

RUSSIA'S SOUTH ASIAN POLICY, 1991-2005

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DECLARATION

I declare that the dissertation entitled "RUSSIA'S SOUTH ASIAN POLICY, 1991-2005", submitted by me for the award of the degree of MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY of Jawaharlal Nehru University is my own work. The dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree of this University or any other university.

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CERTIFICATE

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Introduction

Background

Soviet Union and its successor, the Russian Federation, have successfully forged a friendly and mutually beneficial relationship with South Asia, in general and with India, in particular. Moscow has often seen Pakistan with a sense of suspicion. Although in the past couple of years the relationship has witnessed a 'reset' between Russia and Pakistan. Analysts have gone to the point of saying that Russia has been contemplating to use its relationship with India as leverage in the regional dynamics, in general, and Afghan politics, in particular (Kutchins, 2014). Kutchin (2014) further tries to understand the Russian policy towards South Asia, and its strategic interest viz-a-viz America. He argues that two factors which will be instrumental in shaping Russian regional interests are firstly, "the perception of Wahabi-Salafi inspired terrorist threats finding safe haven in Afghanistan and Pakistan and crossing border to Central Asia and North Caucasus", and secondly, "the state of relations with China."

There has been a strategic realignment in the post-cold war world order, particularly the increased bonhomie between Russia and China. The geopolitically significant relationship between two great powers has taken a lead role in shaping the regional order in Asia, in general and South Asia, in particular. How South Asian powers will respond to their intimacy, remains a question to be enquired into. In the post-cold war period, India and China remain rivals for influence and dominance in the Asian region. (Malik 1994). Russia and China have increased their interaction manifold keeping in view the threat perception emanating from the adjoining region. In the, Russia has tried its best to take China on board on any issue impacting the duo's interest, albeit Russia has its own sort of uncomfortableness with the latter's aggressive and oft-offensive approach to deal with the small neighboring countries of South East Asia and East Asia.

With the withdrawal of United States troops from the most troublesome country of South Asia and the world i.e. Afghanistan in 2014 has opened a Pandora box of speculations over who will be key actor in the post withdrawal scenario. In the sense, Pakistan has very cleverly brought in China in the regional security dynamics by inviting the latter to

augment its commercial presence in the region to that of military and strategic. It is an open secret that Pakistan has historically found herself obsessed with the “strategic depth” notion. China has begun upgrading its military presence in Afghanistan with an active and cooperative climate forged by Pakistan leadership. Taliban factor, which at one point of time was instrumental in keeping China away from the entire affairs of the terrorist activities in the region, was being viewed by it as a threat for its own internal security. Though the distance has now becoming narrower as Chinese make inroads into the crucial strategic sectors of Afghanistan with huge material and human capital investment. (Mehta 2014). It could be observed that Taliban seems to be point of strategic convergence between China and Pakistan with serious security implication for both Russia and South Asia.

Broadly, the research inquiry covers the following sub thematic areas, and trying to find out the gap in the existing scholarship:

A. Soviet Union and South Asia

Historically, the Soviet policy towards India and Pakistan were the subjects of immense skepticism and speculation. Devendra Kaushik (1971), has tried to highlight a significant consistency in Soviet policies towards the two states of Indian sub-continent. He has attempted to prove that "right from the very beginning, Soviet policy towards India and Pakistan has been consistently aimed at strengthening friendship with both, while trying to bring them closer together" (Kaushik 1971:111).He further goes on to argue that USSR never abandoned its bid to improve relations with Pakistan even that at the height of cold war, when India had a friendly inclination and disposition towards Soviet Union. Kaushik (1971) summarily rejected the point that détente between USSR and America and the subsequent Sino-Soviet rift were instrumental in prompting the USSR to make friendly overtures to India’s arch rival Pakistan. He has given number of examples to prove that the friendly overtures to Pakistan by Soviet Union goes back even the ‘détente’ and ‘rift’ periods. The USSR had been giving some strategic assistance to Pakistan viz. providing technical know-how for civilian use of atomic energy, and Molotov’s proposal of

assistance for the construction of a steel plant in 1956. Apart from the, Moscow had provided some military assistance to Pakistan, albeit insignificant when it is compared to the quantum of military assistance advanced by latter to Iran, Afghanistan, and India. Kaushik (1971) insists that the USSR has always tried hard to maintain best possible relations with both India and Pakistan simultaneously. Unfortunately the latter did not reciprocate to its overtures causing the undesirable results for everyone. The imbalance in the relationship led to the evaporation of fear for India. "Good neighbourly relations between India and Pakistan," concludes Kaushik, "are viewed by the Soviet Union as the sheet anchor of Asian security" (Gerhardt 1974:111). However, Paul Gerhardt (1974) concludes that "the changed situation, however, in which Moscow's new "sheet anchor" is a militarily assisted and strategically powerful India, is unlikely to disturb Kaushik's mythologically conceived history of their relations." (Gerhardt 1974:1401)

B. Russia and South Asia: Post 1991 Era

In the post-Soviet era Russia is pursuing an inconsistent policy towards South Asia because of its own domestic constraints. The collapse of Soviet Union, and the subsequent disentanglement of bipolar world order, and Russia's proclaimed reorientation towards freedom and democratic form of government are few of world's most prominent moments. These transformations are of special significance for Russia. Indeed, these changes have implications and ramifications for more than specific aspect of Russia's domestic and foreign policy. The aforementioned transformations had impacted the very essence of Russian self-consciousness and self-identity, and moreover, upon the country's role and place in the world order. (Melville 2005)

The isolationist tendencies on the part of the South Asian states particularly (Afghanistan and Pakistan) propelled or generated a sense of insecurity and instability for the region. The promoted the great powers like Russia to pursue an exclusivist policy towards the region. The in turn, shapes the contradiction in the Russian foreign policy making towards the region. (Buzan 2013)

The test of nuclear weapons by two South Asian major powers i.e. India and Pakistan, contributed to a new forms of arms race, and the great powers tried to have a greater say in the region by bargaining them through nuclear regimes like NPT and CTBT. Russia, in the regard, pursued a dialectical policy aiming at ensuring non-proliferation through consent and at the same time using regimes. This has contributed to some sort of strategic dilemma in the region both for South Asian regional powers and Russia. (Dittmer 2001).

In the post- Soviet space, Terror outfits are crossing borders to destabilize Russia and Central Asia. Russia fears that the dormant insurgency activities in the Northern Caucasus region might reappear. In view of hostile security environment, they may also pose a strong challenge to security to India also. Conventionally, the Russian –Indian strategic partnership has been flourishing on the edifice of five key pillars, as elucidated by Ranjan Mathai (2012). He calls Russia-India relationship a “special and privileged” one with a priority status attached to it. The five major components of the “special and privileged” relationship are- *First*, political with sustained regular dialogue and discussion at the highest level. *Second*, counter terrorism cooperation, which is poised to take central theme after the USA withdrawal from Afghanistan. *Third*, defence. *Fourth*, civil nuclear energy and *finally*, cooperation in the field of space which is a strategic sector. One may add here that the 70 percent of India military hardware are of Russian origin despite India renewed efforts to diversify its defence import basket in a drastic way. Though, there have been some disquieting incidences in defence deals clinched by the non-Russian military hardware suppliers and companies. (Mathai 2012)

C. External Actors and South Asian Politics

In the changed circumstance, the relationship with Asian powers lies at the core of Russian Federation’s foreign policy, and the reorientation is preconditioned by Russia’s direct affinity with the dynamically vibrant region of the world. Within Asia, the major focus of Russia will be on preserving and developing friendly relations with the two Asian giants primarily India and China. Russia desires to give new fillip to its traditional partnership with South Asia, in general and with India and Pakistan, in particular,

including in international affairs, and “to assist in overcoming problems persisting in South Asia and in strengthening stability in the region.” Moreover, Russia views the signing of CTBT (comprehensive test ban treaty) and accession to NPT (nuclear non-proliferation treaty) by India and Pakistan as “an important factor contributing to stability in the Asia Pacific region with establishment of nuclear free zones in Asia.” (Foreign Policy Concept 2000)

Though, Russia has conducted its policies in South Asia taking into account India’s importance as an ally asserting itself as a regional power. But simultaneously, Russia is trying to give considerable weight to other South Asian nations specially Pakistan. The Foreign Policy Conception of Russian Federation (1993) is an authentic document as to how Russia seeks to balance its relationship with India and Pakistan simultaneously without hurting anyone. As per the document, the leadership asserts that “our policy must cause others to view it as profoundly pro Indian. It must not become obstacle for us in developing other ties, particularly with Pakistan.” (The Foreign Policy Concept 1993) It further goes on to say “we do not imply that policy must be artificially moderated so that abstract balanced relations with the two countries might be established. Our task is to boost our ties with Pakistan up to the same level as our relations with India., i.e. rendering the two countries equally close to us, rather than equally distant from us.”, in general, the policy of Russian Federation vis-à-vis the duo along with other countries of the region “must be subject to consistent pragmatic reconsideration prompted by sides’ actual capacities and legitimate interests, and resting on economic stimuli.” (Foreign Policy Concept 1993)

Russia has been keenly interested in selling its oil and gas in the Asian market particularly to India and China. Russian and Indian policy makers are contemplating a gas pipeline through China. In addition to the pipeline, Russia has shown interest in Pakistani hydro-electric sector. Since the estrangement of Moscow with the West for sale of its hydrocarbon, it has started looking south and east for the alternate buyers (Laugh 2011).

Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) pipeline first, conceived in the 1990s but yet to materialize due to instability in the region. From Russian strategic viewpoint, creating such alternatives both reduces Russian leverage and increases the bargaining power of these states in the negotiation over supply to/through Russia. It is known that Russia has expectations to join the TAPI project. Igor Sechin (2010) said that “we are discussing new projects, including Gazprom’s possible participation in the TAPI pipeline project.” (Novosti 2010). However, it was a disappointment that Berdymuhammedov, the Turkmenistan President did not attend the latest meeting of CIS heads of states in Moscow on 10 December 2010 due to a meeting of partners involved in the TAPI. On the other hand, Berdymuhammedov said on the same day that Turkmenistan is looking to increase ties with the Russian government “both in bilateral and CIS formats”, which means briefly not in TAPI. (Novosti 2010)

Though, the research is on Russia’s posturing towards South Asian region, it will focus on three major countries of South Asia because of their economic potential and strategic significance. These issues are pertinent to the region’s geopolitical development. India, always being at the heart of South Asian geopolitical hotbed, acquires the natural significance. Pakistan, bordering Afghanistan cannot and should not be ignored when taking a holistic look at the menace of terrorism in South Asian region and elsewhere. Therefore, it is an imperative to treat the region as a security complex with the possible spillover of threats and challenges to the adjoining regions. All the three countries occupy a special and often, pivotal place in the regional geopolitical setting due to their size and strategic location.

The following research questions will be crucial in exploring the research theme:

- Why Russia has started to look at the region significantly (in a much broader framework) in view of changing geopolitical realignment?
- How Russia will manage its long drawn preoccupation with India as it opens itself to take Pakistan on board to deal with its security concerns?
- How Russia will come out with its own agenda and strategic designs to overture South Asian nations in view of strategic restructuring in Asia?

- How far trade and commerce is acting as element in the strategic convergence between Russia and South Asian states?

The following hypotheses would be at the core while delving into the domain of research:

- Russia in the post-Soviet space tried to engage itself more effectively with South Asia due to the threat perception emanating from the region.
- The changing strategic realignment in South Asia, in general along with energy interest, in particular propels Russia to have a greater role in the region.

The research methodology forms the very bottom of any research inquiry. Hence, the importance of research methodology is self-explanatory. It is the science of research methods and techniques employed to get research findings. A brief discussion of the tools and techniques employed during the research process, however, is not unwarranted. It would be a qualitative study of analyzing various perspectives on the issue. Moreover, official documents and reports are to be central to the enquiry that discusses the perspectives of the Ministries of External Affairs of various South Asian countries, and the Russian Foreign Ministry in regards to the perception of security and other adjunct concerns and issues. Structured observations of day-to-day state practices will be incorporated in my study. The present work will use both primary and secondary data and analyse them in the context of present work.

Chapters:

- Chapter 1: Historical basis of Russia (Soviet Union) - South Asia realignment

The chapter, basically discusses the myriad engagements with the South Asian region by the then USSR, even before that the era of Tzarist Russia, keeping in view its distinct geopolitical landscape and other considerations. Changes at the helm in USSR and their policy orientation and geopolitical and geostrategic perception towards the region were enquired into in detail till the disintegration of it.

- Chapter 2: Russia's strategic initiatives (1991-2001)

In the chapter the focus would be on the Russia's major initiatives aimed at enhancing its leverage on the happening of the South Asian region and its relative stability and security having repercussions for Russian and for its 'near abroad' security and stability. The period of transition in Russian economic and political life, and the subsequent stability due to a concerted effort by the leadership in the domestic arena prompted Russian Federation to reconsolidate its lost influence in the world, in general, and in South Asia, in particular.

- Chapter 3: Post 9/11 era: Russia's Interaction with the Region

The chapter contains an enquiry aimed at looking at the change in the global discourse after the 9/11 terrorist attack in New York, USA. The convergence as to how to deal with the evil of terrorism and how estranged allies and all weather friends, in the changed security and political settings, can be overture again. The ISAF operation in Afghanistan provided a point on which the Russian and American interest apparently converged. South Asia as a region has been at the receiving end of terrorism, especially India. India remained always wary of the ways of proxy war deployed by Pakistan to destabilize Kashmir and India. Pakistan's covert support to terrorism was criticized by both Russia and India on several occasions. The period saw the ascendancy of Vladimir Putin on the helm, transforming the whole domestic and foreign policy apparatus drastically. The taste of *real politik* was injected in its external policy.

- Chapter 4: Russia's Economic Policy towards South Asia

Russia's being one of the prominent energy producer and exporter in the world, would definitely leverage its position to the benefit of realization of its national interest. For that, to what extent the new instrument of foreign policy can be successful. The recent 'rebalancing' by the leadership in dealings with other South Asian nations forms the shift in the foreign policy posture of new dispensation at

the helm right from 1991. Diversifying the basket of trade and commerce to South Asian countries lies at the forefront in its engagements.

- Conclusion:

Summing up the arguments with substantial support. Finding a balanced ground between the desirable and the feasible can fill the gaps.

Chapter 1- Historical basis of Russia (Soviet Union) - South Asia realignment

The Soviet took keen interest in the South Asian sub-continent much before from the middle of the 20th century when Czarist Russia occupied the entire landmass presently known as central Asia and was in search of further expansion southwards. At the time British were the formidable force in the Indian subcontinent and they had strengthened their rule in the part of the world (Ahmar 1989). At the juncture, English got concerned about the threat being posed by czarist Russia to their empire in the sub-continent, and prompted them to pay attention towards it. In order to torpedo the czarist ambition towards South Asia, they decided to intervene in Afghanistan to make it the buffer between the two hostile powers of the time (Chandra 2004).

In the nineteenth century a traveler called Minaev visited Indian subcontinent along with Ceylon, Nepal, Burma in order to study Buddhism. He codified his travel experience in his celebrated work *Sketches of Ceylon and India*, which is regarded as the one of the masterpieces of Russian Indology (Kaushik 1971). Minaev also wrote about the Indian national congress when he witnessed the first session of it. He wrote about its objective as “the development of feeling of nationalism in India for the unification of India.” He also came in contact with Indian nationalist leaders such as Babkim Chandra Chatterji, R. G. Bhandarkar, Surendranath Banerjea, and K. T. Telang (Ya 1966:146-48).

It was when Tzarist Russia conquered Central Asia that it aroused the hope among the Indian people of throwing off the British colonial yoke of oppression. However, “the hope was confined in the beginning to a few rulers of princely states who had no popular aspirations and tried to leverage the hostility between the two colonial powers” (Kaushik 1971: 6). Maharaja Ranbeer singh of Kashmir sent an emissary to Tzarist Empire with the hope of assistance from them against the mighty English, but in vain. (Khalfin 1963). Kaushik (1971), pointed out that “the Tzarist government was not interested in promoting the cause of the national liberation of India.” He further elaborates the Tzarist stand and says that “ it was interested only in its own colonial expansion, and for want of adequate material resources did not at that point inclined to involve itself in trouble with the

powerful British empire.” The coming years saw a number of mission from India led by leaders such as Guru Charan Singh, which was the most popular mission sent by the Namdhari Sikhs of Punjab with the aim of liberation of province from foreign rule. Guru Charan Singh was very hopeful of the aid from Russia and he made very appealing statements before the czarist officials. To quote N. A. Ivanov, an official Zeravshan district, “importance of the fact that a part of the population of British India appealed to us to help liberate them from the foreign yoke” and remarked that “in the speeches of Guru Charan Singh we find such confidence in Russia’s power, such belief that we were destined to liberate the Indian people from hateful domination of Britain, that it is impossible to doubt our great moral impact on the population British India.” But at the end of the mission got disappointing assurance from the officials which were never acted upon (ibid).

Indian people still had huge hope from Russia even after all these failed to persuade the czarist officials for coming to their rescue in their fight against British. In 1879 a Russian warship visited the then Bombay city and the Times of India wrote about the enthusiasm people showed and convincingly “began to talk of a quick downfall of the British yoke, which would be cast off by Russia and Nana Sahib.” The great leader of Indian independence movement Bal Gangadhar Tilak popularly known as Lokmanya said to have sought help of Russia for military training to Indian youths abroad¹.

During the last later part of nineteenth century, Russia expanded its frontiers up to the borders of British colonial possessions. The southward expansion of Russian empire was viewed by British viceroys in Calcutta as something seeking urgent attention. For checking the onward march of their Russian counterpart, British and Russia decided to chalk out their respective spheres of influences after the Russia-Japan war of 1905. However, the situation changed after the October revolution and the subsequent end of First World War. In the changed ideological landscape, Russian bolshevism asked for greater space in the region lying to its southern borders and elsewhere. Though, the

¹ Source Material for a History of the Freedom Movement in India, II, 215-16

ideological currents of did not found resonance among Indian national movements leaders, but sufficed to discomfort the colonial masters. (Rothermund 1969)

The disinterest showed by Russia at that time debunks the British claim that they wanted to conquer India citing Peter the Great's will. The "Russian menace" is the product of British mind to obstruct the development of relationship of friendliness Russian and Indian people. British invented the thesis as to conceal their own malafied aggressive intention towards central Asia. Indian historian and nationalist leaders never accepted the version of saga. (Kaushik 1971). Kaushik (1971) cites impracticability of such invasion by Russia due to military weakness of Russian empire, political condition prevailing in the country, and economic and transport related enormous problems.

Indian National Congress strongly opposed any move by the British to increase military expenditure that apparently aimed at counteracting the "Russian threat" to India (Prasad 1960). Indian nationalist leaders staunchly opposed British "forward policy" aimed at counteracting "Russian threat". Dinshaw Wacha, in the seventh session of INC accused the government of misleading the Indian people on the self-nurtured theory of Russian advance. He said the government India "initiated aggression under one pretext or another. Russia only responds to the British move. Outpost answers outpost and gun answers gun." Furthermore he called for a reversal in the so called Forward Policy being pursued by English on the pretext of defending India. However, the bogey of Russian advance towards India was being pursued by English even after the demise of Tzarist rule. To quote Jawaharlal Nehru:

"We have grown up in the tradition, carefully nurtured by England, of hostility to Russia. For long years past the bogey of Russian invasion has been made the excuse of vast expenditure on our armaments. In the days of the Tzars we were told that the imperialism of Russia was forever driving south, coveting an outlet to sea, or may be India itself. The Tzar has gone but the rivalry between England and Russia continues and we are now told that India is threatened by the Soviet government" (Nehru 1928: 191)

The Tzarist Russia was never in a mood to help Indian nationalist in their bid to throw of the colonial yoke till they were in rule in Russia. But the situation changed drastically to Indian favor when the Soviet regime admitted the legitimate rights of the oppressed people world over to self-rule. Here India also got special assistance and favor from Soviet Union in the fight against imperialism and colonialism. Kaushik Basu (1971) held the contention, “the Leninist policy of friendship with the colonial people of Asia made a great impact upon freedom fighters in India and elsewhere.” The statement shows the impact of Soviet revolution on the freedom struggle in the colonized world crawling under the white man burden.

The October revolution gave huge impetus to the freedom movements all over the world including India. It was endorsed in the Indian Constitutional Reform Report came out in 1918 when it referred to the October Revolution which has “given an impetus to Indian political aspiration.” The basic contribution, however, was that industrial workers and peasantry were drawn into India’s freedom struggle in huge numbers, thus broadening the base of the struggle. This is an undisputed fact that to a larger extent the national movement was inspired by the October revolution. Contrastingly, as against the principles of Marxist ideology, Lenin backed the then bourgeoisie leaders of Indian National Movement due to their ante imperialist character. (Bakshi 1999:2)

The Communist party of India (CPI), established at Tashkent in October 1920 by a group of Indian political exiles pioneered by M. N. Roy, made strategy for an attack on India, yet nothing happened on the ground. M. N. Roy attempted to impact Lenin's way to deal with the colonial question and requested him not to trust elitist bourgeoisie national struggle leaders like Gandhi and to back just a proletariat party. However,, Roy did not succeed, and Lenin kept on sympathizing with every single national struggle leaders determined to uproot imperialism and colonialism. These nationalistic sympathies buried with the demise of Lenin. Stalin indicated minimal enthusiasm or interest for these issues. It was just during the Second World War that Moscow demonstrated a passing enthusiasm for India and after that just to direct Indian Communists to work together with the Soviet Union's British allies. Along these lines, socialism in India rose up out of the

Second World War altogether disparaged, and Indian patriots were certain to take a peek at the Soviet Union. It incidentally happened that Indian autonomy coincided with the Soviet declaration of the theory of the "two camps" in 1947. This did not augur well for Indo-Soviet relations, and it appeared that India and the Soviet Union were to stay uneasy partners even after the departure of the British (Rothermund 1969: 79).

The most testing time in the Indo-Soviet relations came when China attacked India in 1962 along the Himalayan borders and at the same time Khrushchev had a grinding halt in the Cuban missile crisis. Khrushchev found himself in a sort of dilemma on the question of supporting either India a perennial friend or brother China. However, the world proactively supported India with both military aid and much needed moral support. The Chinese contention through the covert military operation was to test the patience and determination of Soviet Union towards India. For China, if Soviet Union supported India militarily or otherwise, it will get western support, and if not then Soviet Union to lose one of its most trusted friends in addition to losing even a impression of independence. Thus, the Chinese threat reinforced what strategic thinkers called "a new realignment in world politics." Dietmar (1969) said in the context "The triangle India- China-Soviet Union emerged as a decisive element of world politics." (Dietmar 1969)

Interestingly, Khrushchev was willing to come on board with India in the subsequent years despite risk of displeasing China. Soviet Union pledged to live up to all its commitments towards including the supply of military equipment and hardware. The relations between Soviet Union and China saw new low in the coming years when the former threatened the latter with nuclear arsenals and exceptional military might.

When India was still under colonial rule, they used to make much of the inevitable contradictions between the interests of indigenous Indian capitalists and the foreign imperialists. In the "two camp" period, the analysis was simplified: Indian independence was spurious and the Indian bourgeoisie had entered into an alliance with foreign imperialists. (ibid) When the Soviet Union decided to befriend India and to give aid to its public sector, the class analysis changed once more: only the big Indian monopoly

capitalists were in league with the imperialists, while broad strata of the national bourgeoisie were potentially progressive and deserved to be supported.

Dietmar (1969) counted three broad issues Soviet Union appeared to have walking a tightrope: First, Soviet insistence on India's acceding to NPT (intended to check the nuclearization in South Asia as a consequence of it), second, Soviet arms and weapons supply to Pakistan for bringing the latter on Par with India as envisaged in the Tashkent agreement, and third, the Czech crisis, wherein the then Indian Premier Indira Gandhi endorsed the speech given by his father and India's first Prime Minister before a relative more critical audience. He underscores the change in the India's mood vis-à-vis the nuclear non-proliferation regime the nuclear capability acquired by China in 1964. "The Chinese atomic-bomb test of 1964 has converted India from an enthusiastic supporter of international treaties against further proliferation of nuclear weapons into a conscientious objector to the procedure." (Dietmar 1969)

However, the course of events may have introduced a wholesome dose of realism into Indo-Soviet relations. The double shock of Soviet arms-aid to Pakistan and the Czech crisis in mid- 1968 demonstrated that the Soviet Union was not a benign big brother, after all, but a world power, with numerous liabilities and obligations, trying to defend its own interests. Indo-Soviet friendship has to be seen in the context of the national interest of the two countries, and as long as there are compelling reasons for their cooperation, the friendship will last, in spite of occasional misgivings and ideological qualms (ibid)

India got independence in 1947 after a prolonged national liberation movement. The sad part of the independence was the partition of the subcontinent leading to the creation of two independent nations rather on unified and integrated India. The particular event created a disenchantment among the Soviet leadership which had envisaged the emergence of one single state called India. Soviet leadership viewed the partition a consequence of British policy of "Divide and Rule" and raised serious doubts over the genuineness of the real independence of the state of Pakistan. What Soviet called the partition a mere deal between Indian and British bourgeoisie imperialists. (Jain 1974:31)

It is however, worth noting that at that time Soviet Union leadership did not find itself comfortable with idea of creation of a new state on the basis of religion and was noted to have opined, "how primitive it is to create a nation on the basis of religion." Moscow remained unconvinced of the feasibility of the survival of State of Pakistan which was carved out of India in the form of East Pakistan and West Pakistan having a very distinct and diverse socio cultural milieu altogether. Moscow had envisaged of a federation kind of solution for British India in which India and Pakistan would be existing side by side peacefully. For federation was the best solution of the issue of two nation theory championed by the founder of Pakistan Mohammed Ali Jinnah².

The next major issue immediately after the independence which was major headwind in the relation between USSR and India was the issue of Non-Alignment Movement. Here, India found herself in the fix when it earned the criticism of both west and Soviet Union for mooting and actively pursuing advocating the principle of non-alignment in international affairs. The Prime Minister of India Jawaharlal Nehru announced in 1949 the joining of Commonwealth and subsequent acceptance of an invitation to visit United States of America. These two moves upset the Soviet leadership and hatched the suspicion of India falling into western trap. As a response to these developments and to offset the India's closeness with western world, Soviet Union invited the then Pakistani Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan to visit Moscow. But the invitation could not materialize and Liaquat Ali Khan chose to visit Washington instead of Moscow. The preference of Washington to Moscow by Pakistani Premier did not go well with Moscow leadership and Pakistan lost an opportunity to sow the seeds of good relations with Moscow. (Shah 2001)

Later Pakistan turned its weight behind western countries to the detriment of Soviet Union's interest. Here begins the period of Soviet estrangement with Pakistan leading to the natural emergence of India as a sole partner in South Asia. Subsequently Pakistan announced to join the western designed security and military alliance for its benefit. It

² K.P.S Menon, *The Lamp and the Lampstand* (London, 1967), p. 24 Cited in J.P. Jain, " *Soviet Policy towards Pakistan and Bangladesh.*" (New Delhi, 1974, p. 3 I.

joined SEATO and CENTO in 1954 and 1955 respectively. The proactivity with which Pakistan joined these military alliances annoyed Moscow which saw these alliances as an instrument of America's containment policy.(ibid) however,, these series of moves by Pakistan aimed at enhancing its status vis-à-vis India with the economic and military assistance from the Western countries created a conducive and favorable climate in which the Indo-Soviet Union relation could flourish despite the fact that India espoused the notion of non-alignment in international politics. In these period and in the subsequent decades USSR tried to maintain what Kaushik (1971) termed a "policy of equi-closeness" rather "policy of equi distance." However, the stance of the latter could not reap benefit for herself because Pakistan rested under the shadow of western palm during the entire period of cold war politics. Though USSR still tried to woo Pakistan on several occasions in vain. It meant Soviet Union was not willing to close its doors for Pakistan completely. (Bakshi 2000)

The stance is evident in the fact that it was Soviet Union which agreed to mediate between India and Pakistan during the Tashkent Declaration summit in which Soviet Union asserted her role as a neutral third power and facilitated the signing of an agreement which was commended by many. However, when the full scale war broke out between India and Pakistan, Soviet Union sided with India. In the aftermath of war, the role played by USSR in catalysing to persuade India and Pakistan to ink an agreement which aimed at maintaining peace and stability was a landmark event in international politics. The also manifested the South Asia connection of USSR simultaneously. (Chakravarty 1990)

Soviet Union had adopted a nonpartisan approach towards the Indo-Pakistan conflict over the conflicting claim by both the parties over Rann of Kuchh. It joined hands with other powers viz. Washington and London to pressurize both the claimant to observe restraint and sort out the dispute peacefully, a ceasefire agreement was signed on 27th June, 1965. However, the conflict was dormant for some time and another conflict broke out in 1965

when Pakistan launched its *Operation Gibraltar* intended to capture Kashmir by way of sending large number of infiltrators armed with modern armaments. (Kux 1993:235.)

Initially Soviet Union's approach towards the conflict was 'non-committal as is evident from the statement made by Soviet representative in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) on 4 September 1965. The statement emphasized the need for "an immediate end to the bloodshed in Kashmir and to halt the conflict"³ without blaming any single party for the adventurism. Soviet leadership tried to play it safe by not indulging itself in the fault finding act. It rather made every effort to convince both the leadership in New Delhi and Islamabad to observe ceasefire and strictly follow the Indo-Pakistan agreement in 1949⁴.

When China tried to make its way in the conflict by threatening India with a possible second front against it, Soviet leadership put its weight behind India and warned China against any such adventurism.⁵ Even at till the moment the neutral position of Kremlin was not lost. It was the very neutral nature of Soviet posture that built the basis of a goodwill image of it among India and Pakistan and led to a ceasefire between the conflicting parties on 23rd September, 1965. The Soviet leadership shows exemplary commitment by proposing to mediate between New Delhi and Islamabad in Tashkent to reach an agreement for the peace and stability in the region. The agreement is also important for the fact that the Kremlin still fascinated the idea of having a friendly relations with India and Pakistan simultaneously rather at the cost of each other.

The Kashmir issue and Soviet Union

On the issue of Kashmir, the Soviet stance was non hawkish. In January, 1948, India took the issue to United Nations for the peaceful resolution under Article 35 of the United Nations Charter, with the complaint of Pakistan's aggressive design against Kashmir. Here Moscow had two options at their disposal: one either India, or the second i.e. to

³ *United Nations, Document S/PV, 1237.*

⁴ *Pravda*, 12 September 1965, quoted in Jyostna Bakshi, op.cit., p. 55.

⁵ *Pravda*, 11 September 1965, Cited in J.P. Jain, op.cit., p. 77.

remain neutral. Surprisingly Moscow chose the latter in view of its strategic and geopolitical compulsions. At the same time Moscow did see both the countries policies in the particular issue not so much different from each other and viewed both the governments as reactionary. It saw both India and Pakistan equally important, for its delegation did not evince interest in participating and debating the issue in the Security Council. (Budhraj 1974:74)

In the later period of time, Soviet stand got a sea change when it came to realize the fact that USA and UK were harboring their own strategic and military interest in the guise of resolving the Kashmir issue. Moscow started criticizing the west on the issue to the benefit of Indian position on Kashmir. Thus when USA and UK nominated Frank P. Graham as an appointee for representation at the United Nations for India and Pakistan, USSR's representative Jacob Malik criticized the move (Jain 1974). Malik said, "instead of speaking a real settlement, were aimed at prolonging the dispute and at converting Kashmir into a trust territory of the US and the UK under the pretext of giving it assistance through the United Nations".⁶ In December 1952, the then Soviet representative V. Zorin stressed the earlier position of Soviet Union articulated by Malik. In the year 1955, Soviet Union and India's relation saw an unprecedented boom when the two heads of the states paid visited each other. Then Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and his USSR counterpart Nikita Khrushchev exchanged unmatched bonhomie and affirmed the relationship extremely special. In the visit, Khrushchev made one statement which in the subsequent years became a hallmark of Soviet sensitivity towards India's territorial integrity and sovereignty. He said, "That Kashmir is one of the states of Republic of India which has been decided by the people of Kashmir." (Budhraj 1974:122) The mutual visit of heads of states laid the foundation of a relation which in the subsequent years proved to be indestructible and highly matured.

The visit is very important even the history of Soviet India relationship since the very marks a decisive shift in Soviet foreign policy towards India. Here onwards Soviet Union and India found a trustworthy friend in each other which can withstand any crisis. Some

⁶ Year Book of the United Nations (New York: Columbia University Press, 1952), p. 232.

analysts argue that the marked preference in Soviet foreign policy towards India in the form of supporting India's stand was not only to lay a strong foundation for future strategic alignment but to punish erring Pakistan. Then in the Tashkent Declaration Soviet Union made a strong commitment to remain neutral between India and Pakistan. It marks another move by Soviet Union to rejuvenate its fading ties with Pakistan. In the entire process Moscow emerged as victorious whereas China and USA emerged as trouble creators. Soviet image got a massive boost up after the agreement between New Delhi and Islamabad inked. Moscow viewed the happening as something to help it regaining the lost strategic ground in the Indian subcontinent. (Budhraj 1974)

Another milestone in Soviet Union and India relation came when in 1971 India and USSR signed twenty year Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation in the month of August. The treaty came against the backdrop of third India Pakistan war which broke out in the 1971 leading to the separation of East and West Pakistan and birth of a new nation state called Bangladesh. The open standing of Soviet Union with India did not go well with Pakistani leadership and they termed interference in their internal affairs. (Shah 2001) it is said that the treaty was signed to deter any attempt by the external powers from making any direct involvement in the conflict.

Soviet Union and the Afghanistan crisis

The lowest point in the Soviet-Pakistan relations was yet to be witnessed. It came when the former intervened in Afghanistan in December 1979. The year following the Afghanistan intervention witnessed the worst ever low points in the USSR South Asia connection or engagement. The situation changed only when global strategic and security climate changed epitomized by the end of cold war and as a consequence the rapprochement between USSR and China and to some extent with the west. With the end of cold war Soviet policy towards South Asia changed markedly. (Robert and Nagee 1998: 268). Jyotsna Bakshi (1991) observed that in the changed global strategic and geopolitical environment India did not remain "strategically" significant partner for Moscow against the West and China, which does not seem to be a plausible proposition.

India remained and still remains high on the priority list of Moscow even today with a different thrust and rigor.

Another milestone move of if it could be said is to forge a collective security alliance in Asia, in general and South Asia, in particular. The then Premier of Kosygin, during his visit to Kabul and Islamabad had mooted a Regional Constructive Economic Cooperation among Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India. The plan was in addition to the Moscow's urge for the settlement of dispute Afghanistan and Pakistan and Pakistan and India. Moscow assured of every possible help from its side in materializing the plan⁷. The plan of Moscow got resonance in the Pakistan leadership. The then President of Pakistan responded positively to the Soviet design of an economic grouping in the region. Here, Moscow had something else in its grand design which got unfolded in the meantime. The second plan of Moscow was even more strategic than its economic design for South Asia. At the meeting of international communist and workers parties held in Moscow, the then CPSU General Secretary envisaged the creation of a system of collective security in Asia. (Budhraj 1974)

The Soviet design, as analyst would suggest, aimed at countering the increasing American foothold in the region. The same thing was done by America in the initial days of cold war when it unleashed a series of doctrines and military alliances against the apparent Soviet expansionism. However, whatever be the motives of Moscow putting its entire weight behind the collective security system in Asia, it did not go well with the Chinese. China viewed the design as something aimed at containing china and undermining its status as regional power. China denounced the move as "expansionist design" aimed at stifling the people's revolution in Asia and to China's detriment.(ibid) in the backdrop of these developments, India too did not appeared to be on board with Moscow's plan. However, it seemed clear that India could consider going along on the condition that former convince and take Islamabad on board. The condition did not seem feasible in view of increasing concentration of power by Pakistani President Yahiya Khan.

⁷ "India wants peace, says Kosygin" in *Hindustan Times*, 1 June 1969.

In 1971, a major crisis took place in South Asia in the form of Bangladeshi struggle for liberation. Bangladesh, the erstwhile East Pakistan revolted against the discriminatory treatment of the Pakistani leadership who hailed from the western Pakistan largely. Entire political power was being wielded by the people coming from western Pakistan than eastern Pakistan. The step attitude of the leadership created discontent among the people of eastern Pakistan. In the testing time, Indian Premier Indira Gandhi was under heavy pressure to assist Bangladesh earn its independence even in the form of military intervention. India witnessed heavy influx of Bangladeshi refugees. Indira Gandhi initially favored the political solution of the issue but the recalcitrant leadership at Islamabad were reluctant to let things go as they were going. The refugees should be allowed to return to their homes “in peace and with honour”. (Gupta 1976:176)

Among all these, a new sort of alignment was taking place in Asia. It was the golden time when the Sino-Pak-US axis was taking roots. In the coveted alliance, then US secretary of State Henry Kissinger played an active role. He paid a secret visit to China facilitated by Pakistan. The visit and the prosed visit of Nixon in the same year ruffled India. India got apprehensive these secret meeting and visits which could cost India dear, if left unnoticed. The apprehension was not without proper signals from the American side.⁸ Amid heightened strategic and security environment India thought it wise to take Moscow along. On the other hand Pakistan was issuing threatening warning against India that Pakistan was on the verge of war against it. Yahya Khan threatened to turn East Pakistani liberation into an Indo-Pak conflict. The looming question of Pakistani aggression against India and the subsequent backing of it by America and China led New Delhi and Moscow to sign the 20-year Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation on 9th August, 1971. The treaty marked the watershed in India-Soviet Union relationship. Through the treaty, Moscow committed security assistance to India in times of aggression or threat of aggression against it.

The biggest ever adventure of Soviet Union in South Asia came in the form of military intervention by the former in Afghanistan in 1979. Scholars figure out three broad

⁸ *Times of India*, 7 August 1971

schools of thought when it comes to analyse the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. The first strand of thought has argued conservatively and pointed out the traditional urge of Moscow to have access to the warm water port in the part of the world. The second school of thought has delved upon the issue and came up the point that Moscow wanted to rescue the tottering regime in Kabul which it had helped to prop up. The third school of thought quite interesting and startling. It maintains that “Soviet Union intervened for the first time in any non-aligned, Muslim and non- Warsaw Pact member country as a part of its long term objective to expand its influence beyond Oxus river.” (Ahmar 1989:111) The protagonists hold the view that the intervention in Afghanistan was neither motivated by the Soviet obsession with the warm water port or the salvage of pro-communist regime in Kabul, but rather a bigger design was taking shape. Afghanistan was mere a “stepping step” for the Soviets for fulfilling their long term interest in the South Asian region. With an increased Soviet presence in the region, Moscow would be in a much stronger and relatively better position to “influence Pakistan and India and also to counter the massive US naval-military strength in gulf.” (ibid)

The opening of 1980 witnessed some unprecedented geopolitical changes in South Asia. These changes were mainly linked Afghan imbroglio. When the Soviet troops marched into Afghanistan in late December 1979, geo-strategic complexion of South Asia began to change. It reintroduced the American factor in South Asia and led to remilitarization of Pakistan. (ibid). As per some western scholars, that Soviet Union never aspired to master Afghanistan. These scholars cite some documents in support of their contention. For instance, way back in 1873, Tzarist Russia made a proposal to the British that the country’s independence should be recognized which was summarily rejected by the latter. Moreover, in 1921, USSR and Afghanistan inked a friendship treaty which embodied future roadmap of the relationship between two proximate countries in terms of border. Surprisingly, Afghanistan was among the few countries in the world recognize the Communist revolution in Russia despite the western pressures. Notwithstanding these developments, Britain never seemed to be in a mood to brush aside its Afghan strategic obsession. Even after the three Anglo-Afghan wars, Britain “had never magnanimously decided to grant a legitimate or total independence to Afghans.” (Robinson 1986:90)

It is of grave interest to note that Soviet Moscow and Kabul had entered in a relationship of interdependence much to the benefit of the latter. Afghanistan tried its best to get rid of the British yoke by inviting several international actors. These actors did not turn up to hear the Afghan voice of friendship. Kabul tried to persuade US to invest and financially assist Afghanistan to build its industrial infrastructure. Here again Kabul had disappointment leading to frustration among its leadership. All these steps were aimed to neutralize the British influence on its external policy. In its bid to woo the external actors who can become an active partner in its economic development, invited Moscow. Moscow did reciprocate and above mentioned events created an environment, which in the following years saw an unprecedented Soviet economic and military assistance to the latter. When Afghans asked for the weapons from Moscow, the latter responded favorably to the former's request with "no strings attached." In the following years Soviet extended wholeheartedly, the military and other assistance towards Afghanistan. They built a new airport at Begram and upgraded an airfield situated outside Kabul. The same airfield was utilized fully by the Soviet troops when they stormed Afghanistan in 1979. (Wolport 1982:157). It is therefore noteworthy that the disillusionment of Kabul with the other Western powers led it to ever deepening ties with Moscow in an exponential way.

Moonis Ahmar (1989) maintains that all these heavy Soviet investments in Afghan infrastructure and other military assistance acted as a catalyst in driving Soviet to intervene in Afghanistan militarily in 1979. The Soviet deviated from the doctrine of "limited sovereignty" formulated by Brezhnev. The doctrine earlier applied to the European allies of Soviet Union, but the intervention deviated from the stand. Now it seem that the doctrine of "limited sovereignty" applied to its non-European allies. The deviation was viewed by the Americans as a threat to its interests in the world , in general and in the peripheral areas of the world , in particular. (Hsiung and Chai, 1981:192)

Since the early fifties Soviet Union showed an exceptional interest in Afghan economic and military matters and came out with huge economic and military assistance as stated earlier. But things got worsened in Afghanistan. In 1978, President Sardar Mohammed Daud was dethroned and murdered by the members of the Afghan Communist Party.

More so, the Party took over and one party rule was declared there. The Communist regime became very unpopular attributable to its policies and programs. The unpopularity was to be checkmated by the Moscow with a Treaty which came to be known as The Treaty of Friendship, Good-Neighborliness and Co-operation. The Treaty was termed by Leonid Brezhnev, the then Soviet Union President as “qualitatively new character” of Soviet-Afghan relations (Satish 1990)

The very Treaty became the ground of Soviet intervention in Afghanistan militarily. Soviet Union tried to defend its move legally by quoting certain provisions in the Treaty itself. The Article 4 of the Treaty reads:

The High Contracting Parties, acting in the spirit of the traditions of friendship and good-neighborliness and in the spirit of the Charter of the United Nations shall consult with each other and shall, by agreement, take the necessary steps to safeguard the security, independence and territorial integrity of the two countries.

The further lines read:

In the interest of strengthening their defensive capacity, the High Contracting Parties shall continue to develop their co-operation in the military field on the basis of the relevant agreements concluded between them⁹. . .

The very Article was used by the Soviet Union to justify their action. Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan brought some strain in the relationship between Moscow and New Delhi. Though India tried to justify the intervention by saying that ‘it had been done at the request of Afghan Government’, albeit in a subdued voice. India abstained from the international chorus of Soviet condemnation which did not yield for India’s image world over. It did a harm to India’s bolstering of leadership of non-aligned countries and in the region itself (Wirsingh 1988) the stand of India annoyed many domestic constituencies accusing New Delhi of sacrificing its long term interest of dominance in the region on the

⁹ *The Treaty of Friendship, Good-Neighborliness and Co-operation* signed between Soviet Union and Afghanistan signed on 5th December, 1978.

altar of Soviet friendship. Same accusations were labelled against the latter by the western critiques. India summarily rejected the critiques both domestic and abroad and continued with the business as usual with Moscow. India did not want to annoy its all-weather friend and hence its opposition to the move remained subdued. India at the time was mainly concerned with the Sino-American-Pak axis which posed greater risk to security and strategic interests than the presence of Soviet troops in its neighborhood (ibid).

On the other hand, Pakistan was the largest benefactor of the entire episode of Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan. Pakistan-US was losing its shine in the past couple of years started to pick up the momentum again. The former not only received huge military and financial assistance from the latter but became a trusted ally of US than before. It became an active actor in the Afghan factor in close liaison with American intelligence agencies to oust Soviet troops from the soil of Afghanistan as soon as possible. The refurbished ties between US and Pakistan were very much on the agenda when the new Soviet Union's new General Secretary took charge. Even during the time, the ties between New Delhi and Moscow were under stress and strain (Satish 1990).

The real breakthrough on the issue of Afghanistan came when the Geneva Accord on Afghanistan was signed on April 14, 1988. The Accord constituted an important milestone in the Soviet moves aimed at maintaining peace and security in South Asia. As per the Accord, Soviet troops were to be withdrawn completely from the soil of Afghanistan by May 15, 1989. The agreement was in a quid pro quo from an agreement between Pakistan and Afghanistan that these two nations will not interfere in each other's internal affairs anyway. (Bakshi 1999) The accord was guaranteed by US and Soviet Union in their capacities as the two superpowers in the world. However, the accord could not bring lasting peace and security in Afghanistan even after the complete withdrawal of Soviet troops. Whole Afghanistan was in a mess due to the warring faction's self-interests driven acts. Donaldson and Noguee (1998) maintains that the Soviet decision to wrap up its military operations in Afghanistan was followed by her another historical decision to end the cold war and the subsequent disintegration. The period also witnessed

the Sino-Soviet reapproachment with a renewed thrust and rigor. In the changed geopolitical and geostrategic milieu, Russia, the successor state to the USSR, had to bring a transformative revisit of its core interests and allies. This led its leadership to change its perception towards the South Asian region markedly. (Donaldson and Noguee 1998)

Nuclearisation of South Asia

Moscow had refrained from criticizing India for her peaceful nuclear explosion in 1974 and had consistently showed greater understanding for India's nuclear position at various international forums. The Delhi Declaration on a Non-Violent and Nuclear Free world, signed in 1986 by the then Soviet General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev and Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, could be seen as an epitome of the understanding and clear backing for the Indian stand of looking for global, non-discriminatory nuclear disarmament inside of a given time frame (Kaushik et al 1997). Soviet Union reliably demonstrated cordial understanding of India's nuclear position.

The deterrence between India and Pakistan is not as reliable as the deterrence used to be between America and Soviet Era. The reason for such an absence of deterrence is a different relationship shared by India and Pakistan. Both the countries share a common boundary, cultural and historical trait. India and Pakistan have gone to war with each other more than once and bloodshed has taken place on a massive scale. The very natures of the duo's relationships make the nuclear crisis amenable in the South Asian region, if a conventional war ensues. The Indian civil nuclear authority is very assertive and in case of Pakistan the entire nuclear arsenal is under the military control. (Sagan and Waltz 2003)

The Soviet Union's stand was always that of negotiation than imposing unilateral sanctions. Debate and discussion remain the cornerstone of Kremlin's posture. With the nuclear weapon acquisition by India in 1974, Soviet leaders remain convinced of India's peaceful nuclear programme despite harsher criticism by western powers such as Canada and America. Both the countries reacted negatively as they feared the explosion would destabilize the regional peace and security. (Perkovich 2002)

The Soviet Union and South Asian region were long engaged even before the emergence of Soviet Union on the one hand and India and Pakistan on the other hand a sovereign and independent nation. The initial period of Soviet foundation saw an immense interest in the affairs of India and from the side of British India the image of USSR remained benign. Soviet leadership opposed any partition of British India into two India and Pakistan. It viewed the partition as the conspiracy hatched by the colonial British to serve their own interest.

With India and Pakistan gaining independence, the Soviet Union tried to an '*equi-close*' relationship with India and Pakistan rather '*equi-distance*'. But despite several diplomatic and political overtures from Moscow, Pakistan did not respond with the requisite warmth and thus the relationship could not take off. On the other hand India did respond well with a decisive leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru. Nehru had evinced his keenness in the economic fundamentals of Soviet Union and tried to emulate back here in India. The socialist ideology worked as the force multiplier in cementing the ties. The climax in the relationship came in the form of India Soviet Union Treaty of Friendship and Mutual Cooperation in 1971. The estrangement between Soviet and Pakistani leadership acted as the conducive environment in which Indo-USSR relationship could flourish.

During the Indian nuclear test in 1974, Soviet Union adopted a benign attitude towards India and opposed any kind of unilateral sanctions against it. The meticulous articulation of understanding India strategic needs holds testimony to the level of maturity between the leadership of both the countries.

However, with the demise of the USSR in 1991, the new leadership muddled for the time being and the decisiveness in the leadership dissipated owing to its own domestic problems. Soon, the Russian leadership got itself disillusioned with the western powers promises of providing with crucial financial and technological assistance to revive the economy. In those days, the leadership followed a pro-western foreign policy.

The period, in which Gorbachev held the reign of Soviet Union as a General Secretary of CPSU, the economic distress had enmeshed Russian economy tightly and there were clear signs of stagnation. From the beginning, Gorbachev was determined to leave a stamp of his own on the both the fronts domestic and external. The novel principles of *Perestroika* and *Glasnost* meaning reorganization and openness respectively were launched to bring about a transformation in the domestic economic and political arena. In the domain of international politics, Gorbachev was the statesman behind the novel idea 'New Political Thinking'. In a way he was much interested in peace than war in the world.

Gorbachev focused on four vital areas, detente, disarmament, development and democratization of the international order through the rejection of confrontation and affirmation of cooperation as the ground rule of international coexistence; of the strategic concept of Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD) as the king-pin of the dominant doctrine of deterrence between the two super powers; replacement of deterrence between the two super powers; replacement of the narrow concept of collective security focused only on military-defence dimension; the application of wider concept of equal security in defence, economy, polity and environment; the negotiated joint efforts of both the super powers for solving regional tensions and conflicts; putting specific emphasis on global economic development and utilizing *Perestroika*, Democracy and *Glasnost* as the three axial principles of national and international life.

The biggest plan proposed by Gorbachev in his initial days was the idea of collective security in Asia on the pattern of Helsinki Accord among the Asian countries during the visit by the then Indian Premier Rajiv Gandhi in 1985. He announced to have "an all-Asian forum for an exchange of opinions and a joint search for constructive solutions". He further said, "*we think that India as a great power enjoying much prestige and respect ... can play a very important part in the process.*" The response of Rajiv Gandhi was tepid at the time. The response was in line with the earlier leadership's stand on the Asian Collective Security System, a brainchild of the then Soviet leader Brezhnev (Darshan 1986: 127).

The Soviet-Indian Statement confirms that the Soviet Union supports Indian proposal to start negotiations involving all the nuclear powers, on working out a convention to ban the use of nuclear weapons. For its part, India welcomed the Soviet Union's commitment not to be the first to use nuclear weapons. The USSR and India shared the opinion that if all the nuclear powers were to make such a commitment, the initiative would become an important step towards completely banning the nuclear weapons or eliminating the threat of their being used. The results of Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's visit to the USSR and of summit meetings and talks have elevated Soviet-Indian relations to a new stage and given a powerful impetus to their successful development in the International arena and their efforts to resolve the most burning problems¹⁰.

Rajiv Gandhi gave an apt description of the aims of the cooperation, and of Soviet - Indian relations , in general, at a meeting with representatives of Soviet public in Moscow on 22nd May. He said:

Friendship between the Soviet Union and India was not directed against any other country, but was motivated exclusively by the desire to make the two nations stronger and to promote peace and international cooperation the world over. The gives us reason to be firmly confident of the bright future of friendly Soviet-Indian relations, which are a truly invaluable asset of the Soviet and Indian peoples..¹¹

Commenting on outcome of the Indian Prime Minister's visit Mikhail Gorbachev said "Each visit by leaders of our countries, each of their meetings, has left a noticeable imprint on Soviet-Indian Relations".¹² In his banquet speech in the honour of the visiting Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi on 21 May 1985, Gorbachev said, "*We highly appreciate India's contribution to the cause of strengthening peace and international security, and to enhancing the role of the non-aligned movement*". It could be inferred

¹⁰ For text of the Joint Statement issued at the conclusion of the visit to the Soviet Union by Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, see, *Foreign Affairs Records*, vol.31, no.5, May 1985,pp.143-48 and *The Current Digest of the Soviet Press*, vol.27,no.21, 19 June 1985, pp. 6-8.

¹¹ *Foreign Affairs Record*, vol.31, no.5, May 1985, pp. 141-42.

¹² *Summary of World Broadcast*, SUf7956/A3jl, 21 May, 1985

from the statement that Russia was supportive of Indian approach towards bilateral and international issues. Thus, the significance of Delhi Declaration went beyond bilateral and regional barriers (Gorbachev 1987: 185)

The bonhomie between Soviet Union and India went unabated. Gorbachev paid a visit in reciprocity to the visit paid by Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in 1986. The crucial visit saw signing of various bilateral agreements in the field of economy and technology¹³. The most appreciated Delhi Declaration was signed between the two leaders. Gorbachev reiterated Soviet Union's commitment to Indian Ocean as a zone of peace. He also lauded India's efforts in the international arena in the field of peace and security.

At the time there were some thoughts doing round in the strategic community that Soviet leadership is trying to reset its priorities in the face of its desire to have détente with America and China. However, Gorbachev debunked such thoughts in his statement while being in India on his second visit in his tenure. He said, "*I shall not dignify with an answer such totally groundless and obviously speculative assertions*".¹⁴

However, during the same time no such high profile visit by Gorbachev took place to Pakistan. Soviet Union was unhappy over the Pakistani support to the terrorist groups operating in Afghanistan and trying to undermine its interest by joining hands with western powers. To say, there was not a drastic change in the Soviet stance towards South Asia, be it nuclearisation, terrorism or Kashmir issue. The pivot of overall Soviet engagement remained India which is evident from two visits paid by Gorbachev in his tenure.

Russian vice president Alexander Rutskoi visited Pakistan in December in 1991 immediately after the disintegration of USSR and drove home the point that the "right of self-determination of Kashmir People should be decided under the UN auspices and in

¹³ Deccan Herald (Hyderabad), 29 November, 1986.

¹⁴ Telegraph (Calcutta), 19 November, 1988.

accordance with its resolutions.” At the same time, a joint-communicé which was signed between Russia and Pakistan mentioned:

The Russian side acknowledged Pakistan's position and expressed the hope that the issue would be resolved peacefully through negotiations between Pakistan and India on the basis of international agreement.¹⁵

The policy continued and in 1995 Alexander Yu Alexeyev commenting on Indian and Pakistani Nuclear Policies mentioned, *"we do intend to develop our relations with South Asian states on the basis of an even-handed and balanced approach ... we also realize that nuclear and missile proliferation in South Asia has stemmed from both Pakistan and India's domestic political concerns and regional security threat perceptions. We are also aware that both Pakistan and India need a capable defence.* (Alexeyev 1996)

The policies of *Perestroika*, *Glasnost* and *Democratsia* created economic and political landscape in Soviet Union that the leadership could control the process of transformation domestically. Before that, the cold war era had come to an end following the signing of agreement between the Soviet and American leaders. The economic and political forces began to assert themselves fueled by a reform oriented leadership at the helm committed to transform the command and control economy and electoral democracy. All these forces acted and reacted with each other and eventually led to the disintegration of Soviet Union in to number of independent republic states popularly known as CIS states.

The fresh impetus of blood in the form of investment and financial assistance was needed to revive the Russian economy, the successor state of USSR. The new dispensation desperately began to explore new avenues for financial and technological assistance. Here came a leadership committed to look west for the remedies for its ailment, and accordingly prioritised its foreign policy objective in the all new geopolitical and geostrategic milieu.

¹⁵ Sumit Chakravarty, "The Yelstin's visit: Secret of Success," The Hindustan Times, New Delhi, 11 February, 1993.

Chapter 2: Russia's strategic initiatives (1991-2001)

The much discussed and significant event in the history of world politics was yet to come. It came down in the form of collapse of a formidable superpower, which influenced, if not dominated international politics for a considerable period of time in contemporary world politics. The disintegration saw birth of a number of new nation states in its neighborhood, prominent among them of course was Russian Federation a successor state of USSR. The new political entity called Russian Federation emerged in the post-Soviet world political stage. The geopolitical and geostrategic scenario in international political had undergone change soon preceding the collapse. Russian federation succeeded the USSR, along with all its legacy. All the arms and weaponry were inherited by it making it the same formidable force to be reckoned with at least in military domain in the world. The initial era of the transition saw a reorientation of its relationship towards the Western powers due to some economic considerations in mind. It was strongly felt in Russia that the country was in a dire need of western financial and technological assistance to bring about a transformation in its economy sustainably. (Kozyrev 1992: 9) The Soviet era economic system laid emphasis on the “command and control” aspect of the economy, was replaced by a much liberal and slightly market oriented system. The hope of western assistance in the form of financial and technological aid was belied soon and the leadership began to look for other alternatives to help its economy and people in the distressful economic and political climate. (Hannes 1995)

Though Russia has conducted its policies in South Asia taking into account India's importance as an ally asserting itself as a regional power. But simultaneously, Russia is trying to give considerable weight to other South Asian nation specially Pakistan. The Foreign Policy Conception of Russian Federation (1993) is an authentic document as to how Russia seeks to balance its relationship India and Pakistan simultaneously without hurting anyone. As per the document, “our policy must cause others to view it as profoundly pro Indian. It must not become obstacle for us in developing other ties, particularly with Pakistan.” (The Foreign Policy Concept 1993) further goes on to say “we do not imply that policy must be artificially moderated so that abstract balanced

relations with the two countries might be established. Our task is to boost our ties with Pakistan up to the same level as our relations with India., i.e. rendering the two countries equally close to us, rather than equally distant from us.” , in general the policy of Russian Federation vis-à-vis the duo along with other countries of the region “must be subject to consistent pragmatic reconsideration prompted by sides’ actual capacities and legitimate interests, and resting on economic stimuli.” (Foreign Policy Concept 1993)

The Transitional economy and Foreign Policy

The economic fundamentals had taken a dip following the collapse of giant. The Russian currency- ruble experienced a massive drop in its value vis-à-vis dollar in international exchange market. The slide was to the extent of 600 roubles for one dollar from the previous rate of 60 roubles to one dollar in 1993. Another indicator of the trauma of Russian economy at the onset of its new life was the GDP growth rate. It fell to the level of -14.5 percent in 1991, though it improved a bit in the latter half of the decade and stabilizing in 1997. (Ickes 1997: 1-6; Letiche 2007: 3)

The energy sector in the Russian economy came to occupy a dominant position and the leadership began to realize the fact that the energy leverage can be strategized to serve country’s ‘national interest’. But the biggest challenge before the industry was the lack of appropriate technology and investment in the essential infrastructure for exploiting the hydrocarbons. The western countries had failed to meet the aspirations of the new leadership in providing key resources to start off the reform in its economy (McFaul 1997: 17).

The period till 1998 saw an unprecedented reform measures and political turbulence. But soon the economy started showing the sign of stabilisation in terms of stability in the growth rate and employment. During the reform and change period the energy emerged as the frontrunner, showed high rate of growth and appeared promising in terms of a reliable source of foreign exchange earning. The boom in the sector was dovetailed by the asertive foreign policy posture (McFaul 1997-8).

After a period, transition began to disappear and a new and assertive Russia was on the cards. The Yeltsin era had fought hard to restore the Russian power and influence by adopting a pro west foreign policy agenda during his first tenure. But the hope of technologic and financial assistance was soon to be belied. There happen no significant investment from West in Russia's critical sectors of economy. The disillusionment came on the fore soon as Russia began to aggressively reformulate its foreign policy agenda to achieve its lost prestige and influence in world politics. (Tsygankov 1997:250) The period after the disintegration of USSR saw the continuance of the same foreign policy which was pursued by Mikhail Gorbachev. Gorbachev sought to redefine the goal of Russian foreign policy in the changed strategic milieu. He advocated de-ideologisation of Soviet foreign policy and emphasized to build 'Common European Home'. He also tried to maintain the same sort of relationship with the developing countries which were pursued by his predecessors.

Mehrotra (1996) argues that the sole objective and priority of newly emerged Russian foreign policy during the period of time seemed to be the close relationship with the western countries , in general and with the America , in particular, and that too at the cost of its proximate relationship with the developing world. In fact, at the point of time 'Atlanticism' or 'West Centricism' was the mainstay of Russian foreign policy under the commandership of the acting Prime Minister Yeogor Gaidar and the Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev. The then Foreign Minister Kozyrev strongly believed that the "utopian character" was the main drawback of the Soviet foreign policy which had considerable implications for its image world over. Thus, Gaidar-Kozyrev duo vehemently supported and advocated the 'western centricism' in the foreign policy orientation. However, many scholars, political leaders and experts on Soviet-India affairs criticized the pro-western tilt and personalities like Sergei Stankevich, Russian Federation State advisor on Political questions, dubbed the policy as disastrous.¹⁶

¹⁶ *The Current Digest of Post-Soviet Press* (Ohio), vol. 44, no. 13, 29 April, p. 1.

Without a doubt the demise of Former Soviet Union brought changes in Russia's strategy towards India and Pakistan substantively. The crumbling itself had substantial ramifications to global political order. The world turned unipolar, spearheaded by United States of America. The influence of Russia in international political lessened significantly. The onset of strategies of globalization and business economy made the Russian economy teetering. Russia needed to turn around its prior stand to conduct foreign policy independently and toed the line drawn by Western Powers to support its shattering economy and bolstered the notion of liberalization and market economy. Along these lines, there was no other route left but to be preoccupied with the Atlanticism or western centric foreign policy. The orientation towards the west in Russian strategy additionally had bearing on Russo-Pakistani relations as it brought both the countries closer.

As per an academician Yevgeny Chelysev, a Russian expert on India, it was profoundly troubling to see Russian-Indian relations coming to demolish due to Moscow's overt and covert western orientation in the aftermath of Soviet breaking down. He further said India is a great power, while Pakistan and different nations are just states like others. He said that President Yeltsin's visit to India ought to serve to restore the ties between the two nations to their old level of glory. Gennady Burbilis, the Secretary of State, additionally regularly talked about 'enlightened pragmatism'¹⁷ to go down Indo-Russian relations. Thus, it was troublesome for Russia, after deterioration, to receive a particularistic approach towards India in view of rising scenario which was brimming with complexities, and instabilities. The emergent situation's request was portrayed by the way that the geostrategic contemplations have now been supplanted by geo-economic thinking and rivalry in the economic sphere has become basis of interstate interaction in the world politics.

The International Committee of the Supreme Soviet likewise saw sharp division with respect to the strategy of Russia towards South Asia in the setting of Yeltsin's proposed

¹⁷ *The Times of India* (New Delhi), 24 January 1993.

visit to India on January 28, 1993¹⁸. Georgy Kunadze, a Deputy Foreign Minister of Russia, contended against holding the 'exceptional relationship' with India that the Soviet Union had developed in light of cold war confrontation with America and China. The position of Kunadze was heatedly challenged by a member of the foreign relations committee, Yevgeny Pudovkin known for his pro-Indian standing, who said it was a real strategic mistake of Russian strategy to abandon the world with which Moscow had such a longstanding cordial relations as with India and it is an advantage that ought not to be squandered. The head of the South Asian Department of the Foreign Economic Relations Ministry, Viktor Koptevsky, additionally objected to Kunadze's claim that relationship with India had not generally been advantageous to Russia. He contended that India provided a huge market to Russian businesses and earned the much needed foreign exchange for Russia.

Therefore, there were distinctive perspectives with regard to conceptual underpinnings of Russian foreign policy approach after the demise of Soviet Union. As indicated by Olga Alexandrova, noted Sovietologist, there were four main conceptual pattern in Russia's foreign policy: westerners; the Russian nationalistic frame; the Eurasian; and the geopolitical realist school of thought. (Alexandrova 1993) According to another view, there were three main priorities in Russia's foreign policy choices at the time; firstly, the members of Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) (Policy of Near-Abroad); Secondly, to develop relations with the West; and the last one was to establish or maintain relations with the third World. (Shearman 1993)

According to another view point, Russia's foreign policy priorities in January 1993 were: **(1)** the CIS; **(2)** arms control and international security; **(3)** economic reforms; **(4)** the United States; **(5)** Europe; **(6)** the Asia-pacific regions; **(7)** West and South Asia; **(8)** the Near East; **(9)** Africa; and **(10)** Latin America. It is evident from the above listed priorities that CIS had topped on the list whereas Latin America was on the last step. Though the West and South Asia did not do well on the list and were accorded relatively less significant positions on the priority list. The Pro-West tilt seemed to come up for an

¹⁸ *The Hindu* (Madras), 22nd January, 1993.

audit by Kremlin as the Russian political leadership started to concentrate all the more pointedly on the nation's Asian neighbors. The shift in Russia's foreign policy was dubbed as a shift 'from romanticism to pragmatism'. (Singh 1995)

In the midst of the perplexed circumstance it appeared that two noteworthy schools of thought existed in Russia with respect to her strategic orientation towards India and Pakistan. One school of thought supported that the existing 'Special Relationship' with India ought to be retained and to be further strengthened. On the other hand, other actors in South Asian region are needed to be overtured, for it would balance the regional geopolitical interest of Russia. As per the other school, the age of 'special relations' with India should be called off and Pakistan to be given similar treatment by Russia in her foreign policy. As per the approach, taking a look at the happenings in South Asia 'through Indian spectacles' prejudiced Russia's interaction with other regional geopolitical actor viz. Pakistan. The latter view was sought to be linked with Russian foreign minister Andrei Kozyrev. The first perspective or school of thought was pervasive among the scholarly groups and the parliamentary circles of Russia. (Shaumian 1993:55)

In Indian press reports it gave the idea that Kozyrev was seeing the world through the lenses of American democracy and human rights, and he disregarded the 'Third World' and declined to view India as a partner. (Shah, 1994) In January 1992, the then India's Foreign Secretary J. N. Dixit led an official delegation to Moscow. It was reported that so much so that Indian authorities couldn't meet Foreign Minister Kozyrev, who cancelled his scheduled meeting with the Indian group and left for Kaliningrad, Estonia and Germany on President Yeltsin's instructions. A Russian scholar was accounted for to have called attention to the fact on the Russian side the 'political will' was missing to take old relations with India forward¹⁹.

Undoubtedly, taking after such thought the Russian Foreign Ministry under Andrei Kozyrev tilted totally towards the West and he said on record that "Russia was essentially a European nation and the most essential undertaking before Russia was political and

¹⁹ Patriot (New Delhi), 17 January, 1992.

monetary integration into the West". (Arbatov 1993:11) He also said that the developed nations of the west are the true allies of Russia. Russia proposed to achieve all its major foreign and domestic policy objectives with the assistance of the West. These targets incorporated the permanent seat of the previous Soviet Union in the United Nations Security Council; sole control over the atomic stockpile of the previous Soviet Union and liberal western financial and technical help that would help it to achieve simple, rapid and structural change of the command and controlled economy to free market economy. President Boris Yeltsin additionally wanted to make utilization of the economic and political backing of the Western powers in his battle against his home adversaries. (Bakshi 1999: 1373-4)

Consequently, in the starting post-Soviet period, South Asian nations including India were overlooked for some point in time. For Russia's new leadership wished to seek an alternate foreign policy stance towards the Indian sub-continent different from what it used to be during the Soviet Union. As discussed above Russian foreign policy approach formulators did not wish to have uncommon association with any one nation to the detriment of her relations with some other nations. The Treaty of Peace and Friendship had lost their shine in the new Russian foreign policy vision. Taking such things in mind it was felt as if India was no more a vital strategic friend in Russia's South Asian calculations as it used to be during Soviet period. On the other hand, Zhirinovsky, pioneer of Liberal Party bolstered to keep up 'extraordinary relationship' of Russia with India intact. In the meantime, India embraced the strategy of liberalization in the domain of economy and started to look for some other options for its buys of military hardware and investment on the grounds that Indo-Russian financial and military connection had effectively constrained on account of insufficient supply of Russian weapons and military hardware. (Mehrotra 1133-42) in the meantime, the Russo-Chinese rapprochement progressed quickly and China became the second biggest purchaser of Russian weapons, though the first biggest purchaser was India. Then, Pakistan additionally attempted to bolster its military engagement with Russia.

There was the pertinent question of increasing Russo-Chinese reapproachment at that time, causing concern among the Indian policy makers. Though, Russia tried its best to persuade India that the realignment wouldn't be an irritant in Moscow-New Delhi relationship. The balance of power between Beijing and New Delhi was sought to be restored. Then comes the question of political and diplomatic overtures to India's biggest concern in South Asia, Pakistan. Here, it is noteworthy that Moscow had a tight rope walk in juggling its bid to retain the friendly relations with India, and trying to bring Pakistan on board in the changed strategic realities internationally. The tight rope walk is what scholars term as the 'equi-distant approach' towards dealing with India and Pakistan. A foreign ministry document of Russia delve upon the 'equi-distant approach' which was in the form of a letter written by the then Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev to Yevgeny Abratsumov, Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Relations, no. 1615/IS, dated 25 January 1993.

It said,

Economic and geopolitical considerations demand close ties with India. Russia's policy must be formed with considerations of India's significance as a country affirming itself as a regional power. At the same time, we must also consider the factor of the Indo-Pakistani opposition ... which has an effect on the entire region ... our policy must not provide ground for other states to perceive it a deliberately and strictly pro-Indian or become a hindrance to the development of relations especially with Pakistan.²⁰

The same document mentions it that the objective of Russian foreign policy is to bring up the ties with Pakistan to India's level. The is so because bringing Russia equally close to both India and Pakistan that being equally remote. To quote from the same document, "*the task consists at bringing up ties with Pakistan to the level of relations with India, so that they are aimed not at being equally remote, but at being equally close*".²¹

²⁰ *Patriot* (New Delhi), 29 December, 1994.

²¹ *ibid*

An interesting thing happened during the same period, it was the changed attitude of the Russian leadership towards Pakistan, , in general and other Muslim countries who bordered Russia in its southern periphery, , in particular. There happened number of high profile bilateral visits between Moscow and Islamabad raising eyebrows in India. The period witnessed some irritants in New Delhi and Moscow perceptions towards each other in the aftermath of Soviet Union's disintegration. (Shah, 2001) the reason became significant was because of its geographical setting. It shared border with some of the Muslim Republics of Central Asia, and more importantly with Afghanistan, which was a big challenge for Moscow to tackle. Pakistan enjoyed the status of being in a position of influencing the developments in these littoral Islamic countries. (Leszek 1992:490) Leszek (1992) further argues that in the changed geopolitical and geostrategic scenario the so called 'key Islamic actors' got prominence and priority in Moscow's geopolitical calculations, to the detriment of India's interest.

For Pakistan the situation was ripe for seeking another ally who can afford to supply arms and ammunitions to Pakistani military. It is to be noted at the crucial juncture, the military hardware and other necessary items were short of Pakistan's need who tried to fill in with Russian help. They tried to purchase advanced military hardware such as MIG-29, and SU-27 fighter jets from Russia to augment its military capability.(Thakur 1992) the garage sale of such a high end military sale to the countries surrounding India, didn't go well with the latter. Latter got apprehensive of such motives and saw the moves aiming at increasing India's vulnerability vis-à-vis Pakistan and China in terms of her security. Through these arms sale what Moscow was trying to do was to develop 'new and positive' relations with Muslim countries at her southern periphery, including Pakistan on the principle of being 'equi-close' than 'equi-distant' to Islamabad and New Delhi (Subrahamanyam 1992)

On the Kashmir issue, there happened to be a significant shift in the Russian stand which was made clear during the Pakistan visit of the then Russian Vice President, Alexander Rutskoi in December, 1991. He said, "the right of self-determination of the Kashmiri people should be decided under the United Nations auspices and in accordance with its

resolutions.”²² The Russia-Pakistan Joint Communiqué²³ issued on 22nd December 1991 states, "The Russian side acknowledges Pakistani position and expressed the hope that the issue would be resolved peacefully through negotiations between Pakistan and India on the basis of international agreements". (Chakravarty 1993) The shift in Russian stand on a very crucial issue of Kashmir was in contravention to the provisions of Shimla agreement which time and again was reiterated by the Soviet leaders.

The saga of Russian overtures to Pakistan did not get approval from the whole parliamentary of Russian Federation. Some apprehension about the over tilt of Russian foreign policy towards Islamic countries, including Pakistan was criticized in the Parliament. The protagonists of the opinion favoured the enhanced cooperation with China and India as a counterweight to thwart the threat of Islamic fundamentalism in its southern periphery consisting of Muslim republics of Central Asia and Caucasia. It was pointed out that these very countries with which Moscow is seeking to change relations prominent among them Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Iran, and Libya are backing Islamisation of education and other institutions in Central Asian countries through economic assistance for constructing mosques and madrasas to impart Islamic education²⁴.

It was felt that the increasing Islamisation of its so called ‘strategic backyard’ would be an anathema to her influence in the region. Moreover, the upgraded relations with India and China would render help to arrest the falling influence of Russia in global affairs by providing a counterweight to the hegemonic design of American policies in the world.²⁵ The period witnessed an intense struggle within the leadership of Moscow to balance the two contradicting strategic objectives simultaneously. These objectives were to be fulfilled keeping in mind the global strategic realities, its body politik and economic turbulence facing her economy symbols of a transitional phase.

²² *Asian Recorder* (New Delhi), vol. 38, No.6, February 5-6, 1992, p.-22140.

²³ *Mainstream* (New Delhi) vol. 33, no. 10, 28 December, 1991.

²⁴ *Patriot* (New Delhi), 21 July, 1992

²⁵ *ibid*

The early Soviet foreign policy was a reflection of the commitment of its establishment towards the western powers of being different from the Soviet era foreign policy. Interestingly, the Moscow-New Delhi bonhomie was the legacy of Soviet era, hence reset was sought. The stand taken by India during the hardline coup on 19th August, 1991 did not go well with and endeared by Kremlin's new occupants. (Bakshi 1999:1375) At the same time, to the much chagrin of India, Pakistan was successful in getting Russian support for her proposal on Nuclear Free Zone in South Asia at United Nations.(Bakshi 1998:122)

Moreover, some of the strategic blunders were made by the new Russian establishment in the meanwhile, which not only hampered its ties with India but its own long term strategic interests. At a time when the Najibullah of Afghanistan was in dire need of Soviet assistance, the latter abandoned him completely clearing the way for an anarchy in Afghanistan to take root, after its withdrawal in 1989. Soviet did not evince any interest in defending Kabul from falling to Pakistan backed Mujahideen groups.

The struggle between the Russian Parliament and the President for dominance led to the extent of acting as a preventive tool on foreign policy formulation and their real implementation in a radical manner. Till the time the economic situation had deteriorated heavily taking a toll on the performance of economy. The much needed assistance and help from the West did not pour in in terms of financial and technological help. Russian people were in a state of limbo and disillusionment over the change in their lot. At the critical juncture, India was hard needed to sell its arms and ammunitions because even till the time India was the largest importer of Russian arms and military hardware, which Yeltsin could not ignore.

The pause in Russia and India relations saw a break with the visit of Russian President Boris Yeltsin in January 1993. The freeze was broken and a number of steps were mooted to revive the vanishing strategic partnership and given a new lease of life in the changed geopolitical and geostrategic environment. Here, it is to be noted that in the initial years of Soviet disintegration, the new dispensation in Kremlin sought to do a balancing act

between New Delhi and Islamabad. The act of balancing had several geopolitical and geostrategic overtones. But, as earlier had happened, the act of balancing also came to an end sooner than later.

Maqbool Ahmed Bhatti (1996) has listed out some of the important factors which went into making Russo-India relations cemented even stronger in the aftermath of the transitional foreign policy of the former:

1. The momentum of a significant relationship in the areas of defence and trade, and notably Russia's interest in selling military spares and replacements to India has led both countries to make special efforts that accord with their perceived interests.
2. The two countries also shared perceptions on threats from Islamic "fundamentalists", and Russia's reiteration of its Cold War period stance on Kashmir is partly rooted in the in the factor.
3. There is a nationalist upsurge in Russia, in the face of Western pusillanimity in delivering on promises of aid, and apart from reassertion its pre-eminence within the republics of the former Soviet Union, Moscow perceived a close relationship with India as an asset in its desire to retain a leading global role.
4. Two countries were finding commonality of interests in major areas of foreign policy, for instance Central Asia and Afghanistan.

Russia's South Asian policy has also been affected by the American and Chinese factors in the South Asian region. The point holds enough ground particularly when it comes to dealings with India and Pakistan. In addition to the American Pakistani bonhomie and Chinese and Pakistani reapproachment and enhanced cooperation in fields of nuclear and missile technology created a flutter in the minds of Russian leadership. All these factors worked against the coming together of Moscow and Islamabad and proved to be major irritants in the relationship, apart from the issue of Islamic fundamentalism and terrorism. It was reported by the U.S. intelligence agencies that China had supplied M-11 missiles to Pakistan. Bill Clinton administration was authorized to extend developmental assistance to Pakistan. (Mahapatra 1993:1127) American Assistant secretary of state Robin Raphel paid a visit to Pakistan in 1993. During the visit, Raphel made a statement

that the whole of Kashmir is a disputed territory by questioning the very logic of integration of it with India. The statement ruffled Indian and Soviet leadership.

In the subsequent years the Bill Clinton administration sought to repeal the Pressler Act on the ground that it was not needed to advance the American interest in the changed strategic environment. The Pressler Law constrains the American foreign policy and hence should be rescinded as it targets individual countries²⁶. The move by the Clinton administration and some other policy decisions created a flutter in the minds of Russian and Indian policy makers that US was not committed towards pressurizing Pakistan to not sponsor terror outfits from its soil. Moreover, US held a joint military exercise with Pakistan in 1994 January. The controversial Pressler Law came for criticism again by the American policy makers. Moreover, U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott stressed the need to give waiver to Pakistan to benefit the overall relations. At the same time another diplomatic visit took place by U.S. Defence Secretary, William Perry to Pakistan. During the visit, the Pressler law again came for criticism by the visiting Perry. By emphasizing the revitalization of the fading defence cooperation between the two countries, a “broader security dialogue” was also called to be put in place. He maintained that the Pressler Law has failed in restraining Pakistan from acquiring nuclear weapon capability, and further hampering the bilateral engagement between Washington and Islamabad. Perry called Pakistan a moderate Islamic country and stressed the importance for the greater peace and stability in the region.²⁷

The strengthening Russia India relations took a leap with some of the visits that marked a new era in the bilateral ties. The first visit was by the then Indian Prime Minister Narasimha Rao in June-July 1994. The visit was about to take place in the backdrop of a recent friendly gesture by Moscow. It was the warning that was the Russian Deputy Foreign Minister, Anatoliy Adamishin gave to Pakistan against internationalisation of Kashmir issue. He further explained that Moscow always supported the resolution of Kashmir issue in a peaceful and bilateral manner stipulated in Simla agreement of 1972.

²⁶ Asian Recorder (New Delhi), vol. 39, no. 51, 17-23, December, 1993, pp. 23626.

²⁷ *Daily News*, 15 March, 1995

Adamishin also stressed the precious relationship between Russia and India, sought to be further cemented with the visit of Indian Premier Rao.²⁸

During Rao's visit, significant developments took place in the bilateral ties. The visit sought to "define the parameters and altered the basis of Indo-Russian relations".²⁹ During the visit two important Declarations were signed- The first agreement was the Moscow Declaration³⁰ on protecting the interests of pluralistic states and the second declaration was on the further development and deepening of co-operation between Russia and India. The two agreements also assured of supply of spare parts of military hardware (sold by Soviet Union) to India by Russia. Yeltsin, after the summit level talks was quoted as saying, "there are no differences at all between the two countries in international and bilateral issues. We work very harmoniously and in a coordinated manner and we understand each other well".

The two declarations were symptomatic of the bond between two great countries seeking to re orient their old friendly ties. These agreements also signify the common perceptions of Moscow and New Delhi on the issues of terrorism, extremism, radicalism and other contemporary issues of regional and global concern. The Moscow Declaration laid special emphasis on increasing the volume of languishing trade between the two countries. The trade relations between the two countries still remain the weakest point in the overall relations. The pace of increase in trade volume has been somewhat static, if not declined.

Although, Russian-Indian relations were again put on the right track, but there were some issues on which the two sides did not find easy to deal with: the alleged violation of Missile technology Control Regime (MTCR), supply of cryogenic engines by Russia, and India's non-committal approach towards Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT). (Bhatty 1996)

²⁸ *Summary of world Broadcast* (London), 21 May, 1994, p.SU/2003 B/4-5.

²⁹ *The Indian Express* (New Delhi), 28 June, 1994.

³⁰ For the text of the Moscow Declaration, See *National Herald* (New Delhi), 5 July, 1994.

The strategic and geopolitical compulsions worked in favour of the bilateral ties. The major issues during the Rao's visit to Moscow were, of course, trade, servicing of India's debt to former Soviet Union, and the much needed supply of spare parts of military hardware. Most importantly, the unseen before political understanding was visible on a number of critical issues concerning both the countries during the Rao-Yeltsin discussions in Moscow. (Bakshi 1999) the brief reference to the "their deep interest in promoting peace and stability in the area between the borders of the Republic of India and the Russian federation". The clear reference could be made to the countries of central Asia lying to the south of Russia and Afghanistan. These countries collectively concern both Moscow and New Delhi. The issue of terrorism still looms in the minds of the leadership of the countries in question. Russia and India share a common perception about terrorism emanating from the region having the potential to destabilize the entire region. India, for long has been a victim of externally sponsored terrorist activities in within its territory, particularly in the state Jammu and Kashmir. These terror outfits get all sorts of assistance be it financial, technological or weaponry from Pakistan based terror organizations. Russia has also witnessed some sort of religious extremism and radicalism in its southern periphery constituting five Central Asian nations. Therefore, it is of mutual interest to cooperate and coordinate on the particular ghastly issue to tackle. (Bakshi 1999)

On the question of permanent membership to India in the United Nations Security Council based on the objective criterion, the Russian response has been sympathetic towards Indian aspirations to play a greater role in global affairs. On the other hand America always supported the claims of Germany and Japan, not India as the new members of reformed UN Security Council³¹.

The relationship between Russia and Pakistan were improving at considerable pace. Some Foreign Minister level visits took place between the two countries, during which a range of issues were discussed such as security and stability in South Asian region, nuclear non-proliferation, peace and stability in central Asia etc. the most significant

³¹ *The Indian Express* (New Delhi), 27 September, 1995.

event during the period happened when On September 24, 1995, Alexander Vengerovsky, leader of Russian Parliamentary delegation to Pakistan made public that “Russia was ready to supply military hardware to Pakistan. He further said that “Russian technology could find its way into many fields of Pakistani markets.” The disclosure ruffled Indian leadership, which so far was successful in persuading Russia to not to sale any arm and ammunition to Pakistan. Though, the announcement remained on the paper and could never be materialized due to some reasons. It was alleged that the strong pro-Indian lobby I Moscow had a final say in the Russia’s decision on whether to sale any arm to Pakistan or not. The pro-Indian lobby stalled the move at its beginning. (Bhatty 1996) Russian General Gamilov remarked in 1994 that Russian arms sale to Pakistan were “pure speculation” and further added "we will not sell arms to Pakistan without consulting India first"³². Therefore, the Indian apprehensions were addressed for a while at least.

All these friendly postures by Russia created conducive environment in which Moscow could rebalance its policies towards South Asia. The proposed arms sale to Pakistan was to be officially announced at the time of visit of Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto in 1995. Interestingly, the visit could not materialize due to some internal problems facing Pakistan at that time. Some scholars view the cancellation of the visit from different lens and point out that under the pressure from India, Russia had to cancel the visit on its own. Notably, whatever be the exact cause of such abrupt cancellation of visit, it benefitted India immensely. For, once again the ‘special relationship’ that India enjoyed with Russia has been heralded. Furthermore, Pakistan had sought Russian support to resolve Kashmir issue and restoration of its relationship with India. Russia agreed to the Pakistani demand on the condition that it would mediate on the Kashmir issue if both the parties make a request simultaneously. As stated above, India doesn’t want any third party involvement in matter and hence, categorically the Pakistani demand (ibid)

³² *Asian Recorder* (New Delhi), 16-22 July, 1994, p.24094.

Another important visit took place when Russian Prime Minister Victor Chernomyrdin arrived in New Delhi on 22nd December 1994. At the time, Russia was undergoing transition in economic, political and cultural fields. These were also coupled with internal political crises such as the Chechanya. Among other things, the highlight of the visit was the agreement for the long term military and technical cooperation for the period upto 2000. On the issue of supply of arms to Pakistan by Russia, Chernomyrdin made clear that it has no plan to supply arms to Pakistan as of now and in future too. He said, "*As for arms to Pakistan we have an agreement with the Indian leaders whereby our relations with Pakistan are fully transparent and open. We are not supplying any weapons to Pakistan today and we have no intention of doing that in the future.*"³³ The stand of Russian on the issue remained the same in the coming years despite the eagerness evinced by Pakistani diplomats and policy makers in the subsequent interaction with Russian officials. It could be inferred from the naysaying by Kremlin that the 'strong and special' status India enjoyed deterred the former from sale of advanced weapon systems to Pakistan to a larger extent.

The countries of Commonwealth of Independent Nations (CIS), in general and five countries of Central Asia, in particular were also instrumental in shaping the Russian perception towards South Asia. The newly independent countries of Central Asia consisting of Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan are considered as 'strategic backyard' of Russia. In the 'strategic backyard' no other country is allowed to have strategic foothold that could undermine Russian influence here. The Russian approach is signified by the 'near abroad' policy formulated in the meantime. According to the 'near abroad' policy, Moscow appears to aspire to be the sole dominant power having influence over the CIS countries affairs. Pakistan, through its various covert and overt policies, tried to engage the five Central Asian countries diplomatically and politically. These diplomatic and political overtures by Islamabad did not go well with Moscow who viewed these move as fomenting religious extremism and radicalization at the behest of Western powers. Some high profile visits by Pakistani leadership took place to Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan culminating into a number of

³³ *Hindustan Times* (New Delhi), 24 December, 1994.

agreements and declarations³⁴. All these acts by Islamabad were seen with suspicion by Moscow, as corollary, Moscow-Islamabad found each other at two end of the spectrum. India benefitted from the tepidness in the duos relationship in the form of no arms and weapons and assistance to the latter.

The second tenure of Boris Yeltsin in Russia (1996-99) is remembered as the period in which the Russia-India relation got cemented by enhanced high level interactions between the leadership of two countries. Yeltsin's second term laid some important milestone in the relationship which still boasts of its significance. In the tenure, Yeltsin appointed a new and energetic Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov, who in his capacity set Russian policy towards Asia on a swing. Primakov emphasized the Eurasianist character of Russia, and hence sought to reshape its foreign policy orientation in a drastic way. The previous term of Yeltsin was a period of transition in Russia which was trying to tide over the immediate economic and political crises in its domestic and international domain. The period of transition saw turbulence in every aspect of her life. The negative time was soon overcome and new and rejuvenated Russia was appearing on the horizon. Moscow had refrained from criticizing India for her peaceful nuclear explosion in 1974 and had consistently showed greater understanding for India's nuclear position at various international forums. The policy continued and in 1995 Alexander Yu Alexeyev commenting on Indian and Pakistani Nuclear Policies mentioned, *"we do intend to develop our relations with South Asian states on the basis of an even-handed and balanced approach ... we also realize that nuclear and missile proliferation in South Asia has stemmed from both Pakistan and India's domestic political concerns and regional security threat perceptions. We are also aware that both Pakistan and India need a capable defence."*³⁵

However, when in May 1998 India conducted its nuclear tests a little irritation was visible in Russian attitude towards India. In its official response Moscow unequivocally criticized the tests. President Yeltsin lamented that "India has let us down". The official

³⁴ Summaries of the World Broadcast, London

³⁵ Alexeyev, Alexander Yu, "Russian-Pakistani Relations," *Pakistan Horizon* (karachi), val. 49, no. 1, January, 1996, pp. 30-31.

statement issued by the foreign ministry on May 12, 1998, not only expressed "alarm and concern" but also urged India to reverse its nuclear policy and sign the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and comprehensive test Ban Treaty (CTBT). An apprehension was also expressed that India's policy may lead to a chain reaction in South Asia and beyond. Russian foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov remarked that India's decision to carry out nuclear explosion was "short sighted" and "unacceptable" as far as Russia was concerned. He felt that there was serious risk of India-Pakistan conflict and added "we specially would not want Pakistan to follow India's footsteps. (Bakshi 1999) Thus, Russia didn't favor any sort of sanction against India, despite immense pressure from the developed countries. The former appears to have understood the strategic compulsions that led India to conduct the nuclear test. However, Russia didn't give up its earlier demand that India should sign NPT and CTBT immediately, and in return the former would recognize India as a nuclear weapon state. (Rajgopalan 1998). Additionally, Moscow promised India its cooperation in the latter's civil nuclear activities when it announced the building of Kudankulam nuclear power plant despite the western pressure, as was mooted in 1988. The basic concern raised by Russian leadership was the fear that the act by India could lead to a nuclear competition or chain reaction in South Asia, having the chances of destabilizing the regional peace and security.³⁶ Later Russia seemed to be more reconciling when it said, "such a policy by India will not cause a chain reaction in South Asia or beyond it, and Russia learnt about the nuclear test in India with alarm and concern." the External Affairs Ministry further said. "The step contradicts the efforts by the international community to strengthen the regime of Non-Proliferation in nuclear weapons at the global and regional levels, a crucial factor for international stability and security", and "Such actions are inadmissible at a time when the general moratorium on nuclear tests is being observed". "the action cause very deep regret in Russia, a close friend of India". The Russian ministry of Foreign Affairs advised Delhi to review its current nuclear strategy and to ink the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the Nuclear Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT).³⁷

³⁶ *Summary of World Broadcast* (London), 14 May, 1998, p. SU/3226 B/ 1.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

Amid all these political and diplomatic upheavals Pakistan conducted its own nuclear test in May 1998. Russia has viewed the indo-Pak nuclear rivalry from a different perspective expressed 'deepest concern' over the test. Alexander Yu Alexeyev said, "As for Russia, we are sure that Pakistan and India would take necessary step to curb nuclear proliferation in South Asia." Boris Kvok, of Russia, observed:

Especially worrying is the fact that the long running standoff between the two leading states of Southeast Asia has finally acquired a nuclear dimension. The situation surrounding the Indian and Pakistani Nuclear tests and their possible repercussions extremely worry us. Russia's fundamental position is well-known and has been promulgated in corresponding documents. We urge Delhi and Islamabad to sign the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty without any conditions. We also repeatedly called upon these countries to accede to the Nonproliferation Treaty as countries having no nuclear weapon (Kvok 1998)

The western apprehension plus that of Russia was that specified the existence of the Kashmir dispute, considered as a "hot spot", the nuclear race in South Asia could begin a conflict escalating into a full blown nuclear crisis. Such a vista was highly precarious. Yevgeny Primakov emphasised that in the existing conditions the international comity of states must take sweeping steps to make New Delhi and Islamabad sign the NPT and CTBT. (Bakshi 1999) Primakov, the Russian Foreign Minister said, "*Russia's position did not differ from that of most European states and USA, except in an aspect: new nuclear powers should not be excluded from the international dialogue*". He further carried on, "We are very cautious regarding the use of embargo. This is our policy. We displayed it in India's case, when India carried out nuclear tests, and it is the same policy as far as Pakistan is concerned.³⁸ Thus, Primakov conflicted the logic of sanctions and embargo against Pakistan as in the case of India earlier. He also maintained that 'New nuclear powers' should not be segregated from international negotiations. Further, on May 30, 1998, Primakov prepared appoint agenda which was to be discussed in P-5 meeting at Geneva on 4th June. The points were : (1) India and Pakistan should be subjected to increasingly intense pressure to make them sign the NPT; (2) India and

³⁸ *Summary of World Broadcast* (London), 30 May, 1998, p.SU/3240 B/10.

Pakistan should be made to join the international test ban; (3) Everything should be done to ease tension in relational between the two states³⁹. The very move exemplify, the conviction that Russia moved to the position being held by western powers on the issue. There happened some other events and conferences, apart from the aforesaid meeting, where Russian diplomats tried their best to prod India to sign the nuclear non-proliferation and comprehensive test ban treaty.

The period of Yeltsin got over with the appointment of Vladimir Putin by Yeltsin himself in first as his Prime Minister and later as the acting President in December, 1999. In a popular vote in 2000, Putin established himself firmly on the throne in Kremlin and assumed the Presidentship. The period onwards is what known as the ‘Putin era in Russian politics by the scholars. Initially, Putin acquainted himself with the existing geopolitical realities and Russia’s place in it. The ‘Great Power’ obsession of Russia was reasserted and the ways to achieve and sustain that was underlined in an article by him. He said, “*Russia could achieve her former status of "Great Power" by combining the principles of market economy and Democracy with the realities of new Russia.*” (Chubarov 2001). This was evident from the fact that Putin took immediate recourse to military offensive against the Chechen terrorist who had attacked in Dagestan. The military operation brought him unmatched popularity and public support that culminated into him becoming the President in 2000 with an overwhelming public votes. After consolidating his position in the domestic arena, Putin embarked on the task of projecting Russia’s renewed image abroad. In the bid, he pick Indian subcontinent to clean the dust from the relations and giving a new lease of life to it. Putin planned a visit to India in 2000 to revitalize the traditional friendly ties. But before that, he seem to emulate, something his predecessor Yeltsin had tried in his initial days in the office. The policy pertained to the ‘equi-close’ perspective toward India and Pakistan.

Putin through his a special envoy Sergei Yasterzhembsky, tried to assure Pakistan that Russia still wants to embrace it, though lot of talk has been underway in vain. Yasterzhembsky made certain statements there in Pakistan raising the eyebrow here in

³⁹ *The Hindustan Times* (New Delhi), 9 June, 1998.

India about the intention of new dispensation towards the hitherto existing policy. Through his statements, he appeared to discount Pakistan of all its terrorist backings in the region, including the Chechnya problem. (Zehra 2000) Jyotsana Bakshi (2000) makes the point that the real reason behind Russia reaching out to Pakistan was to persuade Islamabad to abandon its policy of backing the Chechen rebels and other terror outfits operating in Central Asia. (Bakshi 2000)

Putin paid a visit to India in October 2000 which is marked as a landmark visit by scholars both Indian and Russian. During the visit Putin addressed Indian Parliament in its joint session and appreciated Indian democratic system and its pluralist culture. He stressed the need to learn from India how it has managed its diverse country so efficiently and marching towards higher and higher levels of development.⁴⁰ On the question of terrorism and, Putin put forth his views emphatically and said,

*"the same individual; the same terrorist organizations, are organizing and, very often, the same individuals participate in organizing, conducting and igniting terrorist acts from the Philippines to Kosovo including Kashmir, Afghanistan and Russia's Northern Caucasus"*⁴¹

On Kashmir issue, Putin said,

*"Kashmir has been the cause of tension between India and Pakistan ... foreign interference should be stopped....the issue should be resolved on a bilateral basis through compromise... and there must be unconditional support for the line of control."*⁴²

Putin made it clear through his later statements that he, like his predecessor backs India's position on resolving the issue i.e. through bilateral talks and discussion without involving any third party.

⁴⁰ See the text of the speech of the Russian President Vladimir Putin at the Central Hall of the Indian Parliament on 4th October 2000, in *Mainstream*, vol. 33, October 14, pp. 7-9.

⁴¹ *The Hindu* (Madras), 27 September, 2000.

⁴² *The Hindu* (Madras), 5 October, 2000.

Both the countries, also signed number of agreements - important among them was the Strategic Partnership' declaration. The declaration talked about the principle of sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity, apart from non-interference in each other's internal affairs, and mutual respect and mutual benefit. The countries also agreed to support on international forums and other multilateral forums.⁴³

The issue of Taliban governed Afghanistan also figured during the discussions. Afghanistan which shares border with the so called Russian strategic backyard Central Asia and Indian sub-continent emerged as the biggest security and stability challenge in South Asia and adjoining regions. It has emerged as a intriguing question for both India and Russia to deal with otherwise consequence are awaiting ahead. In the backdrop, the two countries envisaged to coordinate their approach and strategy on Afghanistan based Taliban in the form of a joint working group on it. The group would look into the issue of devising strategy to check and counter cross-border terrorism, smuggle of narcotics and other illegal activities, aimed at ensuring peace and stability in the region. (Bakshi, 2000) Russia made it quite clear that Pakistan was not welcomed in Shanghai-5⁴⁴ organisation due to its comlicity with the terrorist outfits operating in South Asia and Central Asia. Mikhail Margilov, deputy chairperson of the Russian Parliaments upper house was quoted saying, "How can Islamabad that aids and abets international terrorism, religious extremism and drug trafficking become a member of the Shanghai forum aiming at combating these evils,"⁴⁵

The period is marked with the onset of a new impetus in the relationship between Russia on one hand and India and Pakistan on the other hand. The *real politik* sought to be entrenched in the Moscow's dealings with the two nations. The transition period in the economic segment of Russia began to be over and a new thrust in the strength of its political and diplomatic manoeuring conceived. The disillusionment of the leadership of Moscow led it to search for new avenues where it can bolster its dwindling economic fortunes in the form of enhanced purchase of military equipments and hardware.

⁴³ *The Hindu* (New Delhi), 4 October, 2000.

⁴⁴ Consisted of five countries namely, China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan.

⁴⁵ *The Pioneer* (New Delhi), 16 June 2001.

Naturally, India came on the list since it has been a long largest buyer of Russian arms. However, the leadership tried to persuade Pakistan by taking an awkward position on Kashmir issue, to much chagrin of Indian spiration by the incumbent president Yeltsin. But the moce didn't fructify and the memories of old friendly relations with India sough to be reinforced by big policymakers in Kremlin.

On the question of India conducting its nuclear test in 1998, the Russian response was tepid. They appeared to follow the western line when it came to build pressure in India for violating internationa nuclear regime. Moreover, the Russian representative on multilateral forums criticised India, albeit mildly. Due to mountong pressure on India and Pakistan to sign the NPT and CTBT, Moscow also joined the chorus. Interestingly, despite all the high voltage drama, Russian leadership did not support unilateral sanctions to punish India and Pakistan for their belligerent attitude towards international nuclear regime in place. Negotiation and discussion were emphasised as the only tools to resolve the impasse. (Moskalenko and Shaumian 1999: 238)

Till the time terrorism had shown its colour in Russia in the form of Chechen rebels attacks. Putin delt with these fringed groups strictly and went on an all out war to cleanse them. The posture was appreciated by India. India was for long suffering from the scourge of cross border terrorism from Pakistan in Kashmir and elsewhere. The issue provided a common platform to cooperate and coordinate with each other.

The big event in the 21st century took place in the form of terrorist attck on World Trade Center in USA in September 2001, popularly known as 9/11. The marks a shift in the globl political and security discourse away from the state centric power politics. Its reverberations were felt all over the world thereafter and still, more or less remains under that shadow.

Chapter 3: Post 9/11 era: Russia's Interaction with the Region

The period just after the Yeltsin passing the baton to Putin, Russian image had hit a low in terms of its reputation and influence in the global affairs. The world comity of nations began to take Russian status in the matters concerning the world for granted and tried to often ignore it. There were some notable exceptional events as well for it such as the strategic realignment with China being one of them. In the time of ambivalence and uncertainty, Russian president elect was to grapple with a number of problems and issue both abroad and at home. (Lo 2002) "The President-to-be faced a daunting array of problems, ranging from a volatile institutional environment and climate of demoralization, to more concrete concerns such as the deterioration in Russia's relations with the West in the wake of Kosovo and other crises." (ibid). In the problematic strategic and political climate, Putin had to reestablish Russian status and stature in the external affairs, and domestically delivering on the economic front to pacify the citizens.

The post Yeltsin era Russian foreign policy has been a work still in transition. Putin since ascending on the throne of presidentship has started the process of political consolidation and institutional stability due to his relative inexperience at the level of policy making and grand issues of foreign policy. In doing so, he seems to be reluctant on developing policy and pursuance of courses of action. (Lo 2002)

The Russian dilemma with identity which it finds difficult to deal with particularly when it come to foreign policy making and implementation. There are competing identities such as 'Atlanticist' And 'Eurasian' that have been the guiding force in shaping in Moscow's dealing with the countries, at one time or the other. Putin, intially followed the Gorbachvian footsteps and stressd the need for a 'Common European Home' and European integration. But at the same time, he didn't let him entrapped in the cultural cacophony. The stance was proved when Putin paid a number of visits to Asian, European countries after he became president, exceptionaal among them were the visit to China and upgradation of relationship to that of 'strategic partnership'. He reached out to the Islamic world with the plank of an all out war on terrorism. He pursued what Lo (2002) calls the civilizational universalism- of being all things to all people. Switching on

these identities at convenience and need of the leadership. The commendable outcome of the universalism has been that Russia soon recovered from the humiliation of Kosovo crisis and went to second Chechen war only to reclaim its lost glory and self-confidence as a global power, which was reduced to the status of a regional power. Instead, to put it in the way “in a chameleon-like process, Russia is at once ‘regional’ and ‘global’, ‘normal’ and ‘great power’, ‘integrated’ yet also ‘special’ and ‘different’” (Lo 2002, 160)

‘Securitization’ is the most palpable feature of Russian foreign policy under Putin, which, according to Lo (2002) means three things:

First, most literally, it describes the significantly enhanced role of the ‘security apparatus’ in foreign policy-making – both at the individual level and institutionally – and the impact it has had on the conduct of Moscow’s management of international affairs. The *second* meaning centres on the primacy of political-military over economic priorities. Despite the growing importance of the latter, it is the former which continues to dominate the agenda. Although labels such as zero-sum, balance of power and spheres of influence have become somewhat tainted, their spirit imbues much of Russian foreign policy today. *Third*, the more subtle and nuanced, yet assertive approach of the current administration is reflected in the interplay between overtly security objectives and economic interests. (Lo 2002: 158)

For Russia, West still remains a reference point in the foreign policy arena despite the so called clamour for a multipolar world. Though, he refers to it in the 2000 Foreign Policy Concept paper, but with little inclination. He considers it utmost important to improve his terms and conditions with the west and look for the finance, capital, technology to bolster its own economic fortunes which are dwindling. Putin appears to acknowledge the fact that despite the so called emerging centers of power in the world camouflaging the international system as multipolar, be it China, or any other power which is poised to challenge the western hegemony, it is premature, to say the least. The improved relations with the third world and Asian powers such as India and Pakistan, West occupies the pivot in Putin’s imagination. That is the reason why Putin is called the most pragmatist President when it comes to foreign policy. (ibid)

There is a constant flux in Russo-American relations. It is evident from the attitude of both the powers towards each other when it comes to cooperation on some crucial issues. However, the hawkish stance of both the powers went through a transformation after the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center in New York in September, 2001, popularly known as 9/11. (Roberts 2004) The American president George W. Bush and his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin brought a fresh blood in the bilateral relations by giving an optimism of enhanced strategic interaction between the two arch rivals, which is unprecedented in view of past experiences.

Putin was the first world leader who telephoned Bush just after the 9/11 terrorist attack in New York and expressed his grief on the incident. Moreover, he soon began to chart out a five-point plan to support American war on terror. These much-talked and discussed points of interest to the scholars were: sharing the vital intelligence with American intelligence agencies; availability of Russian aerospace for American war planes; cooperating with the Central Asian allies of Russia; joint mission for international search and rescue operation; and, upgrading their humanitarian and military aid to the Northern Alliance and the Rabbani government in Afghanistan (McFaul 2001). The changed mood in the Kremlin was clear from the fact that now Russia has taken a proactive stance on war on terror dovetailing the American effort. Moscow also allowed the Central Asian countries to provide their airspace for Russian forces to carry out an all-out war against terror groups in Afghanistan. Here, Russia also showed willingness to join the efforts against the menace, a significant event deviating from the past.

The euphoria of 'partnership' soon dissipated. The 'unconditional alliance' between America and Russia soon began to count its days. The Russian response to America's call for 'war on terror' was more driven by domestic compulsions than anything else. It was a 'partnership of convenience' for Putin to go ahead with plans to hunt for terrorists. Russia itself was facing the brunt of terrorism back at home from Chechen rebels. By supporting the American 'war', Moscow thought of gaining the worldwide attention and sympathy for its efforts against Chechens. The friendly gesture by Moscow was in the anticipation of a changed attitude of Washington towards Chechen rebels, which often

criticised the former for its highhandedness in the issue. The elusive ‘unconditional alliance’ came on the fore with the growing differences over Iraq issue. (Roberts 2004)

The relationship between the two powers remains a ‘relationship of convenience’ rather of enmity and friendly. The Russian response in the post global realities has been of balancing against due the increased aggressiveness in the American foreign policy. The moscow’s quest for multilateralism stems from the concern of unilateral and dominating nature of United States’ behaviour in dealing with other countries. The Bush Doctrine⁴⁶ which emphasises the unilateral action on the part of america if any unfriendly country supports the terrorist outfits and development of weapon of mass destruction overtly and covertly. The Russia’s ‘balancing behaviour’, however,, is not offensive, but a defensive response to the way America treats other nations. The reaction of Kremlin was shared by the Putin’s predecessor when he underscored the dangers of ‘an absence of an alternate pole to American power.’ (Ambrosio 2001)

Roberts (2004) calls Russian foreign policy during the period ‘reactionary’. The reaction by the Russian leadership emanates from a kind of “identity crisis” in the ranks of Kremlin policy makers. The identity crisis has led Putin to look for something else that can behold the lost glory of Russia in the post-Soviet period by ‘balancing acts and tactics’.

Such reactionary foreign policy is a result of a “crisis of identity” in Russia following the collapse of the Soviet Union. Without a collective national identity to serve as a compass for defining both the national interest and post-Soviet Russia’s foreign policy priorities, there has been a tendency to rely on known quantities – to establish Russia’s international role within a Cold War context in which Russia and the United States, though certainly no longer enemies, still balance power in the international system. (Roberts 2004:4)

⁴⁶ The Bush Doctrine asserts, “United States reserves the right to attack pre-emptively any unfriendly state that supports terrorism or that pursues the development of weapons of mass destruction.” *National Security Strategy of the United States America* published on 20th September, 2002.

The evidence of the reactionary stance by Moscow is evident from the Foreign Policy Concept Paper 2000 wherein unilateralism has been criticised. The unilateral and dominant way of American actions in the world has apprehended the former. In response, the former sought to reestablish the multilateral order as to check the power of latter, particularly the policy articulations such as Bush Doctrine. Such concern is evident from one of the statements of Putin when asked about the United States's engagement in Iraq and the earlier military quagmire in Vietnam, he said, "*great powers and empires often develop 'feelings of invincibility, greatness and infallibility.'*"⁴⁷

Russian stance towards America has not changed significantly, neither the bilateral relations. The fact is that the 9/11 has given fillip to the Russian suspicion and concern about American policies. The Kremlin's quest for a multilateral world order is not ungrounded, given the aggressive designs voiced by Bush Doctrine in pursuit of its interest. Here, the doctrine has acted as a catalyst in strengthening the Russian fear of a unilateralism with consequences for its own interest and security. In fact, the post 9/11 period has seen Russian foreign policy more reactionary in terms of its global ambitions and security interests vision, which further can strain the relations between the two. The only ground, they found to share some commonality of interest was the issue of terrorism. But even the issue could not bring the duo on the common platform due to some reasons. (ibid)

The Russian-American relations from Gorbachev to Yeltsin has been of "unconditional cooperation", and often referred to as the "honeymoon period" of the relationship. But the relationship didn't last for long and the honeymoon period got over with the massive reduction in the power of Russia, both in the military sense and economic sense. Once the matching power standing to challenge America, stumbling under the problems of its own internally and externally. The prestige, glory and status of Russia was regrettably eroding massively and its sense of resentment kept on piling up. The change in the orientation of Russia towards west added fuel to the fire and its elite's expectations from the association

⁴⁷ Putin quoted by Dmitri Litvinovich in "Russia: Unimpressed," Transitions Online (22 December 2003). Quoted in 'Empire Envy'

reached its nadir. The so called Russian empire was shattered and in the words of Loyd (1998): “the empire is lost and the Russians suffered defeat at the hands of America and its allies; the notion of Russian greatness had been humbled. (Lloyd 1998:6)

The Russian quest for multipolarity stems from the suspicious way of looking at American behaviour in the domain of foreign policy, which to some extent is true. Russian approach towards resolving the international dispute through a multilateral forum is the function of its increasing concern of losing out to United States’ its past glory and prestige. The fact that Moscow backs multilateralism not because of their nature as being the multilateral forum, but it holds substantial leeway to make its wishes heard and taken into account. For instance, kremlin has often talked about the United Nations Security Council when it come to resolving any conflict or crises internationally. The is because, kremlin has a permanenet seat with a veto power which it can use to influence the decision in a decisive way to it advantage, whereas arduous opponent of NATO involvement in crisis management, albeit a multilateral body. Becasuse Russia posseses considerable weight and influence in UNSC rather in NATO, which makes it support the former and denigrate and derecognise the latter in which US leadership is dominant and the organisation is led by an exlusive group elite and wealthy nations (Roberts 2004).

The post-Soviet period in Russian foreign policy has been “American centric” in which the Russian ambitions and craving for an equitable ttreatment has moulded the policy choices of Russian elite. Bobo Lo puts the Russian policy malers dilemma in the folowing manner :

the country is torn between anxiousness about the new imbalance in Russia-USA relations and Washington’s global ascendancy; on the other hand, a sense of hope regarding the possibilities for increased political and economic interdependency on terms advantageous to Russia. (Lo 2002:24)

Though the strategic concerns remained in a significant manner between the two cold war time rivals, soothing for some time at least to counter the menace of terrorism. The menace of terrorism has acted as a point of convergence in the bilateral relations at least for some time. The point of convergence did’t last long and with the surfacing of

differences and divergence of opinion caused an end to the honeymoon period. The two countries have tried their hard to strike some sort of workable relationship, although in their own interest. The relationship has not been full of enmity, if not friendly as such. 'The unconditional alliance' catalysed the leadership to come on the negotiating table as to find some common ground for cooperation coordination.

In the context it is worth to examine the Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation, 2000. The Russian apprehension is crystal clear from the wordings of the document in which he raises concern about the unilateralism as a foreign policy instrument to achieve ones goals. Russia is "unable to reconcile itself to Washington's global leadership, Moscow promoted the vision of 'multipolarity,' Russia warns against any unilateral, bilateral or multilateral military actions in the world without the sanction from United Nations Security Council as it would be in breach of international law. Such move would pose a grave threat to Russia's national interest and security⁴⁸. As per the document the the biggest threat to Russian national security in the world politics was the "the danger of weakening Russia's political, economic and military influence in the world." The concern of diminishing Russian components of national power are clear from the above sentence.⁴⁹ (Basu 2000:4)

The post 9/11 support by Russia support to American operations aimed at eliminating terror infrastructure from Afghanistan, led to the creation of a new NATO-Russia Council to enable the former some say in the decisions of the latter, not veto. The Council was tasked with NATO-Russia joint-action in the areas of terrorism, arms control, and nuclear weapons proliferation. (Saivetz 2002). NATO's westward expansion constituted the biggest ever threat to Russian security and strategic interest. The apprehension about the military organisation's encroachment into the so called Russian sphere of influence has been aired many a time by the Kremlin in various forums and summits. According to poll survey the conducted just after the 9/11 terrorist tragedy in New York, about what

⁴⁸ Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation, October 2000. The document was reprinted in *International Affairs: A Russian Journal* 5 (2000).

⁴⁹ In Baidya Bikash Basu, "Russian National Security Thinking," *Strategic Analysis: A Monthly Journal of the IDSA* 24:7 (October 2000), 4.

constituted the most imminent threat to Russian security. The 52 % of Russian elites who responded with a sense of conviction, responded “NATO’s eastward expansion to include the former Soviet Republics”⁵⁰ the survey holds testimony to the fact that how much Russian elite fear the NATO’ eastward expansion into the so called Russian sphere of influence or ‘strategic backyard’.

The renewed thrust of cooperation between Moscow and Washington was hailed. Although, some analysts raised doubt over the pace of the reconciliation move between the two powers and its future. However, the friendly gesture by Russia was not to bear fruits for its expectations from such cooperation. Shortly, American President Bush declared the abandonment of Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty (ABM Treaty) unilaterally evoking mistrust about its motives and decisions vis-à-vis Russia. As Igor Torbakov observes, “the Russian political class seethes over US withdrawal from the Treaty,” and was seen as a “slap in the face” for the Kremlin. (Torbakov 2002).

The aborting of ABM affected the Russo-US relationship adversely. The reason for the unwarranted move by Bush administration was imagined to be the limitless power within the American foreign policy groups (Viktor Kremeniuk) Sergei Rogov attributes the abandoning of the said treaty to America’s “sweeping military success in Afghanistan”(Torbakov 2002). In a clarificationary note, the White house tried to convince Russian people by stating that despite the relinquishing the ABM treaty, America had no intention of undermining the security of Russian federation. In fact, keeping in view the clamouring surrounding the abortion of treaty, White house tried to allay the latter apprehensions regarding their role in ensuring the security and stability of the world peace.⁵¹

The situation began to grow grim with some other incidents. Among them, the most prominent was the American decision to go to war in Iraq. The war in Iraq was waged by

⁵⁰ Poll originally reported in Izvestia, May 25, 2001 and reprinted in the CDPSP. See “Poll Charts Russian Elite’s Foreign Policy Views,” Current Digest of the Post Soviet Press 53:21 (2001): 6.

⁵¹ The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, Response to Russian Statement on US ABM Treaty Withdrawal, December 13, 2001. Available at: http://www.usembassy.it/file2001_12/alia/a1121302.htm. (Accessed on 16th May, 2015).

America on the charge of the development of weapon of mass destruction (WMD) allegedly being developed by the dictatorial regime in Baghdad. Interestingly, the said move by Bush administration was in violation of the international law. Only UNSC has the authority to authorise a military action against any miscreant state. The multilateral approach to resolve any issue is what Moscow has hard pressed in its all communications. Even in its Foreign Policy Concept adopted in 2000, the unilateralism and use of force was sought to be resisted and opposed by all means. The unilateral decision of Washington to obliterate the Saddam Hussain region was not appreciated by Moscow. Thus the Iraq invasion marks the point of downfall of the temporarily knit together relationship of two arch rivals, at least under the garb of fighting terrorism. Moscow found an opportunity to resist and oppose the American unilateralism in Iraq. However, one strand of opinion is of the view that “had less to do with a fondness for Iraqi President Saddam Hussein than with the Bush Administration’s clear demonstration of the limits of Russian power and influence.” (Simes 2003:36)

The Russian influence and power had reached its nadir in the post the last years of 1990s. the massive decline in its influence was resented in the attitude of the Russian political elite, who once saw the matching power equation between United States and USSR, the predecessor of Russia. once Condoleeza Rice, the then American Security Advisor had publicly proclaimed, “I sincerely believe that Russia constitutes a threat for the West , in general and our European allies , in particular.”⁵²

All the above mentioned issues of NATO enlargement, abrogation of ABM treaty, and Iraq invasion laid the foundation for a relationship full of confrontation and suspicion. In the later time, Putin administration found some of the grounds on which it questioned the unfair treatment meted out against it on different occasions. the reality of decline in Russian power and influence remained undigested for its leadership. However, the, the blame for the reducing the relationship between themselves can not be put only on one party. The ‘warm relationship’ to the ‘cold relationship’ has its nourishers from both the

⁵² Rice quoted by Elaine Monaghan, “Spy Arrest Shows Cooler U.S.-Russian Relations,” Reuters, 20 February 2001, in Johnson’s Russia List #4107, 21 February 2001.

sides. Russian President started criticising American strategy in Iraq for it did not take the approval from the UNSC. He also termed the capture of Saddam Hussain as 'unfair' and 'unjust'. By doing the, Putin followed what scholars call a pragmatic approach towards America, than confrontationist. (Trenin 2004)

Saivetz (2002) has listed out some of the policy components of Russiaa in Afghanistan. Since 9/11 terrorist attack, Russian's Afghan policy has three subpolicies, are: first, Afghan policy; second, NIS polic (specifically Uzbekistan); and third, policy directed at America in the context of Afghanistan, the stability factor remains high on the agenda. In addition, the check on some of the Islamic fundamental groups who, if left unchecked, can pose a serious security and stability concern in Russian territory as well as in its backyard. The Taliban groups operating from Afghan soil tried to bring the Central Asian countries under their influence by teaching extremism and fundamental ideology. Moscow sought to improve its staus and influence by announcing the active cooperation with the American administration in eliminating terrorist oufits from Afghan soil.

Uzbekistan, Russia adopted an attitude to not let she fall into American trap completely in the the garb of fight against terrorism. Uzbekistan was the first country to announce the help to ISAF in combating Taliban in the form of providing airbase and othe facilities. In the way, Uzbekistan sought to diversify its foreign policy engagements, which hitherto remained Russia centric. As part of its "near abroad" policy, moscow persuaded Uzbekistan to join SCO, a block to balance against the American power, and withdraw all its support to ISAF on its soil, after the warm in the Washington and Moscow had fast dissipated. Uzbekistan was also suffering from its home grown terror oufits creating problems and instability. The known culprit was IMU (Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan)

When it comes to see the relationship between Russia and U.S., Russia's 'inferiority complex' hogs the limelight. Putin came to assume power on one of the planks of restoring the old glory of Russia. the lost power and influence of Kremlin in the world political affairs annoyed the elite here in Russia and the masses in the same way. Some of the moves of Bush administration such as the abrogation of ABM treaty unilaterally,

Invasion in Iraq, and NATO enlargement towards central and eastern Europe ruffled the Kremlin.(Lo 2002)

The Foreign Policy Conception of Russian Federation (1993) is an authentic document as to how Russia seeks to balance its relationship India and Pakistan simultaneously without hurting anyone. As per the document, “our policy must cause others to view it as profoundly pro Indian. It must not become obstacle for us in developing other ties, particularly with Pakistan.” (The Foreign Policy Concept 1993) further goes on to say “we do not imply that policy must be artificially moderated so that abstract balanced relations with the two countries might be established. Our task is to boost our ties with Pakistan up to the same level as our relations with India., i.e. rendering the two countries equally close to us, rather than equally distant from us.”, in general the policy of Russian Federation vis-à-vis the duo along with other countries of the region “must be subject to consistent pragmatic reconsideration prompted by sides’ actual capacities and legitimate interests, and resting on economic stimuli.” (Foreign Policy Concept 1993) further, Putin belived to achive the lost glory as a ‘Great Power’ by intertwining the principles of democracy and market economy keeping in view the changed realities of new Russia. (Chubarov 2001)

The role of energy in the national policy was acknowledged and further entrenched in the thinking of the elites of Russian politics and economics. Russia today feels very marginalized in the manner the world has turned out to be a hotbed of unilateral actions. In the fundamental changed geopolitical and strategic scenario, Russia feels disgruntled by not being included in the global policy making and order creation. The sense of frustration is indicated in the Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation 2000. How wary of the unilateralism in international politics Russia is clear from the following lines:

The strategy of unilateral actions can destabilize the international situation, provoke tensions and the arms race, aggravate interstate contradictions, national and religious strife. The use of power methods bypassing existing international legal mechanisms cannot remove the deep socio economic, interethnic and other contradictions that underlie

conflicts, and can only undermine the foundations of law and order. (the Foreign Policy Concept of Russian Federation 200:2)

How the Russian leadership views the unilateral action and domination by the western powers and institutions, in general and United States' nature of hegemonic attitude is important. The emphasis was laid on the functioning of the multilateralism as a way to resolve the outstanding conflicts and likelihood of conflict situations, is evident from the following lines:

At the same time, new challenges and threats to the national interests of Russia are emerging in the international sphere. There is a growing trend towards the establishment of a unipolar structure of the world with the economic and power domination of the United States. In solving principal questions of international security, the stakes are being placed on western institutions and forums of limited composition, and on weakening the role of the U.N. Security Council. (ibid)

The five Central Asian countries began to receive utmost attention in the aftermath of 9/11 terrorist incident in New York. The renewed thrust upon these newly independent countries intensified the geopolitical competition and greater opportunities for these countries and the great powers. The replay and reinforcement of geopolitical competition presents an opportunity for the aspiring great powers and these countries to cooperate and reap the benefit of such cooperation in the form of enhancing their national interest. (Allison 2004)

The Yeltsin era was marked by lack of any proactive and preactive posture towards Central Asian countries, but Putin's ascendancy to power has stalled the dormancy in the attitude towards these countries. When it came to the conflict of interest between America and Russia, the general perception in the elite in Moscow was that 'America is here for now, and we are in the region forever.' The perception got translated into a sort of scepticism about the role of America in the part of the world. A widely held view in Moscow was, 'America has appropriated Russian geopolitical space.' (Iyashov 2003) The soft and nuanced hegemonic attitude of Russia towards the region is aimed at two things- Russia's revival as an economic and military power, and tackling the threat emanating

from the unstable southern periphery. In order to check the Central Asian countries' increasing hand held walk with the western countries, Russia inaugurated what is known as 'Ivanov Doctrine'. The doctrine deals with the military strategy of Russia vis-à-vis other countries. As per the doctrine, Russia reserves the right to strike preemptively anywhere in the world including CIS countries, if threat from the unstable countries undermines Russia's security. The document, though unofficial, sent the message clearly to the audience, for which it was meant. The stipulated grounds for such interventions were 'ethnic or political conflict' or any threat to economic interest.⁵³

There has not been any common strategy towards the central Asian countries encompassing all its interests be it economic, political, military and security. The lack of a regional strategy towards the significant region is perplexing, and doesn't seem cohesive. Dmitry Trofimov (2003) lists out five points indicative of Russian interest in the Central Asian region: stability in the region based on close partnerships with the regional states; unimpeded rights of transit across Central Asia to maintain partnership relations with China, India and Iran; the maintenance of a common economic space with Central Asia, which in the future could assist Russia's economic modernization; the use of the region's geostrategic potential for practical military needs and to preserve Russia's status as a world and regional power; and international recognition of Russia's leading role in the region.' (Trofimov 2003:76)

The landscape in Afghanistan and other central Asian countries underwent transformation following the American invasion in Afghanistan to wipe out terrorists from its soil in toto. The post 9/11 scenario presented Central Asian countries with an array of opportunities at their doorstep to enhance and diversify their engagements with other countries in the world. So far, Russia remained the sole great power enjoying the leverage and immense influence in the affairs of these newly independent countries. She also controlled the critical infrastructure of trade and transmission of hydrocarbon, electricity, and cotton happening between the region and rest of the world. In a flurry of events

⁵³ 'We have enough missiles to take on everyone', *Vremyanovostei*, 3 Oct. 2003, p. i; 'Reforms over', *Izvestiya*, 14 Oct. 2003, p. 4; 'Muted reactions to Russian interventionism', *Reporting Central Asia*, Institute of War and Peace Reporting, no. 245, 13 Nov. 2003.

following the 9/11 terrorist attacks, Central Asian countries particularly Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan along with Russia, to provide an active support to the American effort to eliminate AL-Qaida and Taliban from Afghan soil. After the routing of terror outfits from the country, America began to insist the reconstruction and rehabilitation of capacities in Afghanistan, both political and economic (Starr 2005).

In economy, trade was the biggest factor to be dealt with. For huge investment in transport facilities was inevitable. To link the Afghan and Central Asian market with the rest of the world, number of land and railway projects were conceived. Geographically, these countries stand at the crossroad of Middle East, South Asia, East Asia and Europe as well making them highly conducive for emerging as an interregional trade hub. The geographical peculiarity can cause them the reaping huge benefits in terms of trade and commerce. (ibid)

Russia and China look a bit apprehensive of these new policy thrusts by Washington towards their so-called periphery particularly Russia. The restive region of China Xinjiang remains an utmost concern of it, and the instability in its western periphery could further heighten that concern drastically. Russian apprehension emanates from its own 'near abroad' policy towards its neighboring nations in the south particularly. Russian presence is not ephemeral as is the case with America in the regional dynamics. It has strategic stakes in the regional affairs than anyone else and that is why it remains vigilant. The alleged democracy promotion agenda of America has often drawn criticism from the Kremlin, for it undermines the stability in the region.

The participation of India in the entire gamut of activities is a welcome one. Since old times, India enjoys the cultural and historical bondages with the Central Asian countries and Afghanistan. It has started the reconstruction activities there in the form of infrastructure development and financial aid. Worryingly, Pakistan always views Indian presence with a sense of suspicion and accuses it of trying to create instability in Afghanistan and its restive North Waziristan region. Although India stands undeterred of these charges and silently kept on its promises made to Afghan people. Pakistan being a

country sharing not only political boundary, but cultural and geopolitical space, is a natural ally of America. As transit country, Pakistan sits at the crucial position which can provide stimulating factor to Central Asian and Afghan economy by providing link to the open ocean for trade and other infrastructural activities. Pakistan is also a member of Tripartite Commission along with U.S. and Afghanistan. The commission's mandate is to iron out difference in the border disputes and greater regional ties among the countries. (Ibid). Kutchin (2014) tries to understand the Russian policy towards South Asia, and its strategic interest vis-a-vis America. He argues that two factors which will be instrumental in shaping Russian regional interests are firstly, "the perception of Wahabi-Salafi inspired terrorist threats finding safe haven in Afghanistan and Pakistan and crossing border to Central Asia and North Caucasus", and secondly, "the state of relations with China."

There has been a strategic realignment in the post-cold war world, particularly the increased bonhomie between Russia and China. The geopolitically significant relationship between two great powers has taken a lead role in shaping the regional order in Asia, in general and South Asia, in particular. How South Asian powers will respond to their intimacy, remains a question to be enquired into. In the post-cold war period, India and China remain rivals for influence and dominance in the Asian region. (Malik 1994). Russia and China have increased their interaction manifold keeping in view the threat perception emanating from the adjoining region. In the, Russia has tried its best to take China on board on any issue impacting the duo's interest, with Russia has its own sort of uncomfortableness with the latter's aggressive and oft-offensive approach to deal with the small neighboring countries of South East Asia and East Asia.

Afghanistan in 2014 has opened a Pandora box of speculations over who will be key actor in the post withdrawal time. In the sense, Pakistan has very cleverly brought in China in the regional security dynamics by inviting the latter to augment its commercial presence in the region to that of military and strategic. It is an open secret that Pakistan has historically found herself obsessed with the "strategic depth" notion. China has begun upgrading its military presence in Afghanistan with the active and cooperative climate forged by its Pakistan leadership. Taliban factor which at one point of time was

instrumental in Keeping China away from the entire affairs of the terrorist activities in the region having repercussion for its own internal security. Though the distance has now becoming narrower as Chinese make inroads into the crucial strategic sectors of Afghanistan with huge material and human capital investment. (Mehta 2014).

There has been a growth of Russia's energy leverage in the past decades or so. Russia has used the energy as a source of power to reward its friends with heavily subsidized energy and punish its enemies by supply disruptions and punitive price increases. The 'oil power' of resurgent Russia is of immense importance in the formulation and execution of her foreign policy (Newnham 2011) Russia has been keenly interested in selling its oil and gas in the Asian market particularly to India and China. Russian and Indian policy makers are contemplating a gas pipeline through China. In addition to the pipeline, Russia has shown interest in Pakistani hydro-electric sector. Since the estrangement of Moscow with the West for sale of its hydrocarbon, it has started looking south and east for the alternate buyers (Laugh 2011).

The phase is marked by the biggest ever incident in the 21st century that is the terrorist attack in New York on 9th September, 2001. The event is popularly known as 9/11. The attack changed the entire geopolitical and geostrategic scenario in the world, in general and in South Asia, in particular. America launched what is known as the War on Terror or the Global War on Terror vowing to eliminate the whole terror infrastructure in the world. In the period of crisis, Russia showed its overwhelming support for American effort to weed out terrorists from Afghanistan, the then base of notorious Al-Qaida terror outfit. Even Russia promised its full support for the eradication of the same. Kremlin asked the Central Asian countries to provide support in the form of letting its airspace be used to carry out ante terror operations in Afghanistan.

The response of Russian in the period is symbolized by the assertiveness in its dealing with the world powers. Restoring the lost glory and 'Great Power' is the pivot around which the entire constellation of domestic and foreign policy is directed at.

But the period of mutual trust and cooperation didn't last for long and came to an end with the American preemptive strike in Iraq undermining its sovereignty and integrity. The got Russian leadership infuriated who criticized the move vehemently. The notorious 'Bush Doctrine' was the cause of greater concern in Moscow leadership due to its problematic agenda. Now, no longer Russia wanted the American presence in Central Asia and South Asia, considering the presence as detrimental to its national security and interest. Russia vehemently took on Pakistani leadership for it's alleged hand in glove with the terrorist groups. It sided with India because both the powers were the victim of terrorism. The southern periphery still remains an unstable region due to separatist activities taking root. And on the other hand India suffers significantly at the terrorist outfits operating from the soil of Pakistan, in the garb of destabilizing Kashmir.

At the outset the Russian economy was on the track with strong signs of recovery and got itself owing to buoyancy in the revenue by sale of hydrocarbon in the international market. Russia is the largest reserve holder of natural gas in the world and significant amount of oil. Through building of several pipelines, it has been able to sell its oil and natural gas in the European market successfully. The new Russian diplomatic weapon is known as the 'energy diplomacy' gaining wider currency among the Russian elite.

Chapter 4: Russia's Economic Policy towards South policy

The Economic interaction of Russia with South Asian region has not been up to the mark. The major component of the interaction still remains the military hardware and other strategic component. Among the South Asian countries, India enjoys a relatively better position in terms of trade. Despite several landmark initiatives, the trade and commerce has not picked up the required momentum to reach at the desirable level. In the chapter, the existing trade and commerce interaction of Russian Federation with South Asian countries will be analysed. Energy as the major component of Russian foreign trade with the rest of the world, will be analysed as a new component to bridge the trade and commerce gap in the existing economic interaction.

India enjoyed a favorable balance of trade with Russia even after disintegration of USSR but the did not include the purchase of Russian defense equipment by India. The defence component formed the largest import item by India from Russia. It remained the largest arms supplier even today in face of stiff competition for myriad international arms supplying countries. Pakistan's trade volume with Russia relative to India is meagre, even including defence items. The trade and commerce relations is also the function of the strategic and political relations. Since India has been at the core of Russian calculations in South Asia, so the trade and commerce.

Table No.1: Trade between Russia and India: 1993-94 to 1999-2000⁵⁴
(US\$ millions)

Year	Total imports by Russia	% share in total exports by India	Total exports from Russia	% share in total imports by Russia	Total trade turn over	Balance of Trade of Russia
1993-94	648.60	2.92	256.89	1.10	905.49	(-) 391.71
1994-95	807.38	3.07	504.54	1.76	1311.92	(-) 302.84
1995-96	1046.55	3.29	857.53	2.33	1904.08	(-) 189.02

⁵⁴ The data excludes the defence items traded.

1996-97	811.84	2.42	628.96	1.61	1440.80	(-) 182.88
1997-98	954.12	2.72	679.02	1.63	1633.14	(-) 275.10
1998-99	709.26	2.14	545.42	1.29	1254.68	(-) 138.84
1999-2000	952.60	2.53	618.23	1.31	1570.83	(-) 334.37

Source: Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE)

The above table obviously demonstrates that amid the period 1993-2000, balance of trade was favorable to India in spite of unsteadiness in exchange and wide fluctuations which are attributed to the following reasons: *i.*, in the first half of the decade, there was sharp decrease in the GDP, manufacturing and agricultural production, breaking of linkages among the Soviet republics brought about decay of external trade of Russia and so forth *ii.* Economy was still in transitional period new monetary and financial units were not completely developed for competition. *iii.* Special rouble-dollar exchange arrangement was called off. By 1993-94, there were variety of trade channels between India and Russia, for example, Debt Repayment Account, Hard Currency account and so on which added to complexities. *iv.* Dearth of experience in Russia about working of free market economy and the private organisations were not satisfactorily familiar with to deal with the foreign trade. So because of above reasons Russia-India aggregate trade turnover went through a decadal decline after the breaking down of the Soviet Union. India's exports to Russia declined by around 45% amid the decade (1991-2000). India's imports from Russia additionally tumbled down till 1994 and after that a short time later got improved a little. During 1999-2000, Russia's imports had crossed even 1991 level and exports likewise had expanded drastically, total turnover rose by 15% (approx.). It could be obviously expressed that there were high fluctuations throughout the years because of lack of stability in trade relations between the two nations.

Table No. 2: Russia's Trade with India (2000-05)⁵⁵

(US \$ billion)

Year	Russia's export to India	Russia's import from India	Total trade	Balance of Trade: Russia	Change in trade YoY (%)
2000	1.081	0.555	1.636	(+) 0.526	
2001	1.117	0.543	1.660	(+) 0.574	1.47
2002	1.628	0.515	2.143	(+) 1.113	29.10
2003	2.735	0.584	3.319	(+) 2.151	54.88
2004	1.554	0.631	2.185	(+) 0.923	(-) 34.17
2005	2.314	0.784	3.098	(+) 1.530	41.78

Source: CMIE

Major boost in the trade ties between Russia and India was the signing of strategic partnership agreement in 2000. A Joint Study Group (JSG) was put on the ground to achieve the desired targets. The trade and commerce still remains the under performer in the bilateral relations. The competition among the Russian companies and Indian companies for market share in the world has acute. Russia occupies the top rank in terms of supplier of military hardware and instruments meant for strategic purposes. There are number of nuclear power plants on the list to be commissioned in India sold by Russia, in addition to what are already operating here. The defence and nuclear sector are immense with the opportunities for the companies in both the countries. The volume of merchandise and non-merchandise trade between the two countries stand nowhere, when compared with the trade of India with America, EU and China⁵⁶.

The trade and commerce relation between Russia and South Asian region is mutually complementary in many aspects. However,, the interaction has not been up to the potential. The volume of trade between Russia and India, however,, is under the sub optimum level.

⁵⁵ The data excludes the defence items traded.

⁵⁶ *Russia India Report*.

The compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 13 % was registered during the period 2005-10 between Russia and India. Interestingly, Russia emerged as a net exporter to India during the said period registering CAGR of exports (15%) than that of imports (8%) As per the data of Russian Federal Customs Service, the bilateral trade expanded 5.5 (approx.) times in the past couple of years: it was \$7.5 billion, \$8.5 billion, and \$8.9 billion in the years 2009, 2010, and 2011 respectively⁵⁷.

The trade and commerce interaction of Russia with Pakistan is below than that of India in many respects. In 2003, the annual turnover of trade between the countries reached \$92 million merely. Despite the volume being very low, the pace of CAGR is relatively high. The trade volume reached \$411.4 million in 2006, \$ 630 million in 2008, and \$400 million in 2009. The period saw establishment of Russia Pakistan Intergovernmental Commission on Trade and Economic, Scientific and Technical Cooperation for promoting cooperation in the field of science and technology⁵⁸.

The recent mega deal between Russia and Pakistan is the financing of a mega energy project, CASA-1000. As per the sources, Russia has provided \$500 million financial assistance to Pakistan to carry out the CASA-1000 project. The CASA project is being incubated to supply to transmit power from Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan to Pakistan. In 2011, both the countries held discussion to chalk out the plan for creating a free trade area among themselves and other arrangements such as currency swap. Both the initiatives have immense potential to expand the trade and commerce exponentially, benefitting both the countries⁵⁹.

The most amazing fact about the energy policy or diplomacy of Russia vis-à-vis its neighboring countries and importers is that it has been most successful in gas diplomacy than the oil. The dichotomy in the efficacy of the two components of Russian energy foreign policy constitutes a puzzle. The mixed success in deploying its energy policy heft

⁵⁷ Center for Monitoring Indian Economy.

⁵⁸ "Russian – Pakistani Relations". Consulate-General of the Russian Federation in Karachi.

⁵⁹ Tribune Express, *November 8, 2011*.

is considerably intriguing. So far, Russia sits on the world's largest natural gas reserves and third largest oil reserve holder. (Stulberg 2007)

In the late 1990s with the start of rebound in Russian economic fundamentals, its prime resource sector i.e. hydrocarbon sector rose in prominence relatively. The sluggish economic growth was sought to be accelerated on the back of sale of the strategic commodity to the neighbors and other countries willing to pay fairly. The hydrocarbon sector, over a period of time came to be regarded as the foreign policy tool. The foreign policy tool and its efficacy was soon felt when the Russian leadership began to reassert their strategic position and larger geopolitical interests at both regional and global level. Scholars argue that the gas and oil endowment has strategised in such a manner to reward the friends and punish the culprits or unfavorable countries by way of price hike or reduced supplies. The regional and global ambitions of Russia to reinstate itself on the international plane as a formidable opponent to American unilateralism and dominance still lingers. The post-Soviet space saw a gradual and systemic restructuring in international power equations to the much detriment of Russian power and prestige. The economy was in severe crisis due to the unperforming sectors in various segments of the economy. Then came the discovery of significant oil and gas reserves in Russia. the huge hydrocarbon reserve got Russia on the global map of oil and gas suppliers. (Mohapatra 2013)

The Russian demeanour in the field of foreign energy policy has been an issue of immense scholarly investigation. The huge hydrocarbon resources at the command of Kremlin gives it the much needed financial assets in the form of bountiful forex. These buoyancy in the economic fortunes is attributable to the way Moscow employs its leverage as being on of the members of global club of hydrocarbon supplier. Nalin Kumar Mohapatra (2013) highlights three major lacunae in the existing scholarly enquiry into the the interaction between energy and Russian foreign policy. First, lack of theoretical framework in analysing the broader contour of it. Second, the available work in the domain don't appear to well grounded historically. To elaborate the point further, until and unless Soviet period is taken into account while contextualise the present 'regional hegemon' or

‘patron-client’ demeanour of Russian foreign energy policy. Third, the existing literature on the theme lack a holistic approach to look at the Russian energy engagement with a wide spectrum of nations. Rather it focusses largely on the European Union.

Historically, the importance of hydrocarbon was realised in the various foreign policy initiatives of the then Soviet Union political elites in Moscow. The production of oil and gas increased manifold in the initial days of the Soviet birth under the policy initiatives undertaken such as ‘New Economic Policy’ in 1921 and ‘Great Leap Forward’ in 1928-29 by the then Soviet leadership. Here, noteworthy is the point that Soviet Union was initially dependent on the coal for all its energy need. Later, with the discovery of oil in the Volga-Urals region, the real place for energy in the national economy was recognised as the major source of foreign exchange and revenue. Then the revenue generated from the production and export was intended to be used in rapid industrialisation and developing arms and munitions for security reasons. (Considine 2002)

In the period following the launch of five year plans in USSR, the oil and late gas were being promoted on a massive scale to emerge as a strategic sector for the national economy. The discovery of gas in the Western part of Siberia was a shot in the arm for Soviets. However, in the last days of Soviet Union, the falling oil prices globally and the stagnant production back at home coupled with some other infrastructural bottlenecks led to painstaking halt in the particular sector of the economy. At some point in time more precisely by 1984, oil contributed almost 60 % in the national GDP, a significant share after all. Due to the inefficiency and corrupt behaviour of the officials owing to the command and control nature of the economy, oil and natural industry began to implode under its own weight. (Ibid) The first pipeline to carry hydrocarbon to the European countries from the Asian part of Russia, was built way back in 1960 by Soviet Union naming Druzba pipeline⁶⁰. The total length of the pipeline was 5,327 kilometers.⁶¹

⁶⁰ Also known as the Friendship pipeline and Comecon pipeline, is the largest in the world.

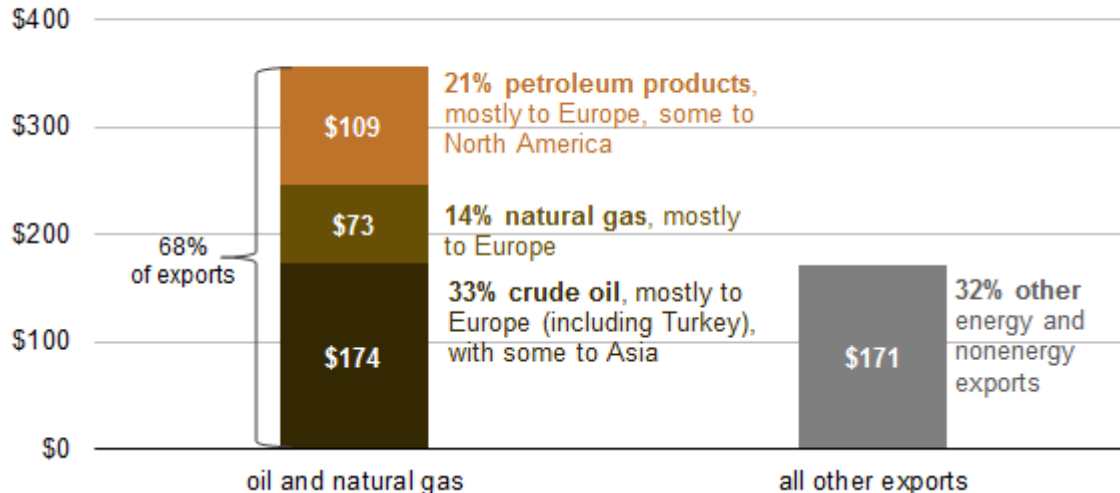
⁶¹ "The List: The Five Top Global Choke Points". *Foreign Policy*. May 2006. Accessed on 5th June, 2015.

Scholars delve on the issue of collapse of Soviet Union and conclude that the apparent stagnation in the economic performance owes its origin to the falling prices of oil and gas in the international market. To the detriment of Soviet economy, the level reached its endurance capacity for the Russian taking a heavy toll which resulted in the never recoverable loss to the national economy. In the regard one needs to peruse to what a CIA report published in 1977 observed. According to the seminal piece, Soviet Union soon going to be enmeshed in severe economic and financial crisis owing to its overdependence on oil and natural gas.⁶²

After the period of transition began to disappear and a new and reassertive Russian was on the cards. The Yeltsin era had fought hard to restore the Russian power and influence by adopting a pro west foreign policy agenda during his first tenure. But the hope of technologic and financial assistance was soon to be belied. There happen no significant investment from West in Russia's critical sectors of economy. The disillusionment came on the fore soon as Russia began to aggressively reformulate its foreign policy agenda to achieve its lost prestige and influence in world politics. (Tsygankov 1997:250) Putin's ascendancy to the seat of power i.e. being elected to the office of President, stimulated the process of Moscow's resurgence in the external affairs. Putin assured the people of Russia to bring back their lost glory. Though several factors were behind the assertive attitude of Putin's foreign policy orientation, but the high prices of oil and gas is attributed to the assertiveness singly out. The increased prices were aone of the causes behind the renewed resurgence in Kremlin's attitude. Government's coffers were filled with precious foreign exchange by using which, the government sought to remedy the ailing economic health. (Nyrger 2008; White 2006; Drzner 1999)

⁶²CIA, 'The Impending Soviet Oil Crisis', 1977

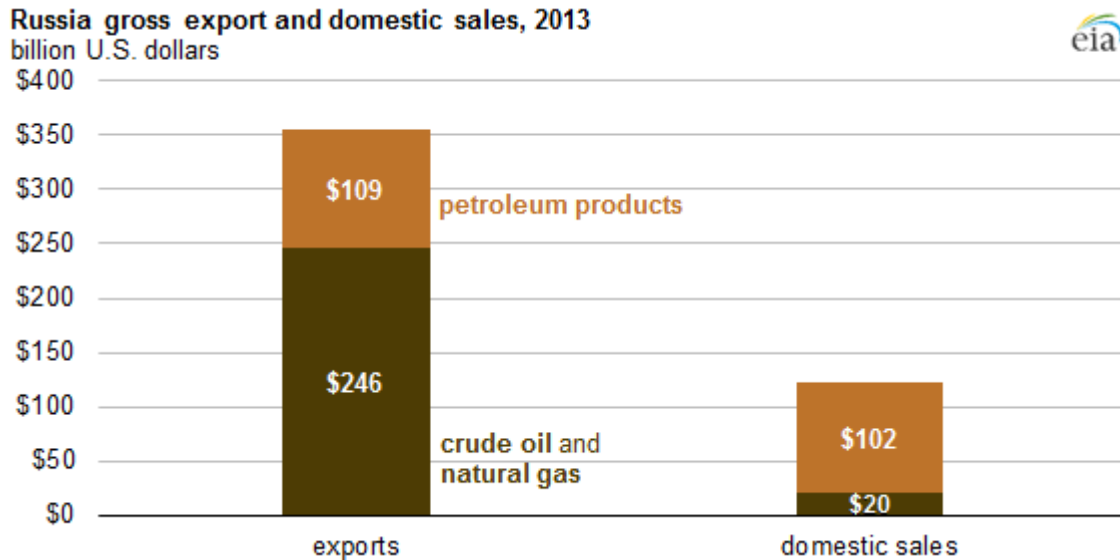
Russia gross export sales, 2013
billion U.S. dollars



Source: U.S. Energy Information Administration, Russia Federal Customs Service

Note: Natural gas includes liquefied natural gas (LNG) sales.

The above diagram clearly shows the overall share of Russian export of hydrocarbon and main buyers. The total share of hydrocarbon in the total export constitutes a significant portion. It is approximately 68 % of the total export that is contributed by mere petroleum products, natural gas and crude oil. And the rest of the commodities in the overall basket of export stood at 32 %. The date indicates how important the hydrocarbon is in the national economy. Interesting fact that surfaced is the extent to which European economies depend on the Russian oil and gas to feed their respective industrial and domestic units. The quantum of revenues exceeds \$ 300 billion in 2013, a massive increment in the foreign exchange earnings. The enhanced earning could further be utilized to rejuvenate other dormant sectors of the economy to achieve a balanced and sustainable economic growth.



Source: U.S. Energy Information Administration, Russia Federal Customs Service, IHS Energy, Eastern Bloc Research

Note: Natural gas includes LNG sales.

Above diagram is descriptive of the shift in the compositional aspect in the sale of oil and in the domestic market and abroad. The earnings from the sale of hydrocarbon to foreign countries stood at whopping \$ 350 billion, whereas the same from the sale to domestic units and companies garnered around \$ 100 billion. If look at the date from the micro perspective, then it is clear that crude oil and natural gas fetched the maximum foreign exchange earnings followed by other petroleum products obtained after refining the crude oil. The demand for natural gas in the domestic market is meagre as compared to the demand existing in international market, albeit no international market as oil has. Oil is deemed to be the strategic commodity and is said to have an international market. Contrarily, natural gas doesn't have any international market as such neither it is considered as a strategic commodity. Obviously, oil industry is much broadened in comparison with the natural gas industry.

The role of energy in the national policy was acknowledged and further entrenched in the thinking of the elites of Russian politics and economics. Russia today feels very marginalized in the manner the world has turned out to be a hotbed of unilateral actions.

In the fundamental changed geopolitical and strategic scenario, Russia feels disgruntled by not being included in the global policy making and order creation. The sense of frustration is indicated in the Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation 2000. How wary of the unilateralism in international politics Russia is clear from the following lines:

The strategy of unilateral actions can destabilize the international situation, provoke tensions and the arms race, and aggravate interstate contradictions, national and religious strife. The use of power methods bypassing existing international legal mechanisms cannot remove the deep socio economic, inter-ethnic and other contradictions that underlie conflicts, and can only undermine the foundations of law and order. (The Foreign Policy Concept of Russian Federation 200:2)

How the Russian leadership views the unilateral action and domination by the western powers and institutions, in general and United States' nature of hegemonic attitude. The emphasis was laid on the functioning of the multilateralism as a way to resolve the outstanding conflicts and likelihood of conflict situations, is evident from the following lines:

At the same time, new challenges and threats to the national interests of Russia are emerging in the international sphere. There is a growing trend towards the establishment of a unipolar structure of the world with the economic and power domination of the United States. In solving principal questions of international security, the stakes are being placed on western institutions and forums of limited composition, and on weakening the role of the U.N. Security Council. (ibid)

Another significant document is Energy Strategy of Russian Federation, 2003 shedding light on how Russia views herself in the global market place of suppliers of oil and gas. The visions contained in the aforementioned document appear to indicate that Russian presence in the world market should transform from being just a supplier of energy to an active member of the global energy supplier community.

The state energy strategy must be directed on the change from the role of supplier of raw resources to the role of substantive member of world energy market. The strengthening of Russian position on the world oil markets and on the gas markets is a strategically important task now days⁶³... (The Energy Strategy of Russia for the Period up to 2020)

Further, the document goes on to elucidate the importance of energy infrastructure and their significance for Russia as being the energy giant in the world. These transit routes should be developed in such a manner to promote and bolstering Russian economic and strategic interests:

Forming of common energy and transport infrastructure in the regions of Europe and Asia, development of international energy and transport systems, providing for un-discriminatory transit of energy, answer the strategic interests of Russia⁶⁴.
(ibid)

Scholars assign the popularity of Putin to his way of foreign policy formulation in an aggressive manner and its successful implementation. These moves were coterminous with the revival in the micro economic condition and industrial performance. To be more precise the oil and gas industry and its export created a huge revenue for Russia which then utilised to achieve a balance growth. The huge inflow of foreign exchange stimulated the process of consolidation in Russia under the leadership of Putin. (Rose 2007)

There two things which will be crucial in determining how Russia will make best use of its huge hydrocarbon in achieving geopolitical and geostrategic goals: its capacity as a stable and reliable supplier of hydrocarbon and the windfall oil prices in the international market. However,, the production of the same has been quite satisfactory in the recent past couple of years.

⁶³ Quoted in Mohapatra, Nalin Kumar (2013), Energy Security and Russian Foreign Policy' CRP Working Paper

⁶⁴ ibid

Russia and South Asia Energy ties

India being one of the major economy in the South Asian region having posted high growth in the recent past, particularly after the opening the economy for private stor. Before 1991, the economic situation in india was very pity owing to high level of unemployment and sluggish rate of growth. However,, the scenario changed dramatically after a spate of financial crises. It is a common economic logic and fact that more the growth, more nergy is needed. Energy is food for the economy like human being can not survive without food so the economy. India is an energy deficient economy. It imports almost 80 percent of its hydrocarbon need, as per the Economic Survey published by the Government of India, albeit haaving substantial reserve of the same.

The energy reationship between Russia and India has not rely take off really due to several reasons, geographical reason being one of them. There is no common border between the two energy players in their own spheres. One being the giant supplier of oil and natura gas, and other being the one of the emerging markts of energy consumption. However,, the very geographical obstacle has not deterred the both the coytries from seeking other mens to cooperate on the critical sector from both the countries point of view. The concept of joint venture has gained wider currency between the two countries' oil exploration and production commercil entities. (Kraner 2008:12) the Indian company ONGC Videsh Limited has share in the Sakhalin- oil field of Russia and reported to have evinced further interest in other oil field for exploration and development. The total investment in the Russia oil field Sakhalin-1 by OVL has reached \$ 2.7 billion. Additionally, it as shown interest in acquiring 20 % stake in Russia's energy major Rosneft. OVI has also purchased an energy company called Imperial listed in London for \$ 2.5 billion. The Imperial Eergy operates in West Siberia's Tomsk region⁶⁵.

Russia has a considerable amount of energy resources and fuel-energy complex's capability, which is a basis for economic development and implementation of

⁶⁵ Russia & India Report, Accessed on 21st June, 2015 URL:
http://in.rbth.com/articles/2012/12/21/india_Russia_to_establish_joint_investment_fund_21205.html

domestic and foreign policies. The country's role in the global energy markets determines its geopolitical influence. (Energy Strategy of Russian Federation upto 2020)

The controversy surrounding the stability of supply of hydrocarbon in Russia is unabated nevertheless. The International Energy Agency (IEA) has maintained that the decline in the production level of oil and natural gas are likely to be caused by the "lack of sufficient and timely investments in upstream development, the declining rate of state-owned natural gas monopoly Gazprom's major fields, the rising domestic demand, irrational domestic usage of natural gas, heavy reliance of the imports from Central Asia to fulfil international agreements, etc." (IEA 2006a: 26-43)

The significance of energy of Russia can easily be understood from the following description. The growth rate achieved by Russian economy was 6.8 % per annum during 2000-2006 causing huge inflow of petrodollars in the government's coffers. The total foreign exchange exceeded \$300 billion at the end of 2006. All these huge revenue generation has been a cause of celebration among Russian elite who again began to aspire to be seen in the world as a 'great power' of first rank, a confident and strong. However,, the potential risk involved in relying too much on mere one sector is looming large. The vulnerability to being dependent on just one source of revenue generation is what scholars has called 'Dutch disease'. (Itoh)

Russia and TAPI project

TAPI pipeline stands for the Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India gas pipeline having a total length of 1,735 kilometres. The pipeline is to carry natural gas from Turkmenistan to India via Afghanistan and Pakistan.⁶⁶ Further, the by extending the length of the pipeline, natural gas from the Caspian region could be fed into. It is being funded by ADB (Asian Development Bank). The proponent dubb the pipeline as the modern continuation of old Silk Road. Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) pipeline project, which was conceived in 1990's is yet to see the light of the day due to

⁶⁶ Joshi, Deepak; Siddiqi, Kamal (2008). "India Joins Gas Pipeline Project". *Hindustan Times* (Downstream Today). Accessed on 10-06-2015

security concerns in the region through which the pipeline passes. From Russian strategic viewpoint, creating such alternative supply routes has detrimental impact upon the influence Russia has over the regional affairs. Russian desire to join the TAPI project gets articulated on several occasions. Igor Sechin (2010) said, “*we are discussing new projects, including Gazprom’s possible participation in the TAPI pipeline project.*” (Novosti 2010). Berdymuhammedov said on an occasion that Turkmenistan is aspiring to strengthen its ties with the Russian government “both in bilateral and CIS formats”, which indicates that it is in TAPI. (Ria Novosti 2010)

Russia is shown immense interest in the Iran Pakistan India pipeline project popularly known as the IPI project⁶⁷. However, due to western sanctions over the controversial nuclear programme of Iran, the project couldn’t take off and India withdrew itself⁶⁸. Russia showed keen interest in the TAPI project. Interestingly, all the members in the consortium welcomed the Russian move. Originally, the project was the brainchild of America in the wake of its unwillingness to allow Iran to sell its natural gas to South Asian countries. In the backdrop of this, Moscow found itself in the dock and felt marginalised in the entire development. The opportunity to join the project gave a blow to the American hegemonic design to counter the Russian influence in the region. (Ria Novosti 2010a; 2011a) despite the fact that America had its interest at stake behind mooting the TAPI project, Russia convinced itself and extended its full cooperation and help to build the pipeline in every possible way. (Bhutta 2012)

The start of the project began to root in the minds of Central Asian countries namely Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan way back in 1990. Till the time, almost all the energy supply routes and infrastructure were being owned and controlled by Russia itself. There were times when, Moscow using its ‘regional hegemonic’ position tried to exploit its dominant position in terms of purchase of cheap oil and gas and selling it in the European market at relatively higher prices. These littoral countries had no option but to bow down to the demands of the Moscow, for there were no alternatives available to them to sell their

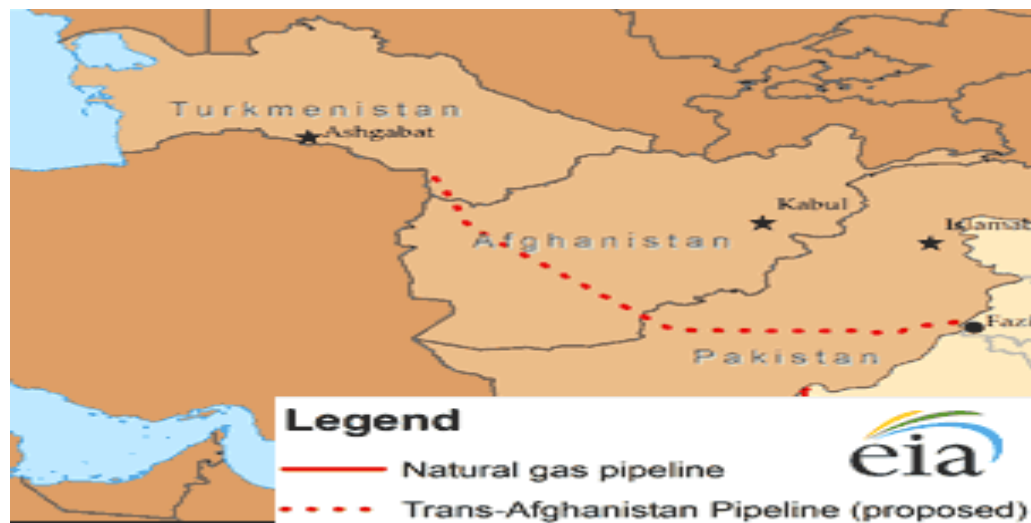
⁶⁷ PIB 2008.

⁶⁸ The Hindu, May 2014

lone revenue earner commodity in the international market. (Le Vine 2007; Brisard and Daqui 2002)

The new agreement on the proposed pipeline was inked on December 22, 2002 by the leadership of three countries except India.⁶⁹ Due to expanding precariousness, the project has basically slowed down; development of the Turkmen part should begin in 2006, however, the general plausibility is faulty since the southern section of the pipeline of the Afghan segment goes through domain which is being de facto Taliban controlled.(ibid)

Apart from involvement in the direct exploration and



production of oil and gas, used its hegemon position to act as the buyer of the same. These purchasings were to export rather for the domestic consumption. Here, one example stands to witness the very nature of it- Russia buys hydrocarbon from Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan and then using its pipelines sales the same to the European countries.

To understand the the ongoing political and economic restructuring in the corridors of power in Moscow, one is obliged to go back to the period of Soviet era in which oil and energy sector set the stage of foreign policy dovetailment meticulously. The Russian tilt in the trade and commerce has been in India's favor. The reason being for such a skewed

1. ⁶⁹ McWilliam, Ian (2002). "Central Asia pipeline deal signed". BBC. Accessed on 10-06-2015.

trade relations is strategic and political. Former being an all weather friend of India, has extended very warm hand on number of occasions.

Here, the Russian 'Great Power' aspiration appears to be a function of how its energy policies work and how the world energy market reacts to its oft-strategizing moves. The European Union countries and Caspian along with the Central Asian countries are victim of the new political tool being employed by Moscow to reward its friends with cheaper oil and natural gas and punishing the belligerent by obstructing the supplies or hiking the prices arbitrarily. However,, interesting point in the future Russian behavior in the world would be contingent upon several factors ranging from geopolitical to pure economic.

Conclusion

The Russian engagement with South Asian region goes back to the time Tzarist Russia when the latter is allegedly seeks to have the access to the warm water port of South Asia. Though, the claim is denied by Indian nationalist leaders summarily accusing the British of dragging the resources both physical and human in achieving its own interest. The period is remembered for the lasting hostility between Tzarist Russia and British Empire in Indian subcontinent for strategic influence. Afghanistan became a hotbed of rivalry.

The Soviet period began to view the region with immense interest and exuded sympathy towards the aspirations of the people of India and voiced its support for the independence. The partition of India into two different countries based on the religious identity drew flak from the then Soviet leadership. During the latter part of the century, Soviet Union attempted to maintain an 'equi-close' relation with both India and Pakistan rather '*equi-distant*'. On several occasions, Soviet leadership deliberated a neutral position when India and Pakistan went to war with each other. The testimony to the attitude is the war of 1965 between India and Pakistan. During the war, the Soviet leaders confined themselves to calling an end to the conflict and return to their respective positions of line of control. The neutral stand earned it a good-will in both the belligerent nations. As a corollary, USSR proposed to mediate between Indian and Pakistan during the Tashkent Conference and it's due to the efforts of Soviet leadership that finally a deal was clinched. According to the agreement signed, USSR to remain neutral in the issues concerning India and Pakistan including the Kashmir issue. Soviet Union accepted Indian contention that the Kashmir issue should be resolved bilaterally without any third party involvement. But the Soviets got disillusioned with Pakistan despite number of political and diplomatic overtures. Pakistan played in the hands of its western masters which irked the former.

During the 1971 war between India and Pakistan, the milestone agreement between USSR and India was signed. The signing of the *Treaty* marked a path breaking event in the Soviet posture towards South Asia. From now onwards it became clear that USSR and India stood shoulder to shoulder with each other. Pakistan, on the other hand found

refuge in the western camp and sought to leverage that. The actual 'strategic' element in the Soviet perception towards South Asia sprouted after the inking said agreement. Scholars argue that it was not Soviet Union that isolated Pakistan its South Asian calculation, but the latter by its tactics isolated itself strategically.

When USSR intervened in Afghanistan in 1979, Pakistan started finding voice in the western criticism. However, India observed restraint, for it had natural obligation to support the Soviet adventurism in Afghanistan. India did not criticize the move, but covertly signalled its unhappiness and displeasure by other means. The moves by Pakistan intelligence in supporting fringed elements in Afghanistan didn't go well with Soviet leadership, further isolating the former. The same sort of policy continued till the disintegration of Soviet Union in 1991.

After the disintegration of USSR, Russian Federation as a successor state saw the light of the day. Turbulence and chaos were the dominant features of new entity both domestically and internationally. Domestically, there were severe strain on the integrity and unity of it exacerbated by the over enthusiastic leadership of Boris Yeltsin in giving autonomy to the federal units. On the economic front, the worst ever experience was yet to come on the way. The massive decline in the value of ruble the Russian currency in international foreign exchange market coupled with fall in the GDP growth rate brought inexplicable misery for the common man and economy both. The need of the hour was in bringing the economy back on the track, through massive financial investment. The financial investment was expected from the western countries, who showed little interest in reviving the crucial sectors. The foreign policy during the period is conducted to woo the western powers that too with some hope. The expectations were belied and led to the disenchantment among the leaders and people alike.

Soon the economy began to show the signs of recovery and by 1998, the economic growth picked up the required momentum. The period 1991-2001 is marked by the shifts in Russian foreign policy at different junctures. Initially, the pro-western lobby was very strong in Kremlin, and as corollary the policies were formulated and executed

accordingly. The South Asian region remained neglected for some years. But the moment of disillusionment with the western powers prompted the policymakers to look for other alternative for its development needs. Moreover, pro-Asia lobby came to dominate the corridors of power in Moscow making its influence visible in the subsequent foreign policy posture. India emerged again as a favorite destination for Moscow to invest its diplomatic capital. Some high profile visits took place intended to revive old ties and reinforcing its power and declining influence in the region as well as in the world. The boom in the economy also made it imperative for the Russian leadership to punch itself above the weight. The relationship with Pakistan, however, sought to be bringing on par with. Some news and reports were made headlines that Russia was deliberating delivery of some crucial arms and ammunitions to Pakistan. Contrary to the news, Kremlin denied the on more than one occasion. On the issue of Kashmir, the leadership tried to play balancing act only to abandon it later. By now, Afghanistan sprouted to pose a threat to South Asian countries as well as to Russian interests in Central Asia.

The terrorist attack on World Trade Centre in New York popularly known as 9/11, drastically reframed the agenda in world politics in a single stroke. America went to war in Afghanistan; Russia expressed its full cooperation in weeding out the terrorists from the world; and Russia became involved in helping America to combat the Taliban in Afghanistan. But the cooperation converted into competition and at the end in conflict on number of issues. The ascendancy of Vladimir Putin in Russia wholly transformed the policy apparatus in Kremlin, bringing an end to playing the second fiddle in global affairs. The unabated decline in Russian influence and power prompted Kremlin to change the camp it looked to benefit from. The difference in the opinion between Russia and western powers had implications for South Asian region. Afghanistan issue became a sole American venture. Russia started to bring in some new players bilaterally and multilaterally. SCO is an example of multilateralism by Russia to regain its lost influence in the regional affairs. Russia also began to diversify its basket in the region by giving diplomatic overtures to Pakistan, irking India. The *real politik* resurfaced in its posture towards South Asia. The ‘Great Power’ obsession led Russian leadership to look beyond India for its own national interest.

The economic interaction Russia is part of its overall strategic and geopolitical calculations. In a way, the economic and trade relations are the function of strategic interest in the region. Since the period of Soviet Union, the trade relations were skewed in favor of only one country i.e. India. Weaponry constituted single largest commodity to be traded followed by other commodities. The trade and commerce interaction with other countries in question remained negligible as compared to India. The recent investment in both Pakistan and Afghanistan are poised to alter the scene. Nevertheless, trade and commerce remain the weakest link in chain. Energy, the new weapon in the hands of Russia, has been integrated into the components of national power as is evident from the *Foreign Policy Conception of Russian Federation 2000*. The geopolitical and geostrategic interest of Russia is getting articulated in the manner it is executing its energy foreign policy. South Asia is not off from the list of its energy outreach. The much hyped TAPI pipeline has been sanctioned by it and slated to be fed by Russian natural gas once it gets operational. Another major project aimed at leveraging its bountiful energy resources is to build pipeline via China to India and supply the hydrocarbon. However,, energy as a foreign policy tool has its own limitations in achieving desired goals.

The Russian engagement with the region is not without its own share of serious difference. On the Afghanistan intervention, India expressed its displeasure, albeit in subdued voice. India conducting nuclear test in 1974 and then again in 1998 followed by Pakistan in the same year, did not go well with Russian leadership and Russia tried to pressure India and Pakistan to abandon the kind of covert and overt nuclear projects. The issue of NPT, and CTBT fluttered the relations for a long period of time. Interestingly, Russia didn't follow the western volley in imposing unilateral sanctions against both the countries. Dialogue is what Russian leaders regarded as a tool to resolve the issue.

Terrorism lies at the core of international security discussion and it figures almost in every bilateral and multilateral summit statements, in one way or the other. The soft under belly of Russia is Central Asia what it calls the 'strategic backyard' and anything happening there could have direct or indirect implication for the security and stability of Russia itself. Hence, the spread of three evils of terrorism, extremism, and radicalism is

regarded as the imminent threat emanating from the region. By engaging the countries in South Asia, the leadership tried to contain the aforesaid threats, both bilaterally and multilaterally.

There are number of power houses emerging in the Asian region, India being one of them. South Asia sitting at the junction of the world trade and commerce highway aspires to be crucial in providing SLOCs too (sea link of communication). Indian Ocean connects the Asia Pacific with Europe and Africa the two important trade destinations. Obviously, it occupies the pivot of world trade and commerce.

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