the credentials of the representatives of Democratic Kampuchea were submitted, as usual, Heng Samrin

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<sup>17</sup> Asis Kumar Majumdar, South-East Asia in Indian Foreign Policy (Calcutta: Naya Prakash, 1982), p. 147.

<sup>18</sup> For details see the International Year Book and Statesman's Who's Who 1983, pp. 288-9.

claiming to be the head of People's Republic of Kampuchea demanded representation of his own government. The majority, which was not prepared to recognise the new government, favoured continued seating of the representatives of Democratic Kampuchea. The Committee, therefore, recommended in its report to the Assembly acceptance of the credentials of Democratic Kampuchea.<sup>19</sup>

The Assembly considered the report of the Credentials Committee during two plenary meetings on 21 September 1979. An amendment was moved by eight members including India to the effect that the Assembly had considered the report and decided, without prejudice to the positions of Member States, to suspend consideration of the case of Kampuchean representations and keep the seat of Kampuchea vacant for the time being. But the amendment failed and the text of the report was adopted as it was under resolution 34/2A by a recorded vote of 71 to 35 with 34 abstentions. Bhutan voted in favour and India against it.<sup>20</sup>

Next, as a political and security matter, the question of Kampuchea was taken up by the General Assembly on the request of the ASEAN States, under the item named "The

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<sup>19</sup>Year Book of the United Nations, 1979, p. 290.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 291.

situation in Kampuchea" and was discussed between 12 and 14 November. Three draft resolutions were placed before the Assembly. Under the first draft resolution (A/34/L.7/Rev. 1) the Assembly called upon all States to refrain from any activity which could be detrimental to the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Kampuchea and which constituted interference in the internal affairs of Kampuchea.

The second draft resolution (A/34/L.13/Rev.2), advocated the calling for immediate withdrawal of all foreign forces from Kampuchea and calling upon all States to refrain from all acts or threats of aggression and all forms of interference in the internal affairs of States in South-East Asia. The draft resolution also appealed to all States to refrain from any interference in the internal affairs of Kampuchea in order to enable its people to decide their own future and destiny free from outside interference. It also expressed the need of holding an international conference on Kampuchea.

The third draft resolution (A/34/L.33) was sponsored by India to "supplement" the other proposals. Under this proposal the Assembly urged the Member States of the Association of South-East Asian Nations and other States of Indo-China to hold a conference to discuss all issues which had given rise to the tensions in South-East Asia.

Bhutan's position towards this crisis was undoubtedly independent of India. The King of Bhutan had already taken such a position in the Havana Summit Conference of the Non-Aligned countries where he had asserted that it was "their firm belief and conviction that intervention in the internal affairs of States cannot be justified under any circumstances whatsoever".<sup>21</sup> Bhutan's stand on the issue in the United Nations remained the same. Dago Tshering, Representative of the Kingdom, stated in the Assembly:

The international community must find a peaceful solution....The people of Kampuchea must be allowed to determine their own destiny without outside interference. We believe that Kampuchea has the same right to independence and integrity as all other States. 22

He concluded his statement expressing his hope that while taking a decision on the three draft resolutions before the Assembly, Member States will be guided by the "non-alignment principles of respect for sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity, non-interference in internal affairs, non-use of force and non-aggression which were mentioned by his King in the Havana Summit".<sup>23</sup>

In the case of the first draft resolution,<sup>24</sup> it was

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<sup>21</sup>Dago Tshering, Representative of Bhutan read out this speech in the Assembly. UN Doc. A/34/PV. 16 November, pp. 33-35.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 32.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 35.

<sup>24</sup>Draft resolution A/34/L.7/Rev. 1, 12 December 1979.



decided by a recorded vote that no decision should be taken on it. Bhutan voted in favour of the move, while India cast its negative vote. The third draft resolution (A/34/L.38) which was sponsored by India was not at all put to vote for lack of support from the ASEAN countries. It was the second draft resolution (A/34/L.13/Rev.2) which was adopted by the Assembly as resolution 34/22 on 14 November 1979 by a recorded vote of ninety-one to twenty-one with twenty-nine abstentions.

Next year on 22 October, under resolution 35/6, the General Assembly decided to convene early in 1981 an international conference on Kampuchea to arrive at an agreement, among other things, on total withdrawal of foreign forces from Kampuchea within a specific time frame to be verified by the United Nations; on the measure by which the United Nations was to ensure non-interference by outside Powers in the internal affairs of Kampuchea; and on guarantees against introduction of any foreign forces in that country.<sup>25</sup> The voting pattern of Bhutan and India was the same as in 1979 on resolution 34/22. Bhutan voted in favour of the resolution while India abstained.

The positions of India and Bhutan remained the same in 1981 also. On 21 October, the General Assembly, under resolution 36/5, decided to reconvene the International Conference on Kampuchea at an appropriate time in order to contribute to a

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<sup>25</sup>Year Book of the United Nations, 1980.

comprehensive political settlement. Bhutan voted in favour of the resolution and India abstained.<sup>26</sup>

What the Representative of Bhutan to the United Nations said in the general debate of the Assembly was a re-iteration of its old stand.<sup>27</sup> The Government of India's view as stated by its representative was that a "political dialogue" among the countries of the region, "within a framework such as defined in the New Delhi Non-Aligned Conference", was essential for desired results. "It is incumbent on the international community to encourage, rather than obstruct, such contacts" and for this it was further needed that the Government of People's Republic of Kampuchea should be invited to the United Nations to participate in the debate and exchange views.<sup>28</sup>

#### (iii) The Afghanistan Crisis

##### The Issue

Through a coup, at the end of December 1979, a new regime took over the Government of Afghanistan denouncing the former President Hafizullah Amin as the head of a "bloody

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<sup>26</sup> UN Doc. A/36/PV. 13, 21 October 1981, p. 66.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 86.

<sup>28</sup> UN Doc. A/36/PV. 39, 21 October 1981, p. 93.

dynasty" and "an agent of US imperialism".<sup>29</sup> The change of regime was accompanied by entry into Afghanistan of several thousand Soviet combat troops. The Governments of Afghanistan and the Soviet Union maintained that the former had invited the troops of the latter in the face of provocation from Afghanistan's external enemies,<sup>30</sup> invoking the 1978 Afghanistan-USSR Friendship Treaty which has a clause whereby any of the two parties can call for material help of the other to ward off danger.

At the international level few countries outside the Soviet bloc were prepared to believe the above mentioned version of the events. The United States described the Soviet Union presence and action in Afghanistan as a "blatant military interference in the internal affairs of an independent sovereign state".<sup>31</sup> China through its New China Agency condemned the Soviet Union's action as a "long planned... military invasion".<sup>32</sup> It is also alleged that the Soviet

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<sup>29</sup>Amin was thus condemned by Babrak Karmal in a speech carried through Moscow Radio. Keessing's Contemporary Archives, 9 May 1980, p. 30229.

Similarly Kabul radio report monitored by the Iranian news agency Pars on 27 December at 7.45 p.m. described Amin's regime as "tyrannical, murderous, treacherous, dictatorial and fascist". Ibid., p. 30229.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 30230.

<sup>32</sup>Kulwant Kaur, "Recent Developments in Afghanistan and their Impact on India's Security", in Surendra Chopra, ed., Studies in India's Foreign Policy (Amritsar: Guru Nanak Dev University, 1983), edn 2, p. 262.

troops penetrated the Afghanistan border to suppress any opposition to the coup which was engineered by the Soviet Union itself through a task force secretly air-lifted earlier to Bagram air base and a commando group stationed in Kabul in the guise of a "communication delegation". It is also reported that Babrak Karmal who is claimed to have "directed the whole operation" of the coup was not even present in Afghanistan at that time as he had taken refuge in West European countries and later in the Soviet Union itself after his forced exile in July 1978.<sup>33</sup>

#### The Issue at the United Nations

At the United Nations when the matter was discussed in the Security Council from 5 to 9 January 1980, the focus was on the questions as to who was responsible for inviting "foreign forces" to move into Afghanistan and as to on what date this invitation was extended.<sup>34</sup> The concerned parties, the Soviet Union, the new Government of Afghanistan and their allies "failed to respond to the questions in categorical terms or in a way that could carry conviction".<sup>35</sup> But because of

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<sup>33</sup> S.K. Bain, Afghanistan will not Die (Calcutta: Satyam Shivam, 1982), pp. 25-32.

<sup>34</sup> UN Doc. S/PV.2199, 7 January 1980.

<sup>35</sup> K.P. Saksena, "Afghanistan Conflict and the United Nations", in K.P. Misra, ed., Afghanistan in Crisis (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House Pvt Ltd., 1981), p. 109.

Saksena points out that the Soviet Union's arguments were very "self-contradictory". It invoked Articles 2(7) and 51 of the Charter simultaneously -- claiming on the one

the Soviet veto the Security Council could not take any decision and hence on 9 January, on the initiative of Philippines and Mexico, the matter was referred, under the "Uniting for Peace" resolution, to the General Assembly which convened its Sixth Emergency Special Session on the 10th of the month.<sup>36</sup> Seventy-four delegates participated in the ensuing debate. Under resolution ES-6/2 proposed by Pakistan, the Assembly "strongly deplored the recent armed intervention into Afghanistan as inconsistent with a fundamental principle of the Charter" and called for an "immediate, unconditional and total withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan in order to enable its people to determine their economic, political and social system free from outside intervention, subversion, coercion or constraint of any kind whatsoever".<sup>37</sup> The resolution was adopted by a vote of 104 in favour, to 18 against with 18 abstentions. India voted against the resolution as it seemed satisfied by the assurance given to it by the Soviet Government that the

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hand that the matter fell under the domestic jurisdiction of Afghanistan and, on the other, that the Soviet assistance to Afghanistan was in accordance with Article 51 which recognises the inherent right of states for individual or collective self-defence. See p. 108.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 106.

<sup>37</sup> The name of the interventionist country was not given in the resolution.

Soviet troops entered Afghanistan "at the request of the Afghanistan Government, a request that was first made by President Amin on 26 December 1979 and repeated by his successor on 28 December 1979".<sup>38</sup> Further, India claimed that it was in favour of advising "restraint" rather than apportioning blame and "warned that a resolution unacceptable to the parties directly concerned would be counter-productive".<sup>39</sup>

Bhutan's response to the situation was peculiar. It absented itself from the entire proceedings of the Assembly, both from the debate as well as the voting on the issue. Bhutan chose to reflect upon the situation only indirectly by its statement in the general debate of the Assembly:

The Asian situation is still one of crisis and turmoil. We cannot ignore or condone the situations resulting from interference in the internal affairs of sovereign States and from Great-Power rivalries as such developments go against the United Nations Charter and could very easily assume serious proportions.<sup>40</sup>

The same year on 20 November, in its regular session, the General Assembly again called for the immediate withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan and reaffirmed the right of Afghanistan people to determine their form of government

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<sup>38</sup>Quoted in Misra, n. 35, p. 109.

<sup>39</sup>Year Book of the United Nations 1980, p. 305.

<sup>40</sup>UN Doc. A/36/PV.13, 21 October 1981, p. 88.

and to choose their political, economic and social system free from outside intervention, subversion, coercion or restraint. The Assembly's decision was embodied in its resolution 35/37 which was adopted by a vote of 111 in favour to 22 against, with 12 abstentions. Bhutan again did not vote while this time India abstained.<sup>41</sup>

In the following year (1981) also positions of the two countries remained the same.<sup>42</sup> Bhutan did not participate in the proceedings but did speak on the issue a bit more clearly during the general debate. It said that it was "fully committed to the view that foreign troops in South and South-East Asia must be withdrawn and the independent, non-aligned status of the countries restored".<sup>43</sup>

From the above discussion it should be noted that Bhutan's behaviour regarding the above discussed three issues, has varied in pattern in two ways: First, while Bhutan held

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<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 86.

<sup>42</sup>Vide resolution 36/34, 18 November 1981, the General Assembly:

1. Reiterates that the preservation of the sovereignty territorial integrity, political independence and non-aligned character of Afghanistan is essential for a peaceful solution of the problem;
2. Reaffirms the right of the Afghan people to determine their own form of government and to choose their economic, political and social system free from outside intervention, subversion, coercion or constraint of any kind whatsoever;
3. Calls upon for the immediate withdrawal of the foreign troops from Afghanistan.

<sup>43</sup>UN Doc. A/36/PV. 13, 21 October 1981, p. 86.

identical view with India on the Indo-Pakistan War 1971, against the majority opinion of the UN Members, Bhutan took completely different stands from those of India on the other two issues. In the case of Afghanistan, though it did not participate in the UN proceedings, yet, outside the United Nations, Bhutan expressed its independent view-point. Secondly, in the case of Indo-Pakistan War, Bhutan remained more concerned with the political settlement between East and West Pakistan and the redress of the grievances of the people of East Pakistan and was less worried about the armed conflict between India and Pakistan and its cessation. On the contrary, in response to the conflict situations in Kampuchea and Afghanistan, Bhutan came up as a staunch supporter of the Charter's fundamental principles of non-interference and non-intervention in the internal affairs of other States, and exhibited less concern over the nature of the problems as a result of which the conflict situations arose. The probable motives behind these variations in Bhutan's voting pattern will be analysed in the concluding chapter.

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**CHAPTER IV**

**OTHER MAJOR PROBLEMS**

## CHAPTER IV

### OTHER MAJOR PROBLEMS

The present chapter attempts to examine Bhutan's voting behaviour and interaction at the United Nations in respect of three major problems: (i) the question of special problems and needs of the land-locked states, (ii) the question of Indian Ocean as a zone of peace, and (iii) the question of South Asia as a nuclear-weapon-free zone. These issues have been selected keeping in view the fact that all of them have a vital bearing on Bhutan's national interests. That, it is a land-locked state is a disadvantage to Bhutan not only politically but also economically for, having no direct access to and from the sea, it has to bear additional transport costs which mean a lot to the Kingdom which is economically one of the least developed states. The other two questions are also of vital concern to Bhutan as they have serious political and security implications for the entire region of South Asia of which this small kingdom is a part.

#### (1) Problems of the Land-Locked States

##### The Issue

There is a long history of attempts made to solve the problems of land-locked states through international conventions and bilateral as well as multilateral agreements.

The first attempt can be traced back to the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, which laid down certain rules and regulations for the Central European states regarding free navigation and traffic charges contributing to the development of international law on free access to the sea for land-locked states.<sup>1</sup> In the period following the Second World War, while the problems of the land-locked states had been more or less satisfactorily solved in Europe, the Asian, African and Latin American countries were still struggling hard to win concessions from their coastal and transit neighbours mainly through bilateral agreements<sup>2</sup> which were not adequate for the needs of the land-locked states. These countries lacked sufficient transit facilities and efficient transportation systems. Most of the exports of these countries were rendered uncompetitive in international markets because of high transportation costs.

#### The Issue at the United Nations

Because of the above mentioned problems faced by the land-locked countries the urgent need for an international convention on the subject was brought to the notice of the United Nations where these countries began to acquaint the

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<sup>1</sup>For the details of these early attempts see Sita Shrestha, Nepal and the United Nations (New Delhi: Sindhu Publications, 1972), pp. 159-61.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 161.

Organization with their special problems and they also started receiving concern or at least sympathy from the international community in regard to their peculiar disadvantages. The problems were discussed at various UN forums such as ECAFE (Economic Commission for Asia and Far East), UNCTAD (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, ECOSOC (Economic and Social Council) and at the General Assembly itself.

The demands put forward by the land-locked countries may be summed up as follows:<sup>3</sup>

- (1) Recognition of the needed facility of free access to and from the sea as a right of land-locked countries;
- (2) Grant to the vessels flying the flag of land-locked countries of rights and treatment identical to that enjoyed by vessels flying the flag of coastal states other than the territorial states;
- (3) Recognition, as a right, of freedom of the seas for the land-locked countries on equal terms with the coastal states;
- (4) Creation of a separate international compulsory fund to subsidise additional higher transportation cost of the developing land-locked countries;
- (5) Free and unrestricted transit on the basis of reciprocity for every type of goods of land-locked countries;

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<sup>3</sup>For details see Ibid., pp. 163-4.

- (6) Grant of priority by International Financial Agency for the development of the infrastructure of the transport project and especially of inland water navigation of the developing land-locked countries;
- (7) Evolution of international practice of quoting "Through Rates" in order to facilitate the international trade of developing land-locked countries;
- (8) Elimination of such practices as licensing system and customs appraisal of the traffic in transit;
- (9) Provision for most convenient transit route and the alternative mode of transportation;
- (10) Stabilisation of the tariff structure of surface transport by coastal countries for not less than ten years;
- (11) Provision for port facilities including that of terminal, transit shed, storing and hauling, etc.;
- (12) Provision of roll-on, roll-off facility of the railway wagons to developing land-locked countries and a rebate for using their own wagons; and
- (13) Periodic annual evaluation and meeting of experts from land-locked countries and international agencies.

In 1971, when Bhutan joined the United Nations, the General Assembly, vide its resolution 2320 (XXVI) of 16 December, urged "the UNCTAD at its third session to adopt comprehensive action programmes incorporating special measures in favour of both the least developed among the developing countries

and the land-locked developing countries".<sup>4</sup> There was no voting on the resolution, which was adopted unanimously. Bhutan did not make any statement.

Next year, on 14 December the General Assembly, vide its resolution 2971 (XXVII) recognised the special problems of the land-locked developing countries caused by their geographical positions and the need for the international community to take co-ordinated action to secure a more rational treatment of these countries.

The Assembly also invited the ECOSOC to study the desirability and feasibility including possible ways and means of establishing a special fund for defraying the additional transport costs of the land-locked countries. The resolution was adopted by a vote of 103 to none with 3 abstentions. Bhutan and India voted in favour of the resolution.

In 1973 Bhutan exhibited a more active interest in the issue. It was among the seventeen powers which sponsored a draft resolution put before the Second Committee of the Assembly.<sup>5</sup> When the draft resolution was put to vote in the plenary meeting of the Assembly, Bhutan along with India,

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<sup>4</sup> Bhutan was not a member of the UNCTAD in 1971. It was admitted to the Conference in 1972 through resolution 2704 B (XXVII), 26 September 1972, mtg 2041.

<sup>5</sup> UN Doc. A/C.2/L.1310/Rev. 1, 2, 29 November 1973.

voted in favour of the resolution 3169(XXVIII),<sup>6</sup> which among other things recognised the need for the urgent extension of financial and technical assistance to the land-locked developing countries by the international community and international organisations.

Under the resolution the Assembly also invited all Member States and competent international organisations to assist land-locked countries in facilitating within the framework of appropriate agreements the exercise of their rights of freedom of access to and from the sea.

The Secretary-General was further asked to undertake a complete study, in consultation with the UNCTAD, on the establishment of a fund in favour of the land-locked developing countries; the ECOSOC was invited to report back to the Assembly in 1974 on the implementation of special measures for these countries.

Resolution 3311(XXIX) adopted on 14 November 1974 by the General Assembly surfaced some old difference between the approaches of the transit and the land-locked states. This happened since, besides its usual reiterations of its concern over the special problems of the land-locked countries and its appeals for technical and financial assistance to these countries, the Assembly also invited through the resolution

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<sup>6</sup> Adopted on 17 December 1973 by a vote of 110 to none with 15 abstentions. See Year Book of United Nations 1973, p. 390.

all Member States and the competent international organisations to assist the land-locked developing countries in facilitating the exercise of their right of free access to and from the sea as would be implemented in the relevant agreements.

In response to this part of the resolution Pakistan asserted that free access to the sea was a facility which should not be equated with the notion of a right.<sup>7</sup>

India demanded separate vote on this paragraph of the resolution (para 4) and abstained on the resolution. Bhutan cast its vote in favour of the resolution. It also had sponsored the draft resolution<sup>8</sup> prepared in the Second Committee.

In 1975 the land-locked countries succeeded in getting the approval of the Assembly for the establishment of a Special Fund for them through resolution 3504(XXX) of 15 December. Through this resolution the Assembly also asked the Secretary-General to submit to it, in consultation with the UNCTAD, proposals on the organisational arrangements of the fund and draft Statutes in order to enable the fund to become operational not later than 1977. This time there was no controversy. The resolution was adopted by a vote of 103 to none with 22 abstentions. Both India and Bhutan joined to sponsor the draft

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<sup>7</sup>Year Book of the United Nations 1974, p. 376.

<sup>8</sup>UN Doc. A/C.2/L.1359/Rev.1, 25 November 1974.  
Year Book of the United Nations 1974, p. 376.



resolution in the Second Committee.<sup>9</sup> In 1976 two resolutions were adopted relating to the land-locked countries. One approved of the Statute of the Fund and appealed for generous contributions.<sup>10</sup> Bhutan and India both voted in favour. The other<sup>11</sup> was controversial as it recommended cancellation of the official debts of these countries, highly concessional terms of relief, and preferential treatment of their goods. On this resolution India abstained while Bhutan voted in favour as expected since it had sponsored the draft resolution in the Second Committee.<sup>12</sup>

In the years from 1977 to 1981 the resolutions<sup>13</sup> which were adopted on the issue could not push the matter any further than holding Pledging Conferences at UN Headquarters for contributions to the Special Fund and keeping alive the debate whether freedom of access to and from the sea was a matter of right or not. Whenever a resolution mentioned this freedom as a right, the coastal and transit states reserved their positions on important operative paras and abstained on

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<sup>9</sup>UN Doc. A/C.2/L.1459, 28 November 1975. See Year Book of the United Nations 1975, p. 386.

<sup>10</sup>General Assembly Res. 31/177, 21 December 1976.

<sup>11</sup>General Assembly Res. 31/157, 21 December 1976.

<sup>12</sup>UN Doc. A/C.2/31/L.52, 10 December 1976.

<sup>13</sup>General Assembly Res. 33/150, 29 December 1978; res. 34/196 and res. 34/193, 19 December 1979; res. 35/38, 5 December 1980; res. 36/195, 17 October 1981.

the resolution. All these years Bhutan kept on closely associating with the land-locked countries in their struggle to get favourable steps taken by the international Organisation.

To conclude the discussion of this issue, it will be well to highlight the controversial points, which were very well brought out when the resolution 35/58 was discussed and adopted on 5 December 1980.

India, Pakistan, Congo, Thailand and Vietnam opposed the paragraph 1 of the resolution, which reaffirmed "the right of land-locked countries to free access to and from the sea and their right to freedom of transit", on the ground that its provision was prejudicial to the sovereignty of transit states. They also held that problems relating to transit trade should be dealt with bilaterally. India with some other states also disclosed that "had paragraph 1 been put to a separate vote, they would have voted against it".<sup>14</sup>

Paragraph 3 of the resolution urged transit states "to provide land-locked countries with appropriate financial and technical assistance" for "their transport and transit infrastructure and facilities". India subjected its endorsement of the paragraph to the position it held in respect of paragraph 1.

With regard to paragraph 5, Pakistan emphasised that the invitation to transit countries "to cooperate effectively

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<sup>14</sup>Year Book of the United Nations 1980, p. 549.

with land-locked developing countries in harmonizing transport and planning" "should in no way be understood to prejudice the rights of transit countries to determine their own national policies".<sup>15</sup>

(ii) The Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace

The Issue

The Indian Ocean gained a new politico-military importance in the middle of the 1960's when the technique to build hidden and movable missiles and launching platforms in the wide ocean was acquired with the submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM) system.<sup>16</sup> Coinciding with the development of this system the United States in November 1963 announced the formation of a separate Indian Ocean Command<sup>17</sup> and made since then the presence of its fleet and task forces in the Indian Ocean a regular and permanent feature of its naval policy. This radically altered the balance of power in this area,<sup>18</sup> and henceforth aroused the interest of the other Super Power and big powers in the area. The Indian Ocean thus became a zone of big power rivalry.<sup>19</sup>

The presence and rivalry of the big powers in the

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<sup>15</sup> Year Book of the United Nations 1960, p. 549.

<sup>16</sup> For details see K.R. Singh, Indian Ocean : Big Powers and Local Response (New Delhi: Manohar Publications, 1977), p. 23.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 24.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., pp. 25-26.

<sup>19</sup> Ranjan Gupta, The Indian Ocean : A Political Geography (New Delhi: Harwah Publication, 1979), pp. 142-3.

Indian Ocean agitated and worried the minds of the governments of the littoral and hinterland States of the Ocean who wondered how they would prevent these foreign powers having conventional-interventional capabilities from directly or indirectly interfering in the regional politics. The problem was debated in various Afro-Asian and non-aligned conferences.<sup>20</sup> Sri Lanka took a prominent part in these discussions. Consequently, these countries agreed that Sri Lanka with the co-operation of the non-aligned states should take a lead on the question at the United Nations also.<sup>21</sup> In September 1971, fifty-four members of the non-aligned group met at the United Nations and decided to work for the creation of a peace zone in the Indian Ocean. Accordingly the delegate of Sri Lanka, Hamilton Shirley Amerasinghe, requested the Secretary General to include the item in the agenda of the General Assembly's twenty-eighth session.<sup>22</sup>

#### The Issue at the United Nations

On 10 December 1971, after due discussion the First Committee of the Assembly approved of the draft text<sup>23</sup> proposed

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<sup>20</sup> K.R. Singh, n. 16, p. 222.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> UN Doc. A/C.1/L.590/Rev.1, 2, 10 December 1971.

by Amarasinghe by a vote of 50 to none with 49 abstentions. (Three operative paragraphs of the draft were voted upon separately.) According to the proposed resolution the General Assembly was to solemnly declare that the Indian Ocean, within limits to be determined, be designated "for all times to come as a zone of peace"; to call upon great Powers "to enter into immediate consultations with the littoral States of the Indian Ocean with a view to halting the further escalation and expansion of their military presence" in the area and eliminating from the Indian Ocean all such presence already made; to call upon "all littoral and hinterland States of the Indian Ocean, the permanent members of the Security Council and other major maritime users of the Indian Ocean...to enter into consultations with a view to the implementation of this Declaration".

In response to this issue Bhutan, which at that time was a less than two month old Member of the Organisation, did not make any statement. However, it did not fail to vote for the resolution with other littoral and hinterland States. In the plenary meeting of the Assembly also, Bhutan was one of the sixty-one Members (India included) who voted in favour of the resolution.<sup>24</sup>

Bhutan exhibited a more keen and active interest towards the question in 1972 when for the first time a statement on the issue was made in the general debate by its Minister of

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<sup>24</sup>General Assembly res. A/2332(XXVI), 16 December 1971.

Foreign Affairs himself. He stated that the "Indian Ocean should not become an area of confrontation between the Super Powers" and observed that "little progress has been made in implementing the General Assembly resolution for making the Indian Ocean a zone of peace".<sup>25</sup>

Apart from its verbal support Bhutan voted in favour of the 1972 resolution on the issue.<sup>26</sup> The most important part of the resolution was the decision to establish an Ad Hoc Committee on the Indian Ocean, to study the implications of the proposal, with specific reference to the practical measures that might be taken in furtherance of the objectives of Resolution 2832(XXVI), 1971.

In 1973, Resolution 3080 (XXVIII)<sup>27</sup> was adopted by the General Assembly which noted the Report of the Ad Hoc Committee, and requested it to continue its work, and report with its recommendations to the Assembly's next session. The resolution also requested the Secretary General of the United Nations to prepare a statement of the great powers' military presence, in all aspects, in the Indian Ocean. Bhutan and India supported the move.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> UN Monthly Chronicle, vol. 10, no. 10, p. 68.

<sup>26</sup> General Assembly res. 2992(XXVII), 15 December 1972.

<sup>27</sup> Adopted on 6 December 1973.

<sup>28</sup> The resolution was adopted by a vote of 95 to none with 35 abstentions.

In the next year, Resolution 3259(XXIX) was adopted which was a step forward in the sense that under this resolution the Assembly requested the Littoral and hinterland States of the Indian Ocean to enter, as soon as possible, into consultations with a view to convening a conference on the Indian Ocean. Bhutan approved of the idea of holding the conference and supported the resolution. To make his country's stand clear the Permanent Representative of Bhutan stated in the general debate:

In order that the declaration might be respected by all States, Bhutan would support the idea of convening a conference of all littoral and hinterland States with the co-operation of the major Powers and the major maritime users. <sup>29</sup>

In the following years, from 1976 to 1981 (the period under study, the General Assembly kept on renewing its request to the great Powers as well as to the littoral and hinterland States to enter into consultations for the early implementation of its December 1971 resolution declaring the Indian Ocean a peace zone. It also continued repeating its request to make efforts for the necessary harmonisation of views related to the convening of a Conference on the

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<sup>29</sup>UN Chronicle, vol. 12, no. 10, November 1975, p. 38.

Indian Ocean at an early date.<sup>30</sup> Both Bhutan and India continued to support the cause. Both readily supported the resolution 34/80, adopted on 30 November 1979, under which the Assembly decided to convene a conference on the Indian Ocean at Colombo in 1981 for the implementation of the Declaration. However, despite its renewed request in the following years, the conference could be held in 1981 for want of consensus of opinion on the date of holding it.<sup>32</sup>

It must needs be added here that Bhutan made it a part of its foreign policy to support the cause of establishment of the Indian Ocean as a zone of peace. This is evident not only from its voting pattern on the issue but also from the fact that it rarely failed to speak in favour of an early implementation of the Declaration in the general debate of the Assembly. The discussion of this issue may, perhaps, be well concluded with the view and observation of the Permanent Representative of Bhutan expressed in 1980 in the general debate of the Assembly:

The question of turning the Indian Ocean into a zone of peace, according to the Declaration of the General Assembly in 1971, which could beneficially influence the

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<sup>30</sup> See General Assembly resolutions A/3468(XXX), 11 December 1975; res. 37/88, 14 December 1976; res. 32/86, 1977; res. 33/68, 14 December 1978; res. 34/80 A and 34/80 B, 11 December 1979; res. 35/150, 12 December 1980.

<sup>31</sup> General Assembly Res. 35/150, 12 December 1980.

<sup>32</sup> UN Chronicle, vol. 20, no. 4, April 1983, p. 21.



establishment of permanent universal peace, has again been made more difficult because of the rivalries of the super Powers and other vested interests....In brief, our position was first, that the further escalation and expansion of the military presence of all powers in the Indian Ocean should be halted; secondly, that all military bases and other military installations should be removed from the area; and lastly, that there should be work towards realisation of the Indian Ocean as a zone of peace. My delegation continues that position. <sup>33</sup>

(iii) South Asia as a Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone

The Issue

In a meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee of the Indian Ocean a three-point proposal for the denuclearization of the Ocean region was discussed. Under the proposal the countries of the Indian Ocean were to commit themselves to a policy of denuclearization, which would entail the permanent renunciation by them of a nuclear weapon option. Secondly, they would be under obligation to deny the use of territory, territorial water, and air space to nuclear powers and to undertake an obligation not to deploy nuclear weapons in the peace zone area.<sup>34</sup> Pakistan which had got alarmed at India's successful atomic test in 1974 picked up, perhaps, from here the idea

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<sup>33</sup> UN Doc. A/35/PV, 13, pp. 89-90.

<sup>34</sup> GAOR, session 27, A/9209, Supplement No. 29, p. 10, cited in K.R. Singh, p. 227.

of denuclearization of South Asia, and later requested for its inclusion in the General Assembly agenda.

The Issue at the United Nations

At the request of Pakistan, the General Assembly at its twenty-ninth (1974) session considered the question of the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in South Asia.<sup>35</sup> The Assembly adopted two resolutions on the subject on 9 December 1974. The first resolution 3265A (XXIX), proposed by India, recognized that the creation of a nuclear-weapon-zone "in appropriate regions and by agreement among the States concerned", could promote the cause of general and complete disarmament under effective international control and considered that the initiative for the creation of nuclear-weapon-free zone in the appropriate region of Asia should come from the States of the region concerned, taking into account its special features and geographical extent.

Resolution 3265B (XXIX) proposed by Pakistan, went further.<sup>36</sup> It took "note of the affirmation by the States of the Region not to acquire or manufacture nuclear weapons and

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<sup>35</sup>Year Book of the United Nations 1974, p. 19.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., p. 26.

to devote their nuclear programmes exclusively to economic and social advancement of their peoples"; endorsed "in principle the concept of nuclear-weapon-free zone in South Asia"; invited interested States to initiate necessary consultations for the purpose and urged the States "in the interim to refrain from any action contrary to achievement of these objectives", and decided to include in the provisional agenda of its thirtieth session the item entitled "Declaration and establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in South Asia".

The approaches of the two resolutions were entirely different. While Pakistan's proposal immediately endorsed "in principle the concept of nuclear-weapon-free zone in South Asia, the Indian proposal was based, as claimed by the Indian delegate,<sup>37</sup> on the UN practice regarding the creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones that no action was taken by the General Assembly without the agreement of the states concerned. For nuclear-weapon-free zones were concepts which involved the vital interests of the states. "The point is that if the Assembly were to endorse the concept in principle in advance of mutual consultations and mutual agreements, then the countries which have serious questions, in regard to feasibility of proposals are at disadvantage."<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> B.C. Misra was the Indian Delegate at that time.

<sup>38</sup> UN Doc. A/C.1/PV.2027, 18 November 1974, p. 14.

It remains to add that efforts were first made in the first Committee of the General Assembly to work out a common draft resolution from the two drafts proposed by India and Pakistan, but in vain.<sup>39</sup> Therefore, both the drafts were put to vote. The Indian draft resolution had obtained ninety votes in favour, none against, with thirty-two abstentions and that of Pakistan, eighty-four votes in favour, two against, with thirty-six abstentions.<sup>40</sup> The two votes against the second draft resolution were those of India and Bhutan. In the plenary meeting these draft resolutions of India and Pakistan were adopted as resolution 3265A (XXIX) and resolution 3265B (XXIX), respectively. This time the first resolution was adopted by a vote of one hundred and four in favour, one against with twenty-seven abstentions, and the second was adopted by a vote of ninety-six in favour, two against, with thirty-six abstentions. Bhutan and India again voted against the latter resolution.<sup>41</sup>

Explaining its position and vote in the plenary meeting, the Permanent Representative of Bhutan, Dago Tshering, stated:

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<sup>39</sup> Indian draft resolution, A/C.1/L.681 and the Pakistan draft resolution A/C.1/L.682. Both were adopted on 20 November 1974.

<sup>40</sup> See Year Book of the United Nations 1974, p. 25.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., pp. 25-26.

We are convinced that draft resolution in document A/911 provides a good basis for careful consideration and adequate consultation. Therefore, my delegation will vote in favour of draft resolution A and against draft resolution B as it did in the First Committee, with a view to avoiding confusion. <sup>42</sup>

Thus it is clear that Bhutan was of "the view that countries of the region should consult among themselves on questions concerning the creation of a nuclear-weapon-free zone before seeking the endorsement of the Assembly". <sup>43</sup>

In 1975, India and Pakistan again presented their separate draft resolutions which were subsequently adopted as Resolution 3476A (XXX) and Resolution 3476B (XXX) respectively. Both the drafts were adopted without vote. <sup>44</sup> The contents and nature of both the resolutions were the same, a reiteration of their old stands. The Indian proposed resolution also welcomed the report prepared by the Ad Hoc Group of Qualified Experts, which was favourable to India's point of view. <sup>45</sup>

In 1976 India did not put forward any proposal of its own on the issue while Pakistan did. <sup>46</sup> Pakistan's draft

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<sup>42</sup>UN Doc. A/PV. 2309, 9 December 1974, p. 63.

<sup>43</sup>Year Book of the United Nations 1974, p. 21.

<sup>44</sup>UN Chronicle, vol. 8, no. 1, January 1976, p. 27.

<sup>45</sup>The group agreed on the fundamental issue that the initiative for the creation of such zones should come from all the countries of the region and the participation must be voluntary. See General Assembly res. 3261 F (XXX).

<sup>46</sup>Draft res. A/C.1/31/L.6, 29 November 1976.

proposal reaffirmed "its endorsement in principle of the concept" and urged the States of the region "to refrain, in the meantime, from actions contrary to the objectives" of the concept. The draft was adopted on 10 December as Resolution 31/73 by a vote of ninety to two with forty-three abstentions. Bhutan and India voted against it.

In the following years no further achievement was made in this direction though the issue <sup>was</sup> tried to be kept alive. Each year Pakistan put forward draft resolutions which the Assembly adopted reaffirming its endorsement, in principle, of the concept of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in South Asia, urging the States of the region to make all possible efforts to establish such a zone and in the meantime to refrain from any action contrary to the achievement of the objective, calling on nuclear-weapon States which had not done so to respond positively to the proposal and to co-operate in efforts to establish the zone.<sup>47</sup> Right since 1974 India has been consistently maintaining that though it was in favour of the elimination of all nuclear weapons and "did not intend to develop or acquire them", yet it was opposed to the idea of establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in South Asia "both on principle and for practical considerations; the initiative

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<sup>47</sup> See General Assembly resolutions 32/83, 12 December 1977; 33/65, 1978; 34/78, 11 December 1979; 35/148, 12 December 1980; 36/38, 12 December 1981.

for its establishment must derive from all States of the region, and participation must be voluntary; South Asia was a contiguous and integral part of the region of Asia and the Pacific and could not be treated in isolation".<sup>48</sup>

Bhutan also did not favour the resolutions on the "ground of lack of consultation, and agreement among the States concerned".<sup>49</sup>

While both India and Bhutan consistently adhered to their policy regarding this issue, their voting pattern was inconsistent. Till 1976 both the countries voted against the resolutions proposed by Pakistan; but in 1977, diverging from their old voting pattern both of them abstained on the matter though there was no change in the nature of the resolution. Curiously enough, from 1978 onwards they again started voting against these resolutions.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> India's statement in the First Committee, in mtg. 39. See Year Book of the United Nations 1980, p. 49.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> See Year Book of the United Nations 1977, p. 24; and the Year Book of 1978, p. 80.

The above analysis may be summed up with the following observations. Bhutan was all out for supporting its group of the land-locked countries in the struggle for the solution of their special problems and to this end, it held no reservations for India. As regards the question of the Indian Ocean as a zone of peace Bhutan took keen and active interest and was anxious for the early implementation of the 1971 Declaration. As far as the question of South Asia as a nuclear-weapon-free zone is concerned Bhutan's point of view was identical with that of India but its voting pattern was strange in the sense that it coincided even with India's inconsistent pattern.

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**CHAPTER V**

**OVERALL ASSESSMENT AND CONCLUSION**

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION AND OVERALL ASSESSMENT

From the analysis presented in the preceding pages one point is very clear that Bhutan's interactions at the United Nations have been of moderate intensity. It has maintained a low profile and this for obvious reasons. A land-locked country, sandwiched between two giant neighbours, small in size, having poor economy and also lack of experienced diplomats, it could not do better. It was not surprising, therefore, that besides the main deliberative organ, the General Assembly Bhutan has not been a member of the Economic and Social Council, or the Security Council. Indeed there is hardly any UN subsidiary body, numbering more than hundred, of which Bhutan has been a member. It never got elected to the bureau of any of the main committees of the General Assembly except that in 1978 and 1979 Bhutan was named as one of the vice-presidents of the Assembly.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>There are 21 vice-presidents of the General Assembly. They are taken from the following groups: African States, Asian States, Western European or other States and from the permanent members of the Security Council. These vice-presidents are elected according to the agreement reached at the caucus of these regional groups.

Despite its low profile role Bhutan has certainly made some marks on the United Nations' scene. In the Third Law of the Sea Conference especially on the question of land-locked countries Bhutan took to positions which were not only different from, but also incompatible with, those of India. Being a land-locked country, Bhutan has naturally to face additional disadvantages which retard its economic growth. Hence it openly joined the lobby of the land-locked countries and also actively contributed to the deliberations by co-sponsoring draft resolutions.

On some political and security matters also Bhutan took independent stands. For instance, on the question of the conflict situation in Kampuchea. Regarding the Afghanistan question, Bhutan did not choose to participate in the UN proceedings, yet it again demonstrated its independence from India by expressing its independent views outside the United Nations.

Some of the major points of an overall assessment of Bhutan's role in the United Nations may be summarized as follows:

#### Diversification of Foreign Relations

Membership of the United Nations has considerably helped the country to diversify its foreign relations. It has provided a new channel of communication to the outside world in an environment free from India's direct influence

and through which it can come in contact with as many countries as it can.<sup>2</sup> Further, UN membership has made it possible for Bhutan to create interest in other countries for establishing bilateral ties with itself. In this context it may be noted that previously Bhutan was not able to do so because of India's discouragement.<sup>3</sup> The membership of the UN gave the option to Bhutan of expanding its bilateral relations with other countries besides India. After its admission to the United Nations, the only hindrance the Bhutanese Government experienced in its way to the expansion of bilateral diplomatic ties was its own financial stringency and lack of trained diplomats.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Thus Bhutan could also come in contact with China. King Jigme Singye himself admitted that "Bhutan's envoy at the United Nations was often invited to parties thrown by the Chinese representatives and this was in turn reciprocated." Cited by Manorama Kohli, "The China Factor in Indo-Bhutanese Relations", in Surendra Chopra, ed., Studies in India's Foreign Policy (Amritsar: Guru Nanak Dev University, 1935), p. 167.

<sup>3</sup> Refer to Chapter II, p. 20.

<sup>4</sup> In the National Assembly's October 1971 Session the King of Bhutan stated: "Other countries have also evinced keen interest to exchange diplomatic missions with us. Since our nation is still in the initial stage of development we find it difficult to send and accept Representatives yet. For one thing, we do not have trained personnel to send abroad ... nor do we have the financial capacity since this entails heavy expenditure." Cited by Nagendra Singh, Bhutan: A Kingdom in the Himalayas (New Delhi, 1977), p. 176.

However, it was not long when Bhutan began to expand in this direction. In 1973, Bhutan and Bangladesh accredited their representatives in New Delhi to each other. Later they exchanged full-fledged missions in Thimpu and Dacca. Besides, the Kingdom has now diplomatic ties with Nepal, honorary Consuls in Singapore, and Hong Kong and hopes to set up soon a consulate general in Kuwait.<sup>5</sup> Today if Bhutan has diplomatic exchanges only with a few countries it is most<sup>ly</sup> because, as the King himself explains, it does not want "diplomatic over-extension just for the sake of it"; it "will seek only those ties which are useful and necessary".<sup>6</sup>

A striking example of Bhutan's success in gaining independence in expanding bilateral contacts is the fact that Bhutan is holding talks with China in regard to the disputed Bhutan-Tibet border on the north. Bhutan has permitted the Chinese to make an aerial survey of Bhutan-Tibet boundary.<sup>7</sup>

#### Bhutan's interaction at the United Nations

India did not revise the Indo-Bhutanese Treaty 1949 before sponsoring Bhutan for UN membership (nor has it done so till now). Therefore, it could be feared that Bhutan would

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<sup>5</sup>Asian Recorder (New Delhi), vol. 30, 11-17 March 1984, p. 17642.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

not be able to play a free and self-determined role at the United Nations. But the fear is belied to a considerable extent, especially in the later part of the period under study, as noted below.

In the struggle of the land-locked countries at the United Nations for the solution of their special problems ~~in~~, Bhutan never hesitated to take stands which were not only different but sometimes also incompatible with those of India. Being a land-locked country, Bhutan has naturally to face additional disadvantages which retard its economic growth. For example, it lacks adequate transit facilities and transportation system because of which most of its exports become uncompetitive in international markets owing to high transportation costs. Hence, whether it was a question of fighting for recognition of the right of free access to and from the sea or a question of getting a special fund to subsidise the additional costs incurred by the land-locked countries, Bhutan voted independently of India. It openly joined the lobby of the land-locked states and not only voted in favour of resolutions on the issue but also actively contributed to the cause by frequently sponsoring draft resolutions.

In political and security matters, in the early years of its membership, Bhutan's interaction and voting pattern at the United Nations were similar to those of India. However, it is difficult to establish whether the

coinciding of the stands of Bhutan and India was the result of the former's acceptance of the dictates of the latter or was merely indicative of the two countries' holding common perception. For, regarding its support to the freedom struggle of Bangladesh and its rather hurried recognition of the nascent state, the Bhutanese Government claimed that it was not following the foot-steps of India.<sup>8</sup> The claim is not without some grain of truth. The Bhutanese Government might have calculated that the proximity of a state in the form of a friendly Bangladesh was better than of Pakistan which had hostile relations with India. It might have also visualised the possibility of securing an alternative outlet to the rest of the world through the seaports of the newly created country. To a land-locked country like Bhutan this was, at least psychologically, a major hope and attraction.

Regarding the attempts at the United Nations to get the Indian Ocean established as a zone of peace, it can be safely asserted that here the question of Bhutan merely following the lead of India or any other country does not at all arise as almost all the littoral and hinterland states are in favour of the implementation of the 1971 Declaration though they differ with one another on subsidiary matters.

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<sup>8</sup> Leo E. Rose, The Politics of Bhutan (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1976), p. 97.

Moreover, in the general debates of the General Assembly the Bhutanese representatives rarely failed to express their concern over the slow progress on the issue. This unmistakably speaks of Bhutan's earnestness and eagerness for the establishment of the Indian Ocean as a zone of peace.

Analysing Bhutan's voting pattern on the issue of establishing South Asia as a nuclear-weapon-free zone, we find that it is the only member State which has voted with India in identical fashion. This could be interpreted as if Bhutan seems to follow India blindly. India holds the view that the question of creating South Asia as a nuclear-weapon-free zone should not be seen in isolation from the rest of Asia and that before trying to implement this idea the initiative must come from all States of the region. India certainly has reason for opposing this proposal of Pakistan. Since geographically Bhutan is a part of the Indian sphere of defence and strategy, it may naturally share this view with India. Yet, as far as its voting pattern is concerned, it can be said in criticism of Bhutan, that it has failed to opt for an independent stance. In the years 1974, 1975 and 1976 India voted against Pakistan's draft proposals; Bhutan did the same. In 1977 when India abstained on a resolution which was merely the reiteration of the previous resolutions,



Bhutan also abstained. Later, when India again started voting against such resolutions, Bhutan also voted against them. Had Bhutan continued voting against the Pakistani drafts all the years even if India had abstained in 1977, it would have neither annoyed India nor become unnecessarily inconsistent itself. As it is, it seems that Bhutan's external relations and international behaviour are still considerably influenced by India.

In 1979 Bhutan created quite a stir at the United Nations by taking for the first time, a stand totally independent of India on a political issue - the question of Kampuchea.<sup>9</sup> This time its position was incompatible with that of India and concord with that of China. Why did the Bhutanese Government do what it had never done before? Several answers were advanced. According to some observers, the King of Bhutan took a different stand on the Kampuchean issue because he was "infuriated by some 'unsavoury remark'" about Bhutan's sovereignty made at the Havana Summit by the then Indian Foreign Minister, S.N. Mishra. He "reacted with vehemence and asserted his independence vigorously" through such a stand.<sup>10</sup> Others hold that the King took an independent stand

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<sup>9</sup>The stand taken by Bhutan and India were contrary to each other both in relation to the question of Kampuchean representation at the United Nations and to the approach to the settlement of dispute. See Chapter III, *supra* pp. 39-39.

<sup>10</sup>Z.L. Kaul, "Indo-Bhutanese Relations Enter New Phase", New Wave (New Delhi), 18 March 1982.

on Kampuchea at the Havana Summit as well as at the United Nations because at that time India was having a weak government.<sup>11</sup> Mrs Gandhi, who was then an opposition leader, also held this view which she expressed in one of the public speeches during the 1980 general election campaign. She said that under the Janata Party regime "even a small nation like Bhutan was showing eyes to India".<sup>12</sup> There are some other indications also that make the second view sound more plausible. For example, when in 1980 Mrs Indira Gandhi again became Prime Minister of India the King of Bhutan was invited to New Delhi and was indirectly warned against such independent ventures.<sup>13</sup> The President of India, Sanjiva Reddy, at a banquet hosted in the King's honour said:

We hope that our special relationship and the common perception that we have of international environment will be enhanced in the years to come. It is necessary to work for this; the lack of irritants in our relations must not make us complacent because any dilution in the relations would be detrimental to both countries. <sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> "Bhutan's stand on the Kampuchean issue at the Havana Summit can also be viewed in the context of a Caretaker Government in New Delhi at that time." Manorama Kohli, n. 2, p. 161.

<sup>12</sup> Tribune (Chandigarh), 6 October 1979.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Indian Express (New Delhi), 18 March 1982.

But having once taken this stand, Bhutan stuck to it in the ensuing years perhaps to maintain its international image as an independent member.

India's caution seems to have its effect on Bhutan since it exercised some restraint on the Afghanistan question.

Bhutan stayed away at the time of voting on Afghanistan question in the General Assembly. However it is intriguing to note that in a joint Bhutanese-Nepali communique, it shared the view that foreign forces should be unconditionally withdrawn from Afghanistan and Kampuchea.<sup>15</sup> Earlier also, in the General Debate of the Assembly Bhutan had spoken against foreign armed intervention in South and South East Asia though it had not mentioned the name of Afghanistan.<sup>16</sup>

Here, after having observed Bhutan's diplomacy at the United Nations concerning the Kampuchean and Afghanistan issues, a question suggests itself: why did Bhutan hold and express different views from those of India? Did it do so as a matter of principle of opposing foreign intervention, or because it ceased to share similar security perceptions with India, or just because of its desire to assert its independence

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<sup>15</sup> Asian Recorder, 25-31 March 1984, vol. 30, no. 13, p. 17667.

<sup>16</sup> See Chapter II, *supra* pp. 43-44.

and sovereignty? The theory that Bhutan took to such independent stands because it has always opposed intervention does not hold any ground since it is the same Bhutan which in the case of Indo-Pakistan War 1971 did not care for this principle and was only interested in the creation of an independent Bangladesh. It also does not seem likely that Bhutan has ceased to share security perceptions with India as it still cannot rely on China to the extent as it does on India. In fact, Bhutan's aspiration to play an independent role seems to be responsible for its divergent international behaviour; but this aspiration is less due to its urge to acquire a more positive image abroad than to its policy of ensuring itself greater security by appeasing China whenever it can to reduce the potential acrimony of that Communist giant. The Bhutanese Government, perhaps, felt that both the Kampuchean and Afghanistan issues were such as did not affect India's security directly and hence regarded them as opportunities of pleasing its other big neighbour without antagonising India.

#### Diversification of Economic Aid

During the period under study (1971-81) Bhutan's economic dependence on India remained overwhelming as is evident from the latter's huge assistance to the former's

Five Year Plans falling under this period, namely the Third Five Year Plan (1971-76) involving an expenditure of \$ 43.75 million and the Fourth (1976-81) estimated to cost \$110 million. India's contribution to these plans had been 100 per cent and 80 per cent respectively. Besides this, Bhutan also received significant economic aid from India under other major projects such as the Chuka Hydel Project, cement factory and road construction.<sup>17</sup>

Just the same, it cannot be said that the United Nations system was of no help in the Kingdom's quest for diversifying aid channels. It has been rightly observed that till 1971 economic dependence on India was total, but today international agencies like the UNDP, the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, Kuwaiti Development Fund and others are contributing to Bhutan's economic development in a fairly substantial way.<sup>18</sup> It has also been estimated that "the quantum of foreign aid is such that there are reasonable doubts if the country could absorb that much".<sup>19</sup> Though almost insignificant in amount, Bhutan also succeeded in

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<sup>17</sup> T.K. Roy Choudhury, "The Indian-Bhutan Relationships: Some New Trends", The World Today (London), April 1981, p. 478.

<sup>18</sup> Nirmal Das, "Bhutan", World Focus (New Delhi), November-December 1983, p. 98.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

getting some aid-inputs from Australia, Great Britain, New Zealand, Canada, Singapore and Japan through the Colombo Plan with a total of \$ 1.6 million to the end of 1980. Thus Bhutan's objectives of diversifying economic aid channels is being admirably served by entering the comity of nations, especially the United Nations.

Concerning its economic development, it may also be noted here that the Kingdom is reducing its dependence on India in planning technique. While the first two Five Year Plans were entirely formulated by the Indian Planning Commission, the third was only jointly prepared by India and Bhutan and the fourth was wholly a Bhutanese job. The Bhutanese Planning Commission has also succeeded in obtaining ADB's technical assistance to improve its overall planning capability with special emphasis on project planning, education, monitoring and implementation, and staff training.

It is true that despite these external aids Bhutan is still a poor country, its per capita income at \$ 80 being the lowest in the world. Nevertheless, it is no small credit to Bhutan that in a little more than two decades of planned development it has transformed its economic system from an "isolated barter economy" into a

"transitional market economy".<sup>20</sup> It is also noteworthy that Bhutan has started its own air line (Druk Air) which operates between Paro and Calcutta.

Bhutan's UN Membership and the Indo-Bhutanese Treaty, 1949

Grant of United Nations membership to a State does not necessarily mean recognition to the State's independent and sovereign status.<sup>21</sup> India also became a member of the United Nations when it was not an independent and sovereign country. Perhaps thinking on this line, the Government of India intended to work out Bhutan's membership to the Organisation within the framework of the Indo-Bhutanese Treaty of 1949,<sup>22</sup> under which it had the right to control the external relations of Bhutan. However, the case of Bhutan turned out to be different from that of India. The United Nations accorded to Bhutan immediate recognition as

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<sup>20</sup> Asian Recorder (New Delhi), vol. 30, no. 11, 11-17 March 1984, p. 17641.

<sup>21</sup> The US Representative, Professor Jessup, observed in 1949: "We know... that neither at San Francisco nor subsequently had the United Nations considered that complete freedom to frame and manage one's own foreign policy was essential requisite of United Nations membership." Cited by T. T. Poulouze in "Bhutan's External Relations and India", International and Comparative Law Quarterly, vol. 20, 1970, p. 207.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 206.

a "fully independent State".<sup>23</sup> At the time of Bhutan's admission to the world body the then Secretary General, U Thant, observed: "India freely decided to sponsor Bhutan's membership of the United Nations and thus ended the right to look after its foreign affairs."<sup>24</sup>

Such an interpretation of Bhutan's UN membership has never officially been accepted by India. However, it appears, and this is the Bhutanese view, that the 1949 Treaty only obligates Bhutan to consult India on matters of foreign affairs, but the final decision rests with Bhutan.<sup>25</sup> Bhutan has already demonstrated this contention at the United Nations by its interactions on the Kampuchean as well as the Afghanistan questions.

Thus, even a limited study of Bhutan and United Nations' inter-relationship bears out the fact that the world body serves its purpose well in respect of small and weak nations. In a very small span of time Bhutan has achieved in a considerable measure almost all it had aimed at by enlisting

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<sup>23</sup>Britannica Book of the Year 1972 (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica Ltd., 1972), p. 237.

<sup>24</sup>"Now Bhutan", Hindustan Standard, 25 September 1971.

<sup>25</sup>Rose, n. 8, p. 90.



itself as a member of this family of nations. The mere fact of its becoming a member of the United Nations has purged it of its age-old stigma of being a protectorate. The United Nations has raised its position as an independent, sovereign state; has given it a status of equality with other much bigger states, besides a feeling of courage and confidence and security. The United Nations has helped it to diversify its diplomatic relations. Its various organs and agencies are contributing to its economic development. In a word, the United Nations has provided Bhutan with an important international forum to serve its vital national interests. In turn, small, land-locked, vulnerably located, economically under-developed and a victim of great pulls and pressures as Bhutan is, the country is contributing its part towards the United Nations' efforts to fulfil its high aims, such as world peace and well-being of all mankind. The country is showing promise of evolving a stand on major international issues without fear or favour.

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