

**SOVIET REACTIONS TO INDIA'S NORMALIZATION
OF RELATIONS WITH CHINA**

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SHYAMA PRASAD YADAV

**CENTRE FOR SOVIET AND EAST EUROPEAN STUDIES
SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY
NEW DELHI-110067, INDIA**

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JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY
CENTRE FOR SOVIET & EAST EUROPEAN STUDIES
SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

Telegram : JAYENU

Telephones : 652282

661444


661351

New Delhi-110 067

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C E R T I F I C A T E

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(DEVENDRA KAUSHIK)
SUPERVISOR
&
CHAIRMAN

PREFACE

In the late fifties New Delhi's friendly relations with China received a big jolt through bloody armed clashes on the border eventually leading to a full-scale war in 1962. It is no secret that estrangement in India-China relations was caused not just on account of the border dispute between the two countries and the Soviet Union's friendly equation with India was also an important reason for Peking's annoyance with New Delhi. Thus almost from this early period the Soviet Union became a key factor in the India-China relations.

From 1962 to 1975 India's relations with China remained rather frozen in spite of Mrs. Gandhi's 1969 declaration of India's willingness to open talks with China and the belated Chinese response to it in the form of Mao's smile to the Indian-Charge d'Affaires in 1970. China's conduct during the Indo-Pak conflict of 1971, however, dampened these early efforts towards normalisation. Hopes again rose in 1975 with the Indian visit of a Chinese ping-pong team leading to the resumption of diplomatic relations at the ambassadorial level at the initiative of India in 1976. The Janata regime continued these efforts. Foreign Minister

Vajpayee paid a visit to Peking in February 1979 followed by his Chinese counterpart's Indian visit during Mrs. Gandhi's rule in 1981. Both India and China agreed to hold official level talks to find a solution of their border problem and discuss other measures to improve their relations. Beginning with December 1981, six rounds of such talks have been held up to November 1985 without any significant progress towards normalisation of India-China relations.

The present study is an attempt to construct the pattern of Soviet Union's reactions to Indian efforts towards normalisation of relations with China by scanning the Soviet and Indian media as well as other relevant published literature containing informations about the same. It also attempts to analyse and interpret the impact of India's drive to improve relations with China on the former's relations with the Soviet Union. The author wishes to express his deep gratitude to his research Supervisor Professor Devendra Kaushik for his invaluable guidance in preparing this work. Sincere thanks are also due to the Librarians and Staff of the Libraries of the JNU and the ICWA. To his late father Sri Satya Deo Yadav the author can never

pay off his debt of gratitude for his life-long affection and care so generously showered on him. Unfortunately he left for his heavenly abode while the author was busy writing this dissertation.

NEW DELHI

Shyama Prasad Yadav
SHYAMA PRASAD YADAV

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THE CHINA FACTOR IN INDIAN POLICY:**A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE**

In retrospect it is now becoming increasingly clearer that China loomed large in the calculations of the nationalist leadership of India when it took the first steps to get closer to the Soviet Union by proclaiming its solidarity with the anti-imperialist drive launched by the latter in the late twenties. Jawaharlal Nehru's report to the AICC on the Brussels Conference of the League Against Imperialism spoke no less warmly about independent India's need to cultivate her giant Asiatic neighbour - China.¹

It was not purely coincidental that India's relations with the People's Republic of China were established on a firm friendly basis in 1954, that is one year before a breakthrough in the Indo-Soviet relations was achieved in 1955. (A trade agreement between the Tibet Region of the People's Republic of China and the Republic of India was concluded in April 1954 followed by an exchange of state visits by the leaders of the two countries resulting in reaffirmation of their adherence to the Panchsheel or the famous five principles of peaceful co-existence.) In this connection it is important to recollect what

Nehru, the architect of India's foreign policy, told the then American Ambassador in India Chester Bowles. According to the then Canadian High Commissioner in India Escott Reid, Nehru told the American Ambassador that "the only way of avoiding a third world war was to split China from the Soviet Union and that Stalin's death would make a split more likely."¹ The Canadian Ambassador wrote to his government in October 1953, "Nehru's belief that India should do whatever it could to assist in the process of splitting China from Russia was... why he minimised in his public statements any disagreements India had with China."² Nehru thus envisaged his role as a "honest broker" between China and the West as he thought that the antagonistic posture adopted by the West, particularly the United States, would only drive the two countries (Russia and China) together. Escott Reid pays tribute to Nehru for being "well before his time in not only hoping for, but foreseeing a break between China and the Soviet Union and the importance he attached to this break".³

It is significant that India's relations with the USSR grew friendly in the mid-fifties when the cold war

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1. Escott Rei, Envoy to Nehru, Delhi 1982, pp.56-57.
 2. Ibid.
 3. Ibid.

was on the wane. At the height of the cold war India's relations with the United States had all along remained friendly and cordial. Even during the mid-fifties when New Delhi strongly criticised the formation of the SEATO and started responding favourably to Moscow's overtures, it refrained from making any adverse comments about NATO.¹ US Defence Department publication of November 1951 titled India - Oriental 'Third Force?' observed, "At what history will probably consider the most crucial point in post-war world affairs so far, India was with the United States."² India had actively supported the United States in securing UN sanction for its action in Korea in the summer of 1950. The defeat of the KMT in China enhanced the importance of India in American eyes and Nehru was invited to the United States when the Chinese communists were about to storm Canton.

The American Secretary of State John Foster Dulles wanted to groom Nehru as the leader of the cold war in the Far East. In fact Nehru's leftist facade was looked upon by many in America as an effective countercheck for communism in Asia. But Nehru, being a proud nationalist, was

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1. Devendra Kaushik, "The New Cold War: The Soviet Union and East Europe", in Satish Kumar (ed) Yearbook on India's Foreign Policy 1982-83, New Delhi, 1983, p.144.
 2. Cited in H.D. Malviya, India-US- A Blunt and Cold Relationship, New Delhi 1978, p. 4.

not willing to act as Washington's cat's-paw. Besides, the fear of outraged public opinion on account of indiscriminate American bombings in Korea showing a complete lack of concern for Asian lives prevented New Delhi from continuing its initial support to the US action compelling it to abstain ~~from~~ UN voting on a resolution authorising General Mac Arthur to invade North Korea. It was against this background that India launched its peace initiative in Korea which was welcomed by Stalin.

America's general satisfaction over the conduct of India's foreign policy during this period was expressed in clear words by the New Delhi correspondent of the New York Times Robert Trumbull who wrote in an article: "How anyone call India pro-Russian is beyond this observer. There is an impression abroad that India is "neutral" in the conflict between the Western democracies and the Communists of Eastern Europe and Asia. Actually, New Delhi is quite openly on our side and there is no doubt of it."¹

Similarly, the then Canadian High Commissioner in India, Escott Reid, wrote to his government in the autumn of 1953 that Nehru's foreign policy was "not neutralist" and that Nehru was on "our side".² As Devendra Kaushik observes,

1. New York Times Magazine, 'Behind India's Foreign Policy', 5 October 1952, pp. 42-43.

2. Escott Reid, op.cit., p. 99.

"Fear of a nationalistic backlash and the open American backing for Pakistan in the dispute over Kashmir restrained India from further practising its pro-US variety of non-alignment. By 1954 New Delhi had also discovered the immense potential of its peace-maker role between the two blocs in the wars in Korea and Indochina. By continuing this role India hoped to turn itself into a recipient of economic and technical aid from both the USA and the USSR."¹ India's need to gain the Soviet diplomatic support on Kashmir as also to achieve industrialization through rapid development of key public sector industries which the USA was averse to help made her look towards Moscow.

The nationalist leadership of India fully understood the importance of developing friendly ties with Communist China with a view to balancing India's relations with the USSR. One can not help paying tribute to Nehru's farsightedness who could foresee the parting of ways between the USSR and Mao's China on account of the latter's nationalist proclivities way back in the mid-fifties. While rejecting the policy of forging military alliances and pacts to contain communism in Asia as advocated by Dulles, Nehru had his own ideas on ways and means of counteracting the communist expansion in a more subtle and effective form. His

1. Devendra Kaushik, op. cit., p. 145.

strategy in this regard was based on two factors, viz., India's rapid economic development with the help of both the blocs and a subtle exploitation of the anticipated Sino-Soviet dissensions. Significantly, the Bandung Conference of Afro-Asian countries held in 1955 saw India practising a policy of projecting China on the international stage in a big way while keeping away the USSR. Unlike the 1947 Asian Relations Conference to which all the Asian Republics of the USSR had been invited, New Delhi opposed their participation in the Bandung Conference.

But the Chinese mandarins led by astute leaders like Mao Tse-tung and Chou En-lai proved to be more than a match to the Kautilyan Nehru. They also needed Nehru for a limited purpose of penetrating the newly independent countries with his help and paid lip service to the Panchsheel in order to project their foreign policy in a favourable light concealing their expansionistic and chauvinistic aims. Not long ago they had given a call for armed struggle against the national bourgeoisie of the Asian countries which, as they alleged, gained power by striking a "deal" with the imperialists. Mao Tse-tung had, it may be recalled, described non-alignment as "a term for deceiving the people" and strongly doubted its practicability. In 1950, Liu Shao-Chi had called India's independence a "sham". A

Peking Radio broadcast had referred to Nehru as "a feeble-minded bourgeois."¹

The commitment of the Maoists to socialism was only superficial and their adherence to peaceful co-existence was just a tactical posture to enhance China's international status. They swore by socialism not as a programme for radical socio-economic transformation in the interest of broad masses, social progress and peace, but because of its utility for mobilising the people by exploiting their contempt for capitalism. As early as 1956 Mao Tse-tung proclaimed that China must become "the first country in the world", "world power number one" in a few decades time. Mao was already dreaming of making China a nuclear power. In his talk "on the Ten Great Relationships" (25 April 1956) he declared that "in the not too distant future we shall have not only many aeroplanes and guns, but also our own atomic bombs".²

In fact Mao's great power chauvinism can be traced back to the late thirties. He had told American journalist Edgar Snow as early as 1936 that the "immediate task" of China was "to regain all our lost territories". In 1939,

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1. Devendra Kaushik, China and the Third World, New Delhi, 1975, p. 10.
 2. Stuart Schram (ed.), Mao Tse-tung Unrehearsed, Talks and Letters, 1956-71, London, 1974, p. 68.

Mao referred to Korea, Burma, Bhutan, Nepal and Indochina among the territories taken by foreign imperialism from China. A map published in A Brief History of Modern China in Peking in 1953 showed most of South-East Asia including the Andaman islands and the Sulu Archipelago (the Philippines) as Chinese territory taken away by imperialists between 1840 and 1919.

The impressive success of the first five year plan (1953-57) intoxicated a chauvinist Mao who now gave the new slogan of the "great leap forward" in 1958. At the Third Plenary Meeting of the Central Committee in September 1957 the national bourgeoisie of the neutral nations was declared to have turned reactionary even though certain contradictions with the imperialists made it cherish peace and non-alignment.

At the November 1957 World Conference of the Communist and Workers' Parties held in Moscow, Mao Tse-tung came out with his "Eastwind" slogan which in fact signified that the centre of the world revolutionary movement had shifted to Peking. At the Moscow meeting Mao also outlined his monstrous suggestion about the usefulness of a nuclear war for spreading the socialist revolution. At the Supreme State Conference (28 January 1958) Mao gave the call to catch up with Britain in 15 years.

If Nehru's non-alignment was meant to gain economic and technical assistance from both the USSR and the USA and New Delhi's eagerness to cultivate Peking was aimed at counteracting the USSR's increasing influence in the Afro-Asian countries it was but natural to expect the Maoist China to challenge it sooner or later as it obstructed Peking in the realisation of its great power aims. Peking now resorted to a policy aimed at discrediting non-alignment and with this end in view provoked border clashes with India, a leading non-aligned power. The peaceful border between India and China began to grow tense in 1958 after the Chinese launched their "great leap forward" policy. The launching of an armed attack against India in 1962 at a time when the USSR was engaged in a confrontation with the United States over threat posed to the security of Cuba marked the culmination of this policy of running down non-alignment. The subsequent period saw the Maoists attributing to the national liberation movement a decisive role in the struggle against imperialism and conducting a noisy propaganda about the "World village" (Asia, Africa and Latin America) laying siege to the "World town" (North America and West Europe) and destroying imperialism once and for all by means of a series of China-type and Chinese inspired "People's Wars". The "People's War" theory was also aimed

at providing Peking with a convenient pretext to interfere in the internal affairs of the Third World countries to establish its hegemony over the part of the world.

The Chinese aggression against India in 1962 exposed the fallacy of Nehru's policy of keeping China in good humour by rendering her some public relations services in the international affairs to help overcome her isolation. Nehru had had looked forward to a clash of China with Russia and hoped to act as an arbiter between them, thus extending his peace-maker's role from the two rival ideological and military blocs to intra-socialist bloc conflicts as well. A military collision with China dashed all his hopes and seriously eroded his international authority built on the basis of his advocacy of non-alignment.

II

THE BREACH WITH CHINA AND INDIA'S UNILATERAL QUEST FOR NORMALISATION

From 1969 Maoist China continued to pose a serious threat to the security of India through its desire to exploit the differences between the two neighbouring countries on the South-Asian Subcontinent. Peking began to woo Pakistan as a counterweight to India. The dispute between India and Pakistan over Kashmir was skilfully exploited by the Chinese for gaining a foothold in Pakistan. When India and Pakistan agreed in late November 1962 to try to reach a settlement on Kashmir, Peking subverted their talks by announcing a border agreement in respect of a portion of Kashmir territory. Peking's stand on Kashmir changed with Chou En Lai's visit to Pakistan in February 1964. It now lent support to the demand for a plebiscite. In August 1965 Indo-Pakistan relations were subjected to a severe strain due to intrusion of armed guerillas into the Indian territory of Kashmir.

In 1965 when an open war erupted on the Indian subcontinent China began to play its hand. The Chinese Foreign Minister Chen Yi who visited Pakistan issued a statement supporting the "just" action taken by Pakistan to repel "armed Indian aggression". On 7 September Peking charged India with "naked aggression" and warned against a

"chain of consequences". On the following day Peking went a step further and accused India of "military aggression and provocation" along the Sino-Indian border. The initial negative response of Pakistan to the UN call for a ceasefire was attributed by some international observers to Peking's hostility towards India. On 16 September China delivered an ultimatum to India demanding the demolition of certain border posts within 72 hours on penalty of "grave consequences". To show its earnestness Peking amassed its troops on several frontier points. The Indian Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri announced in the Parliament that, in order not to aggravate the situation, he saw no objection to agreeing with the Chinese demand that India destroy all its fortifications on the Tibetan border since in fact there were none. Shastri also accepted joint inspection of Indian installations along the border.

Peking's provocative actions evoked a strong Russian reaction. Leonid Brezhnev's statement of 11 September 1965 about "third forces" trying to benefit by aggravation of India-Pakistan relations "sometimes adding fuel to the fire" and the TASS statement of 13 September which warned those who by their incendiary statements aggravated the India-Pakistan conflict also played their part in restraining Pakistan from following an adventurist course.

China's conduct at the time of the December 1971 conflict between India and Pakistan which grew out of the freedom struggle of the people in the eastern part of the then Pakistan was again motivated by a desire to widen the gulf between the two countries. Soon after the bloody crackdown by General Yahya Khan on 25 March on the freedom-loving people of East Pakistan, the Chinese press came out with the Pakistani version of reports on "Indian interference".

A leading article in the Jenmin Jihpao of 11 April accused the "Indian expansionists" of "seriously prejudicing the security of Pakistan by amassing troops along the East Pakistan border" and pledged China's support to the "Pakistani Government and people in their just struggle for safeguarding national independence and state sovereignty". On 12 April Chou En-lai warned the "Indian expansionists" that the Chinese Government and people will, as always, firmly support Pakistan". During their visit to China in early November Bhutto, then Foreign Minister of Pakistan, and Chiefs of Pakistani Defence Forces received promise of full support from China in the event of a war with India. China rushed some vital military supplies to Pakistan through the Kashgar-Gilgit road. When the West Pakistan military junta started the

war by launching unprovoked air raids on Indian air fields, the Chinese support to Pakistan became even louder.

On 3 December the Jenmin Jihpao carried a write-up under the title "Indian Ambition to Annex East Pakistan" which said:

"The Indian Government, backed and abetted by social imperialism, is plotting to create a 'Bangladesh' in East Pakistan in an attempt to divide Pakistan and realise its expansionist ambitions to annex East Pakistan.

"The Chinese people are quite familiar with such Indian government's insidious tricks as creating a 'Bangladesh'... It was precisely the Indian Government which engineered a rebellion in China's Tibet region... created the so-called 'Tibetan refugee' issue and energetically antagonised China".

China was to repeat similar allegations in the United Nations. On December 5 when the US-sponsored resolution calling for a ceasefire on the Indian subcontinent came up before the Security Council, the Chinese representative Huang Hua reaffirmed his country's support for the "just" struggle of the Pakistan Government against "Indian aggression".

Huang rejected the Soviet proposal for inviting the representative of Bangladesh to address the Security Council and voted for the American resolution which was vetoed by the USSR.

When the Soviet Union brought forth its own resolution on 6 December calling for a political settlement in East Pakistan which would automatically bring a cessation of hostilities, China was the only state to vote against it. The Chinese representative compared Bangladesh to the puppet state of Manchukuo set up by the Japanese militarists in China. Peking accused both India and the Soviet Union of having "lured away" Chinese refugees from Tibet and Sinkiang to use them in future as a pretext for intervention in the domestic affairs of China.

In fact, China not only extended verbal support to Pakistan in the Security Council but it acted as a "co-belligerent" with the United States in the 1971 conflict on the subcontinent. The despatch of the US naval task force to the Bay of Bengal and the delivery of a protest note by China to coincide with it were part of a jointly-conceived Sino-US plan to browbeat India. However, they were prevented from going further towards direct military intervention in favour of Pakistan by the existence of the Indo-Soviet Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation.

The Bangladesh struggle marks a sweeping transformation of the Chinese stand on national liberation movement in the sixties. In the earlier period the Soviets were accused by Peking of forsaking revolutionary struggle and joining hands with the oppressive reactionary regimes to serve their "great power interests". In the seventies, as Canadian scholar Sheldon W. Simon points out, China preferred the "mundane tasks of balancing allies and adversaries - less in terms of ideological compatibility than of geopolitical location".¹ It must, however, be added that even in the sixties when China was ideologically more militant it did precious little to support the revolutionary movements in the Third World materially and with its stress on 'self-reliance'.

Peking's anti-Indian attitude in the 1971 Indo-Pak conflict came as a surprise to many as during the preceding two years the euphoria for normalisation of relations with China had seized important sections of Indian society. New Delhi apprehended a shift in the Soviet policy following its discomfiture in the 1962 armed conflict with China. It felt that in the

1. Sheldon W. Simon, "China, the Soviet Union and the Subcontinental Balance" in Asian Survey, July 1973.

wake of reduced intensity of the cold war following the Cuban missile crises. Moscow might be tempted to develop other options for reducing US influence in such states as Pakistan, Iran and Turkey bound to Washington in military alliances. In particular it began to suspect that the USSR was trying to wean away Pakistan from China by following a less pro-Indian policy. This suspicion was strengthened by the Soviet decision to supply arms to Pakistan in 1968, New Delhi was concerned at the new Soviet attitude towards Pakistan in the post-Tashkent period which looked like abandonment by Brezhnev-Kosygin team of the Khrushchevian policy of "overcommitment" to one state in a conflict-prone region.¹ Mrs. Gandhi's declaration on 1 January 1969 of India's willingness to open talks with China without any preconditions was obviously motivated by considerations of warding off the Soviet move to get closer to Pakistan.

Indira Gandhi's government looked at the development of better relations with China, or playing the "China card", as a way of increasing India's options vis-a-vis its central and immediate adversary Pakistan.²

1. Robert C. Horn, Soviet-Indian Relations: Issues and Influence, New York, 1982, pp. 12-13.

2. Ibid., p. 27.

A feeling that the extent of Soviet dependence on Indian friendship had not been properly appreciated in New Delhi began to get strengthened. During his visit to India in September 1968 Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister Firyubin made it clear that the Chinese issue had become paramount in the Soviet perspective and references to the desirability of resuming India's dialogue with China in the Indian press provoked his ire.¹

The bloody clash between the Soviet and Chinese troops on the Ussuri river in March 1969 made Moscow anxious to obtain some hint of Indian support. This became all the more important in view of Mrs. Gandhi's offer in January 1969 to China of border talks with no preconditions. It was with this object that the Soviet Defence Minister Grechko journeyed to India in March 1969 and Premier Kosygin also undertook a visit to New Delhi in early May on the occasion of the funeral of ^{the} Indian President Zakir Hussain. Kosygin utilised his sojourn in the Indian capital to reassure Mrs. Gandhi regarding Soviet arms to Pakistan. Thus both Grechko and Kosygin made full use of their visits to stress the danger that China represented. The

1. Times of India, 26 September 1968.

message was that India with an unsettled border dispute could hardly afford to take any chances by ignoring or even minimising the dangers of a sudden conflict with China.¹

In early June 1969 Brezhnev advocated the creation of a collective security system in Asia at the Moscow meeting of the Communist and Workers' Parties. Prior to that on 29 May the Soviet government paper Izvestia carried an article depicting China as the greatest threat to peace in Asia. Mrs. Gandhi's response to the Brezhnev proposal was one of opposition to its "military overtones" and disagreement with its assumptions of a "power vacuum" facing Asia with the planned British withdrawal in 1971.² During Kosygin's visit to New Delhi in May 1969 Islamabad made public a letter from Chou En-lai to the new Pakistani President Yahya Khan reiterating China's firm support to Pakistan in the Kashmir dispute.

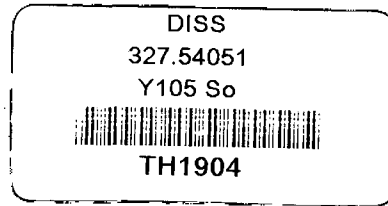
At a time when New Delhi's relations with Moscow were undergoing certain strains due to the latter's overtures to Pakistan and when many advocates of widening

1. The Hindu, 24 October 1969.

2. Hindustan Times, 19 June and 1 July 1969 (Mrs. Gandhi's remarks in Tokyo and Jakarta respectively).

India's options were pleading for mending fences with China, the progress in Sino-Pakistani road construction and the adoption of a tough line on the border dispute with India in Lin Piao's speech at the Ninth Party Congress came as a damper the normalisation enthusiasts. At the top of it came a new clash on the Sino-Indian border in mid-July coinciding with the visit of Pakistani General Nur Khan to Peking. Nothing came out of the fruitless talks held at the end of July between India and Pakistan following Mrs. Gandhi's secret letter in June to Yahya Khan proposing the signing of a "no-war pact" and the setting up of joint machinery to examine all aspects of normalising relations between the two countries.

Jolted by both Peking and Islamabad the 'astute' practitioners of realpolitik in New Delhi were obliged to seek solace in a deeper understanding with Moscow which was achieved through wide-ranging discussions between Mrs. Gandhi and Kosygin who stopped for refuelling in New Delhi on his way to Hanoi to participate in Ho Chi Minh's funeral on 6 September 1969. Subsequently, Foreign Minister Dinesh Singh rushed to Moscow with a large delegation on 11 Sept. for further discussions with Brezhnev, Kosygin and



Gromyko. He declared that Brezhnev's plan for Asian collective security contained ideas "in line with our own" and extended support to it.¹ At a banquet on 12 September Dinesh Singh was reported to have said that:

... the friendship between the two countries was many-sided... We were all living today in a world torn by conflict and many of those present had probably witnessed both ^{the} world wars in their lifetime... if we were to avoid a conflict in the future it was necessary to enter into a closer and more intimate relationship".²

Whether a secret treaty between the USSR and India in September 1969 during the Indian Foreign Minister's Moscow visit was concluded as some knowledgeable observers have alleged, we have no direct evidence to confirm it. One thing, however, is certain that the visit coincided with a major and definitive change in the Soviet policy and India's fears about the USSR's relations with Pakistan were allayed. The new understanding or "alliance" was the result of the

1. Hindustan Times, 16 September 1969.

2. Information Service of India, 13 September 1969

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linkage of threats Moscow perceived from China and New Delhi perceived from Pakistan, backed by China.

The Indo-Soviet relations appeared to be moving along the desired direction throughout the year 1970. The visit to Moscow around the end of May by a team from the External Affairs Ministry led by Foreign Secretary, T.N. Kaul and consisting of Secretary Kewal Singh and the Indian Ambassador to Moscow D.P. Dhar resulted in "identity of views or proximity of approach" as the joint-statement issued at its conclusion recorded. The Hindustan Times reported after the meeting that the two sides have a "near identity of views on the character of the threat posed by Communist China".¹ Both viewed China's behaviour as "aimed at promoting hegemonistic domination of Asia", the paper added. The Report of the External Affairs Ministry published a couple of months earlier while taking note of signs of a return to "revolutionary normalcy" following the Cultural Revolution had emphasised that "it would be unrealistic to anticipate any fundamental change in Chinese foreign policy particularly towards India."

1. The Hindustan Times, 2 June 1970.

The opening of a Chinese-assisted ord-nance factory in East Pakistan and Peking's launching of a satellite in April had only strengthened India's perceptions of threat from China. Even then New Delhi would not close its option of improving relations with China. "We cannot say when this (reversal) will happen but we can say that when it does happen we shall not be wanting in responding to it", the Report hastened to add. It went on to hail the Brezhnev collective security proposal as a new development of some significance" describing the Soviet Union "as much an Asian as a European power". But the Report did not give unqualified support to the proposal thus keeping the door for improvement of relations with China open.

Yahya Khan's Moscow visit in June 1970 failed to bring the Soviet leaders to mediate in the Farakka barrage and Kashmir disputes with India. Moscow urged the two countries to settle their differences in the "Tashkent spirit". The Soviets also refused to supply Pakistan further military arms. The Cabinet re-shuffle by Mrs. Gandhi in late June 1970 replacing the pro-Moscow Dinesh Singh with Swaran Singh as the Foreign Minister made Moscow seek an assurance from New Delhi that the change implied no shift in Indian policy. Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister Firiyabin rushed to New Delhi to receive this

assurance. Dinesh Singh, it may be recalled, was the only high-ranking Indian leader to endorse Brezhnev's Asian collective security proposal. In turn Firyubin assured India that the Soviet Union would not resume arms supply to Pakistan.

President V.V. Giri paid a 11-day visit to the USSR in late September 1970 and Mrs. Gandhi made a three-hour stop in Moscow in October 1970 on her way to New York for the General Assembly Session. Besides the question of Soviet arms supply to Pakistan on which Kosygin reassured India against any fresh resumption, the issue of Soviet maps of the Sino-Indian border also continued to be a minor irritant in the Indo-Soviet relations. Despite Indian protests in 1956, 1958, 1966 and 1968 no alterations were made in the Soviet maps favouring the Chinese position in the territorial dispute.

During 1970 the opposition took up this issue in the Parliament forcefully and in early September the External Affairs Ministry agreed to draft a strong protest to the Soviets on their "cartographic aggression". Both President Giri and Prime Minister Indira Gandhi were reported to have raised this matter in their talks with the Soviet leaders. T.N. Kaul made a visit to Moscow at the end of October on his way home from the United Nations

to discuss this question with Piriyubin. It was only after this visit that the Indian side got some changes, Kashmir was made entirely Indian, part of the NEFA was also shown as Indian while the rest of it and the disputed Aksai Chin were still shown as Chinese.

Moscow favoured coordinated Indian and Soviet moves towards China which were intended to put pressure on Pakistan, for example, mutual calls for normalisation within a day of each other in August. Nevertheless calls for improvement of ties with China at other times by leading Indian officials including the Prime Minister and her Defence Minister Jagjivan Ram, as well as the October Sino-Indian ambassadorial talks in Cairo caused some anxiety to the Soviets. Obviously India desired autonomy in its playing of the "China card". Yet in spite of some undercurrent of anxiety on the whole the bilateral relations of India and the USSR continued to be close and cordial in contrast to New Delhi's relations with either the United States or China and the Moscow's relations with Pakistan. Another stimulus to a close relationship was provided by Pakistan President Yahya Khan's visit to the United States and China. President Nixon reiterated his offer of "limited defence equipment" to Islamabad and China pledged to continue its military

assistance. Peking also expressed support for Pakistan's stand on Kashmir and offered her a \$ 200 million credit.

Relations between New Delhi and Islamabad continued to deteriorate as Pakistan moved towards a civil war in 1971. India still persisted with her efforts to improve relations with China in order to wean Peking away from Islamabad. It had taken China one and a half years to respond to Mrs. Gandhi's offer of January 1969 to hold talks without any free-conditions. The response had come in the form of Mao's smile to the Indian Charge d'Affaires in Peking. Since then New Delhi had spared no efforts to mend its fences with Peking. Mrs. Gandhi's letter in July 1971 to Chou En-lai explaining India's position and offering to hold talks with China on the East Pakistan issue was another effort in this direction. The former Indian Ambassador to the Soviet Union D.P. Dhar was dispatched to Moscow at the end of July 1971 to hold secret talks with the Chinese Ambassador there. This must have heightened the Soviet concern about the reliability of India's anti-China posture. It was therefore not surprising that Moscow watched its move towards Pakistan before the 1971 India-Pakistan conflict with a certain restraint. Thus even in mid-1971 when the Bangladesh freedom struggle had started India

was looking forward^{for} improvement in her bilateral relations with China. This hope was dashed by China's support of the West Pakistani military junta against the people in East Pakistan.

India's one-sided quest for normalisation, however, continued even after the bitter experience of 1971. Hopes again rose when a Chinese ping-pong team accompanied by Chinese Vice-Minister for Sports visited India in early 1975 and the Chinese Vice Premier Chen Hsi-lien during a brief halt at the Calcutta airport on his way to Peking after attending the coronation in Kathmandu declared his government's readiness for talks for normalisation of relations. Yet Vice Premier Chen had behaved quite differently at Kathmandu where he sympathised with the desire of the Chogyal of Sikkim to preserve the separate identity and status of Sikkim and promised Nepal Chinese support in meeting the non-existing Indian threat to its sovereignty and independence. China spurned New Delhi's efforts at normalisation through its hysterical outcry against the merger of Sikkim with India.

The People's Daily described it as an act of "undisguised annexation" which "unmasked the ugly face of expansionist India". It warned that India's "madness"

would be punished by "history".¹ Peking also started encouraging the formation of a separate hill state through coordination among the Naga and Mizo hostiles in India, the tribes of the Chittagon hill tracts in Bangladesh and the Kachin and Chin tribes of Burma.

That India continued playing her "China card" to enhance its own diplomatic "elbow room" and its bargaining leverage with Moscow even if she did not succeed in normalising her relations with Peking, was obvious in the aftermath of the 1971 war with Pakistan. She hoped to force Moscow to be more forthcoming in some area of support for India and wanted to reassert her independence which became suspect in the West on account of the 1971 Treaty and Soviet support to India in the Indo-Pak conflict. The major Soviet response came in the form of a lengthy study of Chinese policy towards the Indian subcontinent published in the Soviet quarterly Problems of the Far East of December 1973, entitled "Peking's subcontinent". Moscow acknowledged the correctness of India's position on the territorial question. The Soviets were also forced to include crude oil in the

1. Devendra Kaushik, China and the Third World, New Delhi 1975, p. 70.

items of Soviet exports to India. New Delhi resisted Soviet leader Brezhnev's plea for Indian endorsement of Asian collective security proposal. During his 1973 visit India reluctantly agreed to inclusion of a paragraph in the joint declaration on principles for the relations of all states which repeated Brezhnev's list of principles for Asian collective security. But New Delhi did not oblige Moscow by an explicit endorsement of the Brezhnev proposal.

India's peaceful underground nuclear explosion on 18 May 1974 may also be viewed as demonstration of its continued independence even from Moscow. India would not be dependent on great powers against a Chinese attack. New Delhi steadfastly refused to sign the NPT of 1968. The 1974 Indo-Soviet agreement which was signed after Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister I.T. Grishin's New Delhi visit included such items as crude oil, newsprint and fertilisers among the items of Soviet exports against rupee payment. Grechko's mission in 1975 resulted in raising the level of Indo-Soviet cooperation in defence.

Mrs. Gandhi's declaration of emergency further aggravated the already existing Sino-Indian estrangement which had recently been worsened by Indian actions in Sikkim. While B.A. Ulianovski justified in a Pravda

write up this "unprecedented" step and criticised the "reactionary" opposition ranging from "pro-fascist militarised organisations" to "vociferous pro-Peking extremist groupings", the People's Daily carried a signed article at the end of June entitled "Indira Gandhi's Governments' Ferocious Features Fully Exposed" which ridiculed Mrs. Gandhi's dependence on "Soviet revisionist social-imperialism". In an effort to prevent India from intervening in post-Mujib Bangladesh China provoked the most serious border clash since the 60's which left four Indian soldiers dead.

On the eve of Foreign Secretary Kewal Singh's Moscow visit in November 1975 the Soviet weekly New Times published an article entitled "Peking's Provocations against India". The Soviet authors asserted: "Evidently the shots fired by the Chinese troops on the parties were Peking's reply to India's desire to normalise relations with China". Yet from the press reports it appears that Kewal Singh was reluctant to talk about China and did not even mention Asian collective security when the New Times correspondent interviewed him and asked a direct question on his

1. NCNA, 30 June, 1975.

assessment of the Helsinki Conference on security and cooperation in Europe.

The early months of 1976 saw a further divergence in Indian and Soviet perceptions of China. India made several gestures of goodwill towards China. India invited China for participation in a regional UNESCO Conference and supported China's candidacy for the Asian Development Bank. An agreement for establishment of telex links was also signed. Mrs. Gandhi signed the book of condolences in the Chinese Embassy in New Delhi after Chou En-lai's death. The Chinese Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs attended the Republic Day reception at the Indian mission in Peking. In April 1976 the Indian Foreign Minister Y.B. Chavan announced in the Lok Sabha India's unilateral decision to restore its diplomatic representation in Peking to the ambassadorial level. This decision was generally welcomed by Parliament, the press and public opinion alike. In less than three months K.R. Narayanan assumed his post as India's Ambassador to China. Peking also named its Ambassador, Chen Chao-Yuan who arrived in New Delhi in September 1976. Ambassador Chen declared that "full normalisation of Sino-Indian relations through joint efforts" was in the interests of the people of

both the countries and that China hoped that their friendship and relations would improve.¹

Mrs. Gandhi's Moscow visit in June 1976 (she had been there last only in 1971) aimed at explaining India's China policy to Moscow and at gaining further Soviet support in the form of enhanced economic co-operation. Kremlin wanted reassurances from Mrs. Gandhi that the change regarding China would not affect Indo-Soviet relations. At a press conference at the conclusion of the visit Mrs. Gandhi stated that China was among a wide range of subjects discussed. In his welcome address Brezhnev spoke about "forces in Asia which, ignoring the rights and sovereignty of states, are striving to subordinate other people to their rule". Mrs. Gandhi, however, chose to reply in her own way stating, "Darkness is not dispelled by cursing but by lighting lamps. Along with international efforts for peace, each country must act on its own to reduce areas of suspicion and to enlarge areas of goodwill".² At her press conference in Moscow Mrs. Gandhi told Soviet

1. The Indian Express, 11 September 1976.

2. The Statesman, 9 June 1976.

journalists that the safest guarantee for peace and stability in Asia "is for every country to become economically strong and stable through a more equitable distribution of the product of labour".¹

India's continuation of her unilateral quest for normalisation of relations with China notwithstanding the repeated rebuffs at the hands of the Maoists calls for a serious explanation. Alienation of China from India is viewed by the ruling elite and even the non-communist opposition as the narrowing down of options open to India resulting in near-absolute dependence on the Soviet Union. This option has been further restricted by the growing strategic consensus between the United States, China and Japan. The ideal global environment which Indian ruling elite could wish for, the hostility of both the Soviet Union and the United States against China and a limited detente between the two superpowers, is already beyond the realm of the possible. Hence New Delhi's persistence with its normalisation drive vis-a-vis China. It does not desire to have a closer hug of the Russian bear. That New Delhi

1. Ibid., 10 June 1976

2. Devendra Kaushik, op.cit., p. 70.

has not been feeling comfortable under the Indo-Soviet Treaty of 1971 is no secret. The Treaty which the Soviet Union had proposed long before 1971 to allay its rising fears about a lasting relationship with India in view of the political uncertainty prevailing in the post-Nehru era was finally agreed to by India in August 1971 in the face of a mounting threat from Pakistan working in collusion with China. The cautious approach taken by New Delhi towards Moscow's various proposals for collective or common security in Asia is indicative of the Indian sensitivity towards China. An influential section of the policy-making elite in India has been quick to explain the rigid Chinese stand on normalization of relations in terms of Peking's perception of Soviet threat to its security and "obsessive fear of a Soviet conspiracy to encircle China". They would like to mend their fences with China in order to regain their lost leverage with Moscow.

III

THE JANATA PERIOD AND CONTINUED SOVIET ANXIETY OVER INDIAN OVERTURES TO CHINA

The trouncing of Mrs. Gandhi's Congress at the March 1977 polls by the newly created coalition of divergent political forces named as the Janata Party caused a shock to the Kremlin. While foreign policy did not figure in the election campaign as a major issue, it was apprehended that several constituents of the new Party that had been voted to power were opposed to leaning heavily on the Soviet Union. The Soviet media had vilified them as reactionary right upto the election time, hailing the state of emergency imposed by Mrs. Gandhi as a progressive measure.

After the elections the Soviets lost little time in launching a vigorous drive to repair the damage likely to be caused by their unstinted support to Mrs. Gandhi in the past. The Izvestiya attributed Mrs. Gandhi's poll debacle to "mistakes and excesses" during the emergency period. Soviet Weekly New Times hastened to emphasise that foreign policy had not occupied a key place in the elections on account of a "general accord in the country on this score".¹

1. V. Sofyin, "Foreign Policy Contours", New Times, No. 16, April 1977, p. 12.

Statements by Janata leaders like A.B. Vajpayee that the new regime would honour all commitments undertaken by its predecessor were prominently displayed by the Soviet press. Before the end of March the Soviet Ambassador called on Vajpayee and it was reported by an Indian news agency, Samachar, that the meeting confirmed the desire of both governments to strengthen the relations of friendship and co-operation.

Barely one month after the Janata's advent to power Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko arrived in India to ensure the continuation of the development of Indo-Soviet relations. At the New Delhi airport the Soviet Foreign Minister tried to counter the impression that the Indo-Soviet relationship was aimed against a third country "It has never been our policy, it will never be" - declared Gromyko.¹ He proceeded to defend the Indo-Soviet Treaty, affirming that it was in the interests of world peace and that "it was his hope that the Indian leaders would take a similar view of it". Vajpayee also responded positively to these sentiments. All speculations about change in Janata's foreign policy were set at rest when Vajpayee declared that

1. The Statesman, 27 April 1977.

"the bonds of friendship between the two countries were strong enough to survive the demands of divergent systems, the fate of an individual or the fortunes of a political party".¹ The joint communique issued at the conclusion of the visit revealed substantial areas of agreement on international issues.² Both sides agreed to further strengthen their "time-tested" friendship and co-operation "on the basis of the Soviet-Indian treaty". The trade agreement for 1977 envisioned a substantial increase in the trade turnover. A new 20 year credit of about 340 million dollars was extended by Moscow with an interest rate of 2.5 per cent only.

The USSR also took steps to strengthen military ties with India. Shortly after Gromyko's departure the Soviet Army Chief Pavlovski arrived in India and in July the Chief of the Indian Navy Admiral Cursteji visited Moscow. Agreements to supply India 70 T-72 medium tanks and two Kashin class destroyers, 5 Ka-25 helicopters and two IL-38 maritime reconnaissance aircraft were concluded during these two visits. But the Janata's Jaguar deal and its new initiatives to improve Sino-Indian

1. Ibid.

2. Pravda, 28 April 1977.

ties caused great concern to Moscow. An Indian representative went to the Canton Trade Fair in May 1977 and trade relations between the two countries were resumed although on a modest level for the first time after an interval of 15 years. It was followed by the China visit of an Indian journalist and port calls by Indian ships.

In a press interview held in September 1977 Foreign Minister Vajpayee addressed both Moscow and Peking on the issue of resumption of India's relations with China. When asked whether India's friendship with the Soviet Union will come in the way of improving relations with China", he replied that the new leaders "do not feel that the process of normalisation between India and China should be at the cost of India's friendship with any other country". Yet to reassure the Chinese Vajpayee also said in the same interview that "India's existing good relations with any country need not be an obstacle to the promotion of better relations with China".¹

In the context of improving US-Indian relations as indicated by the announcement of President Carter's

1. Far Eastern Economic Review, 7 October 1977, p. 32.

visit to India, Moscow welcomed Prime Minister Morarji Desai's visit to USSR in October 1977. It attached great significance to Morarji Desai's USSR visit prior to his visit^{to}/the United States. Earlier Soviet Communist Party paper Pravda had prominently carried a despatch from India containing references to the territorial question by Prime Minister Desai and Foreign Minister Vajpayee in discussing prospects for improvement of Sino-Indian relations.¹ Desai was reported to have said at an election meeting in Calcutta that China not India should display initiative in improving relations between the two countries and Vajpayee to have told the journalists that the commitment undertaken by the Indian Parliament 15 years ago to "get back the Indian lands occupied by China" remained in force.

Morarji Desai's October 1977 visit to Moscow illustrated certain changes since Gromyko's trip to India in April. Moscow did not play up its Asian collective security idea. Brezhnev in his dinner speech in honour of Morarji Desai said: "Both you and we have a most immediate interest in the development of

1. Pravda, 9 June 1977.

affairs on the Asian continent. One would think that our Indian friends are well acquainted with the Soviet Union's viewpoint. We are convinced that one of the surest roads to detente and security in Asia lies through the joint efforts of Asian states - in the form that they deem acceptable."¹ The joint declaration issued at the conclusion of the visit in listing the principles on which peace in Asia should rest added "the right of every people to choose its own political and social system" which sounded like a Soviet gesture to the Janata. The results of the visit were mixed and relations in several aspects were not as close as before the Janata regime. Desai's visit, however, avoided any impairment to Indo-Soviet relations. The old formulation adopted during Brezhnev's 1973 Delhi visit and Mrs. Gandhi's 1976 trip to the Soviet Union that referred to Indo-Soviet relations being strengthened "on the basis" of the Treaty which was described as "an important factor of strengthening peace and stability in Asia and throughout the world" had been reduced to, by the time of Desai's visit, "in the spirit" and the reference to

1. Pravda, 22 October 1977.

its impact on Asia with its implications for the Asian collective security scheme, was dropped entirely.¹

New Delhi's relations with Washington and Peking were under a close scrutiny by Moscow. A New Times article published in the wake of Carter's visit to India accused the United States of trying to improve US-Indian relations "at the expense of India's traditional friendly ties with other states, notably the Soviet Union".² It warned India that "there has been no real change in the position of the United States either as regards the general situation in South Asia or the unsolved problems of American-Indian relations (It is not) enough to pat a giant country like India on the back to cancel all the unpaid bills of the past and make all the differences and complexities of the present disappear... The present-day realities and the complex problems facing India and other South Asian countries naturally demand an altogether different approach".³

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1. Robert C. Horn, Soviet-Indian Relations, Issues & Influence, New York, 1982, p. 155
 2. Natalia Beglova, "Behind the American 'Smiling Diplomacy'", New Times, 4 January 1978, pp. 24-25.
 3. Ibid.

At about the same time Soviet concern with India's other 'option', China, was also increasing during the first half of 1978. Critical references to Indian policies in the Chinese media began to wane by September 1977 and Foreign Minister Huang Hua's address to the UN General Assembly was conspicuous for its moderate tone. A rather low-key reception for Pakistan's visiting President Zia ul-Haq in December clearly signalled China's renewed interest in fence-mending with India. Vice-Premier Teng Hsiao-ping's remark at a press conference in Kathmandu in September 1978 that China was "eager to bring relations with India close" was welcomed as a conciliatory gesture by Peking. In February 1978 a trade delegation, the first since 1962, arrived on a two-week visit to India, followed by a delegation from the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries headed by Wang Ping-nan. Desai and Wang agreed that the border question should be solved through negotiations and by peaceful means. Wang extended an invitation to Vajpayee to visit China which was accepted in principle.¹

1, Times of India, 12 March 1978.

M Mrs. Gandhi's party, now in opposition, tried to exploit this move in its political struggle. In the Lok Sabha, one of its MPs described it as a "systematic erosion of India's national interests" and asked, "Are you giving the land away for the sake of friendly relations or a smile?"¹ The opening in June 1978 of the Karakoram Highway, an all-weather road built by the Chinese connecting Sinkiang with a town 60 miles north of Islamabad was seen as threat to India's interests. Moscow's response to India's move to normalise relations with China was a flurry of activity "both to woo India and to denounce China".² In March 1978 Soviet Air Force Chief Marshal Kutakhov paid a visit to New Delhi to offer an improved version of MiG-23 fighter aircraft. Soviet Deputy Premier Arkhipov travelled to India for the fourth session of the Indo-Soviet Joint Commission. The session resulted in the conclusion of a long-term protocol for the expansion of economic, trade, technical and scientific collaboration. The Soviets appeared to be more concerned than India^{ns} with the fall-out of the Karakoram

1. Far Eastern Economic Review, 11 Aug. 1978, p. 19

2. Robert C. Horn, op.cit., p. 159.

Highway for the security of India. "The road is clearly intended to serve above all Peking's military strategic aims and "cannot but disquiet China's neighbours, and primarily India".¹ Lastly, the Soviets seized on incidents such as the reported incursion over Indian airspace of a Chinese helicopter, denied by both India and China, and sought to encourage Indian "indignation" at such an example of "another Chinese provocation against India".²

It appears that India's relations with China figured prominently in the talks during Foreign Minister Vajpayee's Moscow visit in September 1978. According to the Statesman "the discussion represented the culmination of an effort to discourage Vajpayee from making his planned trip to Peking."³ The mounting tension between China and Vietnam, the conclusion of the Sino-Japanese treaty, Chairman Hua's provocative trip to Romania and Yugoslavia and the warming up in Sino-US relations all increased Soviet

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1. A. Turanov, "Road for Chinese Expansion", New Times, No. 31, July 1978, p. 23.
 2. Peking Review, No. 40, 6 Oct. 1978, p. 39.
 3. Statesman, 20 September, 1978.

fears about the Chinese threat. Izvestiya wrote shortly after Vajpayee's departure from Moscow in its issue of 29 September: "It is obvious that Peking... would like the normalisation of its relations with India to automatically lead to the deterioration of Soviet-Indian relations. Realistic and far-sighted circles in India are alarmed over the fact that these designs by the present leadership are meeting with definite support from certain Indian figures who are actively coming out for "conciliation" with Peking at all costs, including the undermining of Soviet-Indian friendship and co-operation".

In Moscow Vajpayee was given an "outspoken, sharp and critical" appraisal of trends in China's domestic and foreign policies, which the Soviet leaders believed "pose a threat to peace".¹ Vajpayee explained to Gromyko that India wished to improve its relations with China as part of its policy of normalising and improving ties with its neighbours. He also pointed out that the Janata was only continuing the process of normalisation that had been initiated by Mrs. Gandhi

1. Statesman, 13 September, 1978.

before. At the luncheon for Vajpayee, Gromyko spoke at length of the need for joint efforts in Asia for peace, i.e., collective security, in view of the activity of forces that have embarked on a course of militarisation and are "seeking to aggravate the international tension". Lest Vajpayee misses the point Gromyko deplored explicitly "the aggressive essence of the Peking leadership's great-power hegemonistic policy... "What must be done against the Chinese forces?" "The schemes of the forces that are hostile to world peace and international security in Asia", Gromyko went on, "should be rebuffed and rebuffed decisively. It is necessary to unmask and frustrate their aggressive designs and expansionist proclivities in time."¹

Vajpayee, however, disappointed the Kremlin leaders. Paying homage to the stability of Indian-Soviet friendly ties, he avoided identifying himself with any explicitly anti-Chinese remarks. He expressed the hope that the process of greater relaxation in the South Asian region would not be affected by tensions elsewhere and that all powers would encourage the

1. Pravda, 13 September 1978.

countries of the region to "overcome old suspicions and irritations".² The Indian Foreign Minister, however, did stress that his visit to China would in no way affect Indo-Soviet friendship and that India had its own experience of China and New Delhi's "eyes and ears were wide open". The announcement of postponement of Vajpayee's Peking visit due to his hospitalisation led to various speculations. However, after the meeting between Vajpayee and Huang Hua at the United Nations it was declared that the visit would take place at a convenient date.

Vajpayee's visit to Peking took place early in 1979 following Teng Hsiao-ping's trip to Washington. Teng spent a good deal of his trip criticising the Soviet Union as being the "threat to international peace, security and stability and urging states to unite against it. He also warned that China might have to teach a necessary lesson" to Vietnam. Vajpayee described his China visit as an exploratory one. He told the Parliament that as a result of the visit the border problems was at least unfrozen. China for the first time recognised the border dispute as the key to

1. Statesman, 13 September, 1978.

any normalisation. The Indian Foreign Minister also raised the issue of Chinese support for the Naga and Mizo hostiles. There were agreements on cultural, scientific and other exchanges besides plans for trade expansion. It was also reported that the Chinese did not raise the issue of India's relations with the Soviet Union.¹ Vajpayee told the Parliament: "Just as I would caution against euphoria, I would also urge a measure of self-confidence that any effort at improvement in relations need not mean the sacrifice of our ~~national~~ national interests and aspirations. We have made a beginning and I came back satisfied with the decision to undertake the mission. But I also know it would be a long haul which will demand maturity and reciprocal efforts by both governments if, in the path ahead satisfactory results are to be obtained."²

Naturally Vajpayee was trying to project the first ever China visit by an Indian Foreign Minister as a positive event. He, however, could not conceal the fact that he was forced to cut short his visit abruptly as the Chinese invaded Vietnam while he was their state

1. Times of India, 18 February 1979

2. Indian and Foreign Review, 1 March 1979, pp. 5-7.

guest. Prime Minister Desai expressed his "profound shock and distress" over the Chinese action and demanded the immediate withdrawal of Chinese troops. 100 MPs addressed a letter to the Prime Minister demanding that both houses condemned the Chinese aggression in Vietnam.

The Soviet press referred to a Peking's "perfidious aggression against India" which was described as still fresh in people's minds.¹ Moscow particularly relished the fact that "the timing of the aggression against Vietnam to coincide with the Indian Foreign Minister's visit to China once again demonstrated to the world the duplicity of the Chinese leaders and their utter disregard for India's prestige". Kosygin visited India less than three weeks after Vajpayee's return from China. In his meetings with Morarji Desai and Vajpayee on the day of his arrival, he sought an assessment of Vajpayee's visit to China.² Kosygin again showed his preoccupation with China in his address to the Parliament and in his banquet speech. In his address to the Parliament Kosygin referred to

1. V. Tretyakov, "Visit Wrecked", New Times, No. 10, March 1979, p. 24.

2. Statesman, 10 March 1979.

the Chinese action as "criminal" and asserted that India and the Soviet Union had emerged as forces that would not permit such an outrage.¹ Kosygin even crudely warned the Indians that "China might want to teach India a lesson at some point in the future, just as it had sought to do with Vietnam in the present."²

Kosygin sought to give an impression of identity of views between India and the USSR on the Chinese issue. He declared that the two states had "no differences, none at all" and that "the talks have ended very successfully indeed and we have agreed on all subject".³ But Desai gave a different impression when he stated that "We have agreed even where we differ". The joint communique referred to "wide-ranging coincidence of their views". Desai made clear to the Soviets that normalisation with China would still be pursued when circumstances permitted. On the question of recognition of the new Vietnam-sponsored regime in Cambodia. Kosygin failed to get the Indians endorse the Soviet line. But Kosygin's

1. Ibid., March 11, 1979

2. Radio Liberty Research, RL 89/79, 15 March 1979, p.2

3. Overseas Hindustan Times, 22 March 1979.

visit testified to the relative stability of Soviet-Indian economic ties. An agreement on the rate between the ruble and the rupee was reached. Kosygin made the politically significant and economically costly gesture of offering an additional 600,000 tons of crude oil over and above the 1.5 million already promised. A long term economic trade and scientific agreement was also signed with India.

Norarji Desai visited ^{the} USSR for the second time as the Prime Minister just one month before the fall of his government. He had cordial talks with the top Soviet leadership and signed a communique full of glowing references to Indo-Soviet friendship and co-operation. He also signed the agreement for the Visakhapatnam steel mill and for a third Indian earth satellite. Moscow also agreed to step up its supply of crude oil to India. The visit was originally meant to be a stopover on a European trip. But it was raised to an official visit at the instance of Moscow which wanted to project an impression of closeness with India. It was obvious from Brezhnev's speech at the dinner for Desai on 11 June that Moscow still continued to be obsessed with China and the India-China relations. He reminded Desai of the concern that

"both of our countries" share regarding "China's recent aggression against Vietnam" and continuing threats to take up arms again to "teach someone a lesson". Brezhnev also added that China's behaviour "makes the situation extremely complicated and creates considerable danger for Asian countries."¹

The Soviets also published a review of Morarji's memoirs in which the reviewer G. Bondarevsky highlighted the Indian leader's perception of "China's hegemonistic ambitions" in addition to his warmth towards the USSR.² Yet Desai managed to keep a safe distance from the Soviet attempts to associate India in their game of China-baiting. He defended a dialogue with China in the name of peaceful settlement of disputes and the relaxation of tensions just as the Soviets were also pursuing at that time with China. The joint statement did not even mention China. There also remained significant differences between the two countries on the question of Kampuchea (Cambodia) and Desai gave a long explanation of India's refusal to recognise the new regime. In a veiled reference to

1. Pravda, 12 June 1979

2. New Times, No. 25, June 1979, pp. 26-27.

Vietnam's action in Kampuchea Desai said in his banquet speech in Moscow on 11 June 1979: "The countries of Indo-China have only recently emerged from decades of violence and bloodshed and it is a great pity that they have once again been subjected to outside interference."¹

By the middle of July Morarji's government had fallen and Charan Singh taken over as Prime Minister. After the withdrawal of support by Mrs. Gandhi's Party the Parliament was dissolved and elections ordered. Learning from their mistakes of 1977 the Soviets observed great restraint while emphasising on the steadfast nature of Soviet-Indian ties and their support for India. Kosygin made a brief stopover in Bombay in September on his way home from a visit to Ethiopia. He was received by Foreign Minister S.N. Mishra who described the talks as "very fruitful and cordial". Before the Havana non-aligned summit the Soviets published a number of articles upholding the theme of the USSR being a "natural ally" of the non-aligned movement. The summit did not endorse this thesis and even Fidel Castro backed off from openly

1. Soviet Review, No. 26, 1979, p. 12.

espousing it. India, however, supported the Cuban compromise solution on the question of Kampuchea's representation. The seat was kept vacant rather than occupied by Pol Pot. In September a high level Indian team arrived in Moscow to discuss the purchase of arms. A Soviet spokesman said at the conclusion of the talks that "the USSR would allow no obstacles including prices to impair its assistance of India's defence needs."¹ Even though no agreement was immediately reached on the MiG-23s, India's Defence Minister later described the talks in Moscow as "satisfactory" and hoped that the new equipment including the MiG-23s would "soon be with the Indian Air Force".² The significance of the visit lay in its demonstration of the continuation of Indo-Soviet military co-operation in spite of the Jaguar deal.

The Soviets had a growing interest in Mrs. Gandhi's return to power. But they retained their official stance of neutrality imparting a substantial continuity to Indo-Soviet relations. Throughout the Janata interregnum they persisted with

1. Cited in Robert C. Horn, op.cit., p. 175

2. Daily Telegraph, 11 August 1979.

China while continuing their own attempts from time to time to normalise relations with that country. To the change of inconsistency in their stand of opposition to Indian efforts at normalisation of relations with China while themselves striving to do the same, the Soviet reply was reported to be that they were not opposed to normalisation as such and only took exception to attempts to reach an accommodation with China by their treaty partner India behind their back. A co-ordinated Indo-Soviet policy towards China they felt would go a long way towards bringing a wayward Chinese regime to its former course of Panchsheel and creating real prospects for normalisation of China's relations with both the USSR and India. All said, there was a basic difference in the Soviet efforts to improve relations with China, a former member of the Socialist community, and the Indian attempts in this direction. The Soviets showed little inclination to use the 'China card' ^{to} shape their bilateral relations with India whereas the Indian ruling class right from the beginning looked to relations with China as a factor widening the options open to India. If in the beginning they were able to use the 'China card' to obtain economic and even military

assistance from both the blocs, the new cold war between China and the USSR was looked upon as a godsend to extract larger Soviet support and assistance for India. It is no coincidence that India's largest military deals with the Soviet Union and trade agreements providing for increased supplies of crude oil and petroleum products were concluded during the period when the Sino-Soviet rift was at its height.

IV

SOVIET BREAKTHROUGH IN NORMALISING RELATIONS WITH CHINA AND THE FIASCO OF INDIA'S EFFORTS TO PLAY THE 'CHINA CARD'

After an initial setback Sino-Indian relations began to show some progress towards normalisation following the return of Mrs. Gandhi to power as a result of her Party's victory at the 1980 polls. The Chinese made the gesture of sending a new Ambassador without waiting for India's replacement of its envoy at Peking after the change of government in New Delhi. For the first time in 20 years the Chinese Foreign Minister participated in the Republic Day reception at the Indian Embassy in Peking. The trend of improvement in India-China relations continued through the summer of 1980 and in June it was announced that the Chinese Foreign Minister Huang Hua would be visiting India before the end of the year.

The deepening of the Afghan crisis with the entry of Soviet troops into that country in December 1979 apparently contributed to the desire of both New Delhi and Peking to improve their relations. At the Republic Day reception in Peking Huang Hua was reported to have said: "The present turbulent and tense international situation places a greater obligation on both China and

India to promote mutual understanding and co-operation."¹ Another indication that China now attached greater importance to improved relations with India came during General Zia's visit to Peking in early May. The Chinese maintained silence over Kashmir despite the visiting Pakistan President's reference to it in his speech.² Mrs. Gandhi met the Chinese Prime Minister Hua Kuo-feng in Belgrade where the two leaders had gone to participate in the funeral of President Tito in May 1980. The two leaders agreed that better Sino-Indian relations were essential to promote peace and stability in Asia and that bilateral difficulties could be overcome only by avoiding confrontation and taking recourse to mutual consultations. Hua was reported to have stressed that "both countries should concentrate on the present and the future and put aside past differences."

The Soviet reaction to these positive developments in the India-China relations came in the form of reminder to India of the threat posed to its security by the emerging Washington-Peking-Islamabad axis. Soviet weekly New Times projected Zia's visit to China as "co-operation on a militarist basis" aimed at putting

1. Beijing Review, No. 5, 4 February 1980, p. 4.

2. Far Eastern Economic Review, 16 May 1980, pp. 23-4.

3. Indian and Foreign Review, 15 May 1980.

pressure on India on the Kashmir issue and forge co-operation in the nuclear sphere.¹ In an article appearing in the May 26 issue of Pravda under the pseudonym of I. Alexandrov the danger posed to India's security by the Karakoram Highway and Peking's proliferating ties with the imperialist powers was emphasised. Again in early August on the eve of the planned visit to India of Huang Hua Pravda published yet another article by V. Shurygin recounting the various anti-Indian actions taken by China over the years. The author rather bluntly promoted out: "China has officially branded the Soviet Union as its enemy No. 1, whereas India correctly regards it as a dependable and suffers friend, which has always given a helping hand to the country at times of trial."² Shurygin warned the Indian side "to be very cautious and avoid hasty steps that could be detrimental to the country's national interests". Reminding that "India's friendly contact and all-round co-operation with the Soviet Union are a main trend in the country's foreign policy", the Soviet journalist expressed Soviet anxiety when he concluded that this relations "cannot be a subject of bargaining

1. New Times, No. 21, May 1960, p. 24.

2. Pravda, 7 August 1960.

in the matter of normalisation of Sino-Indian relations."

Earlier in June 1980 during Eric Gonsalves (Secretary in the Ministry of External Affairs), Peking visit the Chinese Vice-Minister for foreign affairs underscored the fact that "China and India are two big nations of Asia" and expressed China's willingness to further improve its relations "on the basis of the Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence".¹ The most significant step occurred when Vice-Premier Teng Hsiao-ping (Deng Xiaoping) made an appeal for improved relations in an interview with the editor of an Indian defence journal Vikrant on 21 June. Deng called Kashmir a bilateral problem between India and Pakistan that "should be settled amicably", and offered to settle the long-standing border dispute through a mutual agreement to the present line of control. The Indian government welcomed it as a starting point for negotiations and interpreted it as evidence of China's desire to resume the normalisation process.²

However, the planned Indian visit of Huang Hua in August could not take place and it was reported that he

1. Beijing Review, 30 June 1980

2. Statesman, 3 July 1980.

would not be able to make it during 1980. Peking explained it as being due to Hua's other pressing pre-occupations, it was obvious that it was directly linked with India's recognition in early July of the Heng Samrin regime in Kampuchea.

It was not easy to pinpoint the real motives behind India's action in recognising Kampuchea's Heng Samrin regime. Some critics have attributed it to Soviet pressure or influence. However, it is doubtful if Kampuchea figured as a major issue in talks during either Foreign Minister Rao's Moscow visit in early June or Firyubin's New Delhi trip in April. The more plausible explanation is that this move was taken not under the Soviet pressure or influence but with a view to mollifying the Soviets with whom differences of approach to China and Afghanistan had begun to crop up of late. Besides it was also aimed at stifling public criticism of talking to China without getting the occupied territory vacated and serving notice to Peking that its recent border proposals were unacceptable in their present form. The recognition of the Kampuchean regime was also in line with India's policy of developing closer ties with Vietnam. India looks upon the victory of Vietnam against

America as the victory of nationalism and welcomes its emergence from the standpoint of widening its option vis-a-vis the two giant communist neighbours - the USSR and China.

Foreign Minister Rao's visit to Moscow in June 1980 . As an informed Indian government source revealed the object of Rao's visit was to seek the "unconditional withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan without waiting for an international guarantee of the security and integrity of that country."¹ The Soviets tried to bring India to endorse their position on Afghanistan. Neither side was, however, successful in influencing the other to change its stand. In his statement to the Parliament on his return Rao said: "It is time for us to ask ourselves the question whether the Soviet troops meant for assisting Afghanistan have not become, or are not likely to become, a pretext for those who wish to create further instability in that country. Our fear is that beyond a reasonable time frame this could well come to pass..."² He, however, hastened to add that the Soviet Union seemed to have fully understood and respected the views held by India" and that his talks

1. New York Times, 3 June 1980

2. Indian and Foreign Review, 1 July 1980.

with Brezhnev and Gromyko were "candid", "frank" and "concrete, businesslike". The stalemate on Afghanistan continued during the subsequent visit of President Reddy.

The Soviets attached a great importance to Brezhnev's visit to New Delhi in December 1980. An entourage of nearly 300 officials and journalists accompanied the Soviet leader on his Indian visit. From the results of this visit nothing tangible emerged except agreements on economic and technical co-operation and trade all worked out in advance. The real significance of the visit lay in its demonstrative effect for Soviet propaganda purposes. Brezhnev tactfully utilised his visit to prevent or at least show down any normalisation of relations between India and China. In one of their meetings Mrs. Gandhi felt compelled to explain the progress made in the normalisation of relations with China and then to assure the Soviet leader that this would in no way affect India's ties with the Soviet Union.¹ The most significant contribution of Brezhnev's visit to India was agreement to raise the Soviet crude oil supplies by one million tons per year.

1. Overseas Hindustan Times, 18 December 1980.

Thus prior to Brezhnev's New Delhi visit China renewed feelers of friendship to India. The Soviets could not afford to ignore these gestures and consequently launched their tirade of denunciation of China's "hegemonistic" policies in South Asia. The Izvestia of 23 December 1980 contended that China's military assistance to Pakistan, its subversion in India, its anti-Indian position on the Afghan issue and other Chinese actions directly contradicted "Peking's assurances about its desire to normalise relations with India". Former Prime Minister Morarji Desai tried to queer the pitch for Brezhnev's visit by alleging that he (Brezhnev) had urged him in 1979 not to talk to China and to "teach Pakistan a lesson".¹

As noted above the Soviet Union which looked with certain reservations at the normalisation in India's relations with China had started a press campaign against the motives of China long before Brezhnev's visit to India. Thus Oleg Kitsenko writing in the Pravda of 2 March 1980 referred to reports in the Indian press about setting up of a major special-purpose sabotage

1. Overseas Hindustan Times, 18 December 1980-

centre under Chinese direction in the small town of Aliabad, 25 kilometers from Punch in the Pak occupied part of Kashmir. He alleged that an additional 250 Chinese military instructors recently arrived at this centre to train mercenaries and saboteurs to be sent into Afghanistan, India and other states in the region. Attributing the establishment of this sabotage centre near Punch to joint Chinese-American co-operation in South Asia, Kitsenko stated on the authority of pro-Soviet Indian paper Patriot that an agreement to set up this centre was reached during US Defence Secretary H. Brown's Peking visit. Again in his other article carried by the Pravda in its issue of 15 June 1980 Soviet journalist Kitsenko referred to the advice the American specialists in sabotage reportedly gave to their Chinese counterparts at meetings in Thailand and Bangladesh to extend their operations to the Indian states of Nagaland, Tripura and Assam in the north-eastern part of the country. The anti-Chinese tirade in the Soviet press continued in anticipation of the Indian visit planned by China's foreign minister Huang Hua during the summer of 1980. Pravda of 13 July 1980 reproduced information published in an article in the Indian weekly Blitz that using events in Afghanistan

as a pretext China was stepping up the construction of a new road that will duplicate the existing strategic Karakoram Highway. These roads the paper asserted would connect China's Sinkiang Uighur Autonomous Region with the warm-water port of Karachi.

When the postponed Indian visit of Huang Hua eventually took place in the end of June 1981 the Soviet press described it as a failure. Thus the staff correspondent of Pravda V. Shirokov writing in its issue of 3 July 1981 commented that the Chinese Foreign Minister brought to New Delhi "the traditional Chinese smile and no specific proposals". He noted that at the end of the visit neither a communique nor any joint statement was signed and attributed the main result of the visit - holding of officials' talks on the settlement of the border in the near future - to the grudging consent by the Chinese Foreign Minister to the demand forcefully voiced by Mrs. Gandhi in her statement in Patna. Shirokov quoted local political commentators who thought it "unrealistic and premature" to hope that Huang Hua's agreement would be followed by concrete deeds on Peking's parts.

Soviet scholars too continued to view the prospects of successful conclusion of the proposed India-China border talks with scepticism. In an article published in the Soviet quarterly Far Eastern Affairs Y. Ognev expressed his apprehension that "when deciding on talks with India; the Peking leaders would like first of all to force India to depart from its anti-imperialist position and to drive a wedge into Soviet-Indian relations".¹ The author referred to the Soviet-Indian Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Co-operation as a new chapter in the relations between India and the USSR and characterised the "steadily strengthening friendly relations" between them as "an important factor" in the preservation and consolidation of peace in Asia and in the whole world. Interestingly, Ognev also mentioned Indira Gandhi's meeting with President Reagan at Cancun and "promises of the 'great benefits' that India will derive from co-operation with the IMF and other financial and economic bodies controlled by the imperialist powers", Pakistan's recent proposal to conclude a "non-aggression pact" and the numerous claims that the

1. Y. Ognev, "Interaction between Imperialist Reactionaries and Peking Hegemonists", Far Eastern Affairs, No. 2, 1982, p. 166.

Chinese have lately been making about their "sure interests" in normalising relations with their southern neighbours as the joint drive of Washington and Peking to combine "overt military political pressure on India with vigorous diplomatic manoeuvres"¹. He also referred to the first round of Sino-Indian border talks held in Peking on 8 December 1981 in which from the Indian side R. Gonsalves, Secretary in the External Affairs Ministry led the Indian officials' team and noted that the talks did not lead to any substantial results. The Soviet scholar accused China of "trying to capitalise on India's interest in settling the question of the Sino-Indian border" by peaceful means. "Events show that the Chinese leaders do not intend to give up their hegemonistic policy with respect to India" - concluded Ognev.

Even in mid-1982 the Soviet journal Far Eastern Affairs² carried a long review of some recent critical works by Indian authors on the foreign policy of China. L. Tolkunov, the Novosti Press Agency Chief, who wrote a highly laudatory article about India's policy of developing friendly relations

1. Ibid., p. 164

2. Far Eastern Affairs, No. 3, 1982, V. Gusachenko's article "Peking's Foreign Policy Evaluation by Indian scholars". The article favourably reviewed the works of T.N. Kaul, D.S. Karki and Sallen Chaudhry.

with its neighbour on his return from India after an extensive tour in the summer of 1982 also wrote about the Chinese support to various separatist organisations in Assam, Manipur, Nagaland and other states and Union Territories. Tolkunov further noted: "As India's leadership repeatedly declared, the country consistently worked for a normalisation of relations with all neighbouring and contiguous countries. It was emphasised in this connection that these relations should be based on equality, mutual respect of territorial integrity and sovereignty, non-interference in each other's internal affairs and peaceful settlement of disputes. It is on these principles that India seeks to base its relations with China, too".¹ Thus even while feeling greatly concerned at the Indian efforts towards normalising relations with China during the early eighties, the Soviets pretended to ignore its realpolitik or power politics character and did not, at least publicly, make any comment about ulterior Indian motives. The Indian policy was projected as a principled course to peacefully settle all disputes among the neighbours and the Chinese

1. L. Tolkunov, "India: A Policy of Peace and Good Neighbourliness", International Affairs, Moscow, No. 6, June 1982, p. 51.

alone were blamed for their insincere protestation of friendly sentiments towards India.

The Soviet Union took one initiative after another to eliminate the crisis in Soviet-Chinese relations which developed during the late fifties and early sixties reaching its highest point in the bloody clash on the Ussuri river in 1969. Moscow put forward proposals in the early seventies on the four draft agreements for the preservation of the status quo on the border besides two draft treaties of non-aggression and non-use of force. At the Soviet-Chinese talks held in September-November 1979 in Moscow the Soviet delegation placed for consideration a Draft Declaration on the Principles of Mutual Relations Between the USSR and the PRC. This was followed by fresh Soviet initiatives in the early eighties. It was stated in the Report to the 26th Congress of the CPSU: "The Soviet Union has never sought, nor does it now seek any confrontation with the People's Republic of China. We follow the course set up by the 24th and 25th Congresses of the CPSU and would like to build our ties with that country on a good neighbourly basis. Our proposals for normalising relations with China remain open and our feelings of

friendship and respect for the Chinese people have not changed".¹ Notwithstanding the various setbacks the Soviet Union succeeded in December 1981 in obtaining the PRC's agreement in principle to continue the talks though these were postponed indefinitely under the pretext of that both sides should make "proper preparation".² Incidentally, the period of Soviet-Chinese rounds of talks roughly coincides with the period from the aftermath of Vajpayee's visit to China in early 1979 to the first round of India-China border talks in December 1981. It was still a far cry to a breakthrough in the Sino-Soviet relations which could be achieved only after the death of Brezhnev in November 1982. The mounting tensions between China and Vietnam, the conclusion of the long-feared Sino-Japanese Treaty, Hua's trip to Romania and Yugoslavia - the backyard of the USSR - and sharp improvement in the Sino-US relations all but confirmed Soviet apprehensions about the global Chinese threat.

1. 26th Congress of the CPSU, Documents and Resolutions, Moscow, 1981.

2. Far Eastern Affairs, No. 2, 1982, p. 150.

Relations between Moscow and Peking, however, started improving as China began to feel disenchanted with its initial urge to woo the United States. In the Political Report of the CPSU Central Committee to the 27th Party Congress held in February 1986 the Party General Secretary M. Gorbachev noted: "One can say with gratification that there has been a measure of improvement of the Soviet Union's relations with its great neighbour - Socialist China. The distinctions in attitudes, in particular, to a number of international problems remain. But we also note something else - that in many cases we can work jointly, co-operate on an equal and principled basis, without prejudice to third countries."¹

Of course, there can be no question of China going back to the 50s. The Chinese have no intention to give up their independent foreign policy. Yet at the same time they are obliged to balance their growing economic and technical co-operation with the USA with a strong many-faceted relationship with the USSR. Deng's communist critics have to be assured

1. Political Report of the CPSU Central Committee to the 27th Congress of the CPSU, February 25, 1986, Daily review, Moscow, p. 128.

that the fast growing ties with the West will not be allowed to undo China's socialist development. With the possible exception of questions like Afghanistan and Kampuchea there are hardly any problems on which China sees eye to eye with the United States. On issues like nuclear arms control, star wars, north-south dialogue, Central America, etc. China is more in agreement with Moscow than with Washington.

Under these circumstances, it was not unnatural for Gorbachev to give a surprise to Rajiv Gandhi during his Moscow visit by speaking about China as the other nuclear power besides the USSR to have pledged not to be the first to use nuclear weapons. Yet to say that Gorbachev in contrast with his predecessor Brezhnev gave an equal role to China and India in initiating regional discussion to resolve conflicts and tensions and create a climate for stable peace and security in Asia as against the latter's (Brezhnev's) move towards forging a system of collective security in Asia directed against China would hardly be correct. In its new-found love for the United States Peking was bound to have looked down upon any Soviet proposal to set up a collective security system aimed at preserving peace in Asia

threatened by imperialist aggression.

Thus whereas Moscow has succeeded in achieving a significant breakthrough in improving its relations with Peking, India is still faced with the need to undertake a comprehensive review of its adhoc policy of dialogue with China in order to evolve an integrated overall policy framework. The six rounds of official-level talks since December 1981 have been cordial but sterile". These talks have been largely stuck up with a discussion on the guiding principles for a solution of the border problem. While China has proposed a package deal, India has favoured a sector-wise solution of the border problem. The Chinese refuse to discuss with India Sikkim's northern boundaries with the Tibet region of China established by the Anglo-Chinese convention of 1890 and partially demarcated on the ground five years later. They also decline to discuss the frontier to the West of the Karakoram because it abuts on the part of Kashmir occupied by Pakistan and subject to a "provisional" agreement between Pakistan and China signed in 1963.

The Chinese are again trying to go back to their original position that the border issue being contentious, the two countries should proceed to normalise and improve their relations in other spheres particularly trade and cultural exchange. They have also been insisting that the border talks be raised to political level. As before Peking continues to show scant respect to India's vital security interests to the south of the Himalayan crest. It has extended support to Nepal's demand for recognition as a zone of peace. The traditional military and political support by China to Pakistan is being supplemented by the widening of the strategic Karamoram Highway.

In retrospect it is thus becoming clear that when Mrs. Gandhi launched her policy of normalising relations with China in 1975-76, she had simply set store by the flexibility of the new leadership of Deng which succeeded the older orthodox leadership of Mao and Chou. The relations between two powers of the size of India and China cannot be based on purely bilateral considerations like the relations between China and Burma or India and Nepal. On account of its global interests America cannot but be more

inclined towards Pakistan than India and the prospects of improvement in China's relations with India are not particularly pleasing to the United States which dares not anger Pakistan whose contradictions with India remain rather sharp. For reasons of its preoccupation with the goal of modernisation China can ill afford to displease either the Soviet Union or the United States. This explains the adoption by China of a lowkey, slow-moving policy towards normalisation with India with whom both a policy of extreme hostility and cordiality are ruled out due to its possible adverse effect on balance relations with the two great powers, the United States and the USSR.

As the foregoing analysis shows India's policy aimed at using the 'China card' to promote the country's interests in the international sphere (its authorship may be ascribed to India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru) was not a well-thought out policy. While credit has to be given to Nehru's foresight in anticipating a rift between the USSR and Communist China the wisdom of exploiting it in India's interest has proved to be highly questionable. The unity and strength of the world socialist community is

a dependable bulwork for the security and economic advance of the newly independent countries. Nehru's advocacy of the tactics of "splitting China from Russia" ultimately boomeranged on India. Alienated from Russia, China only became more pliable for the United States which used the Sino-Pak axis to needle India when the latter tried to assert its independence as a leading non-aligned power. India lacked the necessary ingredient of power to exploit the newly arisen polecentric power structure to its advantage. In this connection it is worthwhile to recollect that nearly all the outstanding achievements of India's foreign policy go back to the period when the international system was bipolar, i.e., when China and Russia had not split.

The adhocism which prevailed in the absence of an integrated policy framework could not take New Delhi too far in its game of acquiring the coveted 'China card' which it hoped to play to reduce its dependence on Moscow. The petty benefits which it occasionally derived by way of better terms of trade with the Soviet Union, increased military supplies, etc., were more than offset by the adverse regional environment

necessitating galloping military expenditure. A China united with the Socialist community rather than a China at loggerheads with it and in search of new allies like the USA and Pakistan, is likely to be more responsive to India's policy of goodneighbourliness.

As for the Soviet reactions to India's policy of developing relations with China, there is little to suggest that Moscow during the Nehru period even remotely sensed the real motives behind India moving close to China in the hope of building a counterweight to the USSR. The development of friendly India-China relations on the basis of Panchsheel or the Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence was hailed by Moscow and projected as a model for other countries to follow. During the late 50s when relations between the Soviet Union and China started deteriorating on account of the rising nationalist ambitions of the Maoists, Moscow's friendly political and economic assistance to India further embittered the Chinese. The Soviets, however, refused to give up their policy of befriending the non-aligned countries, India in the first place, and thus the Sino-Soviet rift was complete.

Under these circumstances it was natural for Moscow to expect non-aligned India to stand by it in its confrontation and cold war with China. When India under Mrs. Gandhi and the Janata leadership launched its campaign for normalisation with China without taking the USSR into confidence, Moscow must have obviously felt sore even though it refrained from publicly airing its displeasure and only blamed China for trying to capitalise on India's genuine desire for a peaceful solution of the border problem. This does not mean that no anxiety was caused in Moscow over New Delhi's attempted normalisation with China. The active tirade against China which the Soviet media conducted during the period of early Indian efforts to improve relations with Peking from 1979 to 1981 reflects this anxiety. At times the Soviets in the last years of the Brezhnev period even indulged in a crude anti-Chinese propaganda to scare India from persisting with its policy of mending fences with China. "Your Foreign Minister's visit to China was not received well by our public" ¹ Brezhnev is reported to have bluntly told Morarji Desai

1. Arun Gandhi, The Morarji Papers, New Delhi, 1983, p. 29.

during his Moscow visit in June 1979. There are reasons to think that on account of the India-China drive towards normalisation Moscow further intensified its negotiations with China during 1979-1981 period to put its relations on an even keel.

But if during the last years of Brezhnev's rule one comes across an escalation of anti-Chinese propaganda in the Soviet press on the eve and following the first two rounds of border talks between India and China in December 1981 and May 1982, this pattern is conspicuously absent during the later four rounds from January 1983 to November 1985. By this time the Chinese policy on several important international issues had begun to come closer to the Soviet stand and Moscow's fears about the Chinese trying to develop normal relations with India in pursuance of some anti-Soviet objectives had been somewhat allayed. In the changed context Gorbachev was able to urge Rajiv Gandhi to seek together with China, USSR and other Asian powers a common system of ensuring security in the world's most troubled continent.

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