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*Despite the West's, particularly the United States', support of and friendship for India (including treating India as the major power in South Asia), India has steadily moved from a position of nonalignment with a pro-West bias to one of alignment with the Soviet Union under a facade of nonalignment. This paper examines the reasons for and effects of Indo-Soviet collaboration, discusses the intra- and extraregional influences that may strengthen or weaken that collaboration, finds little likelihood that India will change its strategic course, and suggests that a prudent reappraisal of U.S. policies toward India may be in order.*

## **INDO-SOVIET STRATEGIC INTERESTS AND COLLABORATION**

by  
**Imroze Sagar**

In February 1980 Soviet President Leonid Brezhnev sent a personal message of greetings to the workers and staff of the Bhilai Steel Mill in India on the 25th anniversary of Soviet-Indian economic cooperation.<sup>1</sup> The Bhilai Mill, which supplies one-third of India's steel, was built and is now being enlarged with Soviet assistance. Bhilai was followed and surpassed by the Bokaro Steel Mill, a gigantic project also financed and built by the Soviets. Together the two mills represent the core of the huge Soviet investment in building up India's industrial edifice. The Soviet President's freedom to have direct reach to the Indian steel workers signifies a privileged status to the Soviet Union conceded by India.

Other returns on Soviet investment in India have not been insubstantial.

The latest is India's stand on the Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan. Commenting on the event in March 1980, Indira Gandhi, the Prime Minister of India stated:

It is important to realize that one of the reasons for the Afghanistan crisis is the rapprochement between China and the United States against the Soviet Union which feels itself threatened.<sup>2</sup>

In her several pronouncements on the crisis, Mrs. Gandhi left no doubt that she considered the main responsibility for the Afghanistan crisis to rest on the United States. She linked the Soviet intervention to U.S. policies of rapprochement with China, interference in the internal affairs of Afghanistan, naval buildup in the Indian Ocean, encirclement of the Soviet Union and

**Editor's Note: Publication schedules prevented the author's consideration of the effect or importance of Mrs. Gandhi's and Mr. Brezhnev's December 1980 meeting.**

the supply of arms to Pakistan. On one occasion in New Delhi Mrs. Gandhi announced that:

Diego Garcia was being turned into a US nuclear base and that the Soviet Union would withdraw troops from Afghanistan once assured it was not being surrounded by hostile powers.<sup>3</sup>

Observers noted that this statement of Mrs. Gandhi was made just a day after *Pravda* had published a scathing criticism of military accords that the United States had made in early 1980 with Norway and Turkey. *Pravda* claimed that "Washington aimed to surround the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact Nations with a chain of nuclear, air and naval bases."<sup>4</sup> It may not be fair to conclude that the foreign policy speechwriter of the Indian Prime Minister takes his cues from *Pravda*, but the identity of thought and expression in the two statements is unmistakable.

Although the development of a strategic relationship between India and the Soviet Union has not been the subject of frequent analysis, scattered reports of their mutual relations have appeared in the international press and some military journals. These have covered a broad range of issues: transfer of Soviet industrial and military technology and hardware to India, economic and cultural agreements, exchange of visits between their top political and military leaders, and the common stance of the two countries toward China, the Islamic Bloc, the Indian Ocean, NATO, Western "Imperialism," Asian Security, etc. This writer, having monitored the reported material, came to the conclusion several years ago that Indo-Soviet relations needed to be thoroughly analyzed because India seemed to be moving toward firm alignment with the Soviet Union. Apparently it was not just because of a need to face contemporary pressures or to accelerate her industrial advancement, but more the desire to

secure long-term interests that India was directing its strategic policy toward close collaboration with the Soviet Union. It is unquestionable that Soviet diplomacy and coercion have no small part in bringing about this shift in Indian strategic policy since the mid-1960s. India's tame reaction to the Soviet military occupation of Afghanistan was not unexpected. However, the extent to which the Indian Government went in offering justification on behalf of the Soviet Union for the latter's military adventure came as a surprise (although it could also be seen as a pointer, that Indo-Soviet relations are much closer than what some analysts of the subject have so far estimated).

India's relationship with the Soviet Government extends well back into recent history, to the post-WWI period. Almost two decades before India gained its independence in 1947, leaders of the Indian National Congress, which was the leading political party of the Hindus in the prepartition India, had established contacts with the Soviet Government and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Some of the ideologues and political theoreticians of the Congress Party as well as of other political streams became enamoured of the communist political doctrines, and subscribed to the Soviet objectives of worldwide establishment of socialist order.<sup>5</sup> The Soviet Government encouraged the communist-minded Indian leaders to become organized and expand their leftist influence in the political bodies, but it did not pursue any active measures in supporting the national independence movement in India. It had, however, a well-orchestrated campaign of fomenting anti-British feelings in India, with the theme of the campaign based on the articles written by Marx and Engels as early as 1853 on the exploitative operations of the British East India Company.

Soon after the partition of the subcontinent and the birth of India and Pakistan as two independent nations, the Soviet Union stepped up its diplomatic activity in India and, in the words of Robert Donaldson, "the diplomatic, economic and cultural instrumentalities of the Soviet state were employed in an effort to build Indian support for the 'anti-imperialist' objectives of Soviet foreign policy."<sup>6</sup> Some marked differences in the makeup of the two nations of India and Pakistan tended to bring the Soviet Union closer toward India than to Pakistan. One of the major factors was that the concept of Muslim nationhood on the basis of which Pakistan had emerged as a separate country was repugnant to the Soviet Union, still in the process of consolidating and sovietizing its Central Asian Muslim regions. The Soviet Union much preferred the existence of a predominantly Hindu and secular India to that of an ideological, Islamic Pakistan in proximity of the Soviet Central Asian regions. Nevertheless, for the first few years the relations between the Soviet Union and the incipient state of Pakistan were marked by normal diplomatic cordiality. In fact, at that stage both India and Pakistan also endeavored to show a near-parallel approach toward the United States and the Soviet Union. It was a couple of years later, in the early 1950s, that the lines of diplomacy in India and Pakistan were drawn in divergent directions. In 1950, while the first Prime Minister of Pakistan was touring the United States, his Indian counterpart was planning to visit the U.S.S.R. In 1955 while Pakistan had enrolled itself in CENTO under the American security umbrella, top Soviet leaders were visiting India amid slogans of *Rusi-Hindi, Bhai-Bhai* (Russians and Indians are eternal brothers) and laying the foundations of strategic collaboration that was later to become formalized in the 20-year security treaty between the two countries in 1971.

In 1962 a border war broke out between India and the People's Republic of China in which Indian forces were routed, and large chunks of territory claimed by China were captured by Chinese forces. In those days China was an alien outcast to the West. The Sino-Soviet rift had materialized and was widening. The United States, Britain and the Soviet Union rushed to the military assistance of India; the former to save the largest democracy in the world and to keep their economic and cultural ties intact with it; the latter to cultivate a partner in the strategic power struggle against China and the West. While the Western Powers transferred armaments and equipment to India, the Soviets transferred not only weapons but also technology for armaments and heavy industries and nuclear development. Since then the Soviet policy towards India has remained remarkably consistent. In September 1965, when India and Pakistan went to war over the question of Kashmir, the Soviets took a shrewd further step and displayed a slight but distinct tilt toward India during the crisis. The Tashkent Conference, held to bring about a truce and negotiated settlement between the warring countries, was a feather in the cap of the Soviet Union. The conference achieved nothing, except projection for the Soviet Union as a superpower with "legitimate" influence in South Asia. The Indians were appreciative of Soviet conduct because what they nearly lost to the Pakistanis on the battlefield was restored to them more securely as a result of Soviet diplomacy at Tashkent. The Indians also did not fail to realize that it was the Soviet Union that had kept China neutralized during the war.

The year following the 1965 Indo-Pakistan war marked a qualitative change in Indian strategic policy, just as 5 years later the year preceding the 1971 war between the two countries would mark a turning point in Indian policy

toward the Soviet Union. Militarily, the outcome of the 1965 conflict was seen as a defeat for India which had enjoyed an overall military superiority of 3:1 over Pakistan. In early 1966 the leadership of the ruling Congress Party in India passed to Jawaharlal Nehru's daughter, Mrs. Indira Gandhi (who later received the sobriquet of the "Iron-lady"). Mrs. Gandhi set about rebuilding the Indian military machine, and turned to the Soviet Union for help. The Soviets were eager to oblige. By 1970 the weapons acquired by India from the Soviet Union included an impressive array of aircraft, tanks, ships, submarines, missile boats, heavy artillery and electronic equipments. The growing amity between the two countries was characterized by the exchange of visits of high-level political and military leaders. Their politico-military policies were increasingly moving toward common ground in global and regional matters. The Soviets openly supported India over Pakistan in regional issues. They projected India as a leader in the Third World and the nonaligned bloc. Periodically they raised the specter of the American and Chinese threat to India. They warned India of the U.S. naval buildup in the Indian Ocean including the development of the base at Diego Garcia, with the insinuation that the buildup was also directed against India. Indira Gandhi talked of a seaward threat to India's coastline from the American naval power. Her government's relations with Britain were somewhat aloof and with the United States almost cool. It suited her that both the Western countries were ruled by parties, Britain by the Labour Party and the United States by the Republican Party, that were traditionally considered to be less pro-India than their respective counterparts—the Conservatives in Britain and the Democrats in America. India helped in promoting the Soviet image in the nonaligned bloc and the Third World; and strong overtones of

Soviet influence could be discerned in the nonaligned movement in those years. It is only in the recent few years that Soviet influence has somewhat abated in the nonaligned bloc.

By 1971 the regional situation in the South Asian subcontinent had deteriorated to a dangerous level. The secessionist movement in the Eastern Wing of Pakistan had attained uncontrollable proportions. The eastern regions of India became the sanctuary from which Bengali insurgents could operate against East Pakistan. India supported the secessionist movement and the Soviet Union backed India. China sided with Pakistan. The United States sat on the fence. Facts have now revealed that by the spring of 1971, the Indian Government had decided to seize the opportunity for the dismemberment of Pakistan.<sup>7</sup> The next logical step was the signing of the security treaty between India and the Soviet Union in August 1971. Four months later, by a combination of diplomacy, psywar, military might and Soviet support, India inflicted a decisive defeat on Pakistan, severing the Eastern Wing from the parent country. The renowned Nixon-Kissinger "tilt" to Pakistan during the crisis proved inconsequential to that injured country; on the other hand the Soviets, while deriding the shallowness of American military deterrence, masterfully instigated Indian reaction against the United States. Again the Soviet Union, this time by direct ultimatum, kept China in check from coming to the aid of Pakistan during the war.

Since 1971 Indo-Soviet relations have been growing stronger. In 1977, with the change of government in India in which the Janata Party led by the octogenarian Morarji Desai came to power, many Western observers thought that Indian policy might register a change and loosen its close ties with the Soviet Union. However, events have proved it otherwise; and

although Mr. Desai's government sought to reduce the rift with the U.S. Government, then headed by a sympathetic Democratic President, yet the level of Indo-Soviet friendship remained undisturbed. In fact, by improving its stand with the United States, the Indian Government made it difficult for the Americans to cavil at the Indo-Soviet collaboration. In January 1980 Mrs. Gandhi returned to power in India with a thumping majority, and even staunch Western sympathizers of India watched with worried anticipation for new developments in strengthening of the bonds between India and the Soviet Union.

**Soviet Arms Aid to India.** Two recent events need to be analyzed briefly before taking a look at the identity of interests between India and the Soviet Union. One relates to the \$1.6 billion arms deal between India and the Soviet Union announced toward the end of May 1980. *Newsweek* magazine quoted a Western diplomat in Moscow as remarking, "I expected Prime Minister Indira Gandhi to sidle up to the Soviets if she returned to power, but I am shocked at the size of the deal."<sup>8</sup> In reality the quantum of the deal was not quite shocking, as previous Soviet arms deliveries to India had touched the same superlevels, even though the latest deal envisaged a much more compressed time period for delivery of arms. What could be termed as shocking was the timing of the deal, because its announcement came at a time when the Soviet Union was under international censure and condemnation for its brazen military occupation of Afghanistan, and the West was endeavoring to ostracize the Soviets in an effort to put every pressure on them to withdraw from Afghanistan. Also, in another sphere of strategy the Carter administration was moving hopefully to wean (if not win) away India from the Soviet fold, and in anticipation of a major

breakthrough on this score had announced in early May 1980 its decision to supply nuclear fuel for India's Tarapur reactor despite the Indian Government's refusal to accept the normal safeguards.

The beginning of Soviet military aid to India belongs in the late 1950s but its boost occurred after the 1962 Sino-Indian war. A research study entitled "Guns and Roubles" assessed that between 1955 and 1969 the Soviet Union passed on \$1.6 billion in aid to India.<sup>9</sup> Much of the aid was in the military sphere and included 100 SU-7 fighter-bombers, 60 MIG-21 aircraft, 500 tanks, expansion of the aircraft assembly and manufacture plant of Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd., setting up of a factory for manufacture of tanks, and the construction of the submarine base and dockyard at Vishakapatnam. In another estimate *The New York Times* reported that, between 1961 and 1971 Moscow shipped more than \$1 billion in arms to India.<sup>10</sup> According to the U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency India imported military equipment worth \$1.7 billion in less than a decade.<sup>11</sup> After 1968, naval hardware has topped the list of arms deliveries, until the last couple of years when the emphasis seems to have been shifting to aircraft and missiles. The flow of Soviet arms into India has been steady and continuous for over a decade. It also shows a fairly impressive competence in planning and execution of arms acquisition programs by India, notwithstanding the fact that it has an efficient and reliable arms supplier in the Soviet Union. For example, in 1965 India announced plans to acquire six submarines from the Soviet Union,<sup>12</sup> later raising the figure to eight, and stipulated that the first four would be inducted by 1971 and the remaining by 1975. The program was met with remarkable punctuality; the first four submarines joined the Indian Fleet between July 1968 and April 1970, while

the second batch of four was inducted between January 1973 and May 1975.

The latest arms deal is therefore not a singular development. This time, however, the deliveries are expected to be made at an accelerated pace so as to be completed by around 1985. What sets it apart from the usual international arms deals (for example, one made by India itself 2 years ago for the purchase of \$1.6 billion worth of the Anglo-French Jaguar warplanes) is that India would have to pay the price of the Soviet weapons in 17 years at an interest rate of 2½ percent, while such payments are generally made in 10 years at a higher interest rate.<sup>13</sup> The hardware involved in the deal includes T-72 battle tanks, heavy artillery, 100 each of MIG-23 fighters and AN-32 transport aircraft, MIG-25 aircraft, maritime patrol aircraft and standoff air-to-ground missiles.

High-level government to government arms aid has come to occupy the central place in relations between big powers and developing countries. Arms deals can also be seen as a barometer to gauge the relations between the states involved. They serve as one of the most efficacious instruments for obtaining leverage and exerting pressure; and not always by the suppliers to the recipients! Current history is replete with cases highlighting the extraordinary, manipulative power of arms deals. The arms deals involved in the Camp David agreements of 1978 present a classic example. The package involved colossal amounts of U.S. military aid to both Egypt and Israel, totaling over \$3 billion for Egypt and around \$10 billion for Israel in a period of about 4 years. Commenting on an earlier agreement negotiated by Henry Kissinger with Israel for the latter's partial withdrawal from the Sinai desert, *Time* magazine wrote,

Henry's 1975 Sinai agreement may well have been the most expensive

part ever negotiated. It not only pledged enormous financial and political support but also opened America's arsenal of advanced weapons to Israel.<sup>14</sup>

In another case, relations between Saudi Arabia and the United States came under strain in June 1980 over American reluctance in going ahead with an arms sale to Saudi Arabia involving F-15 modified aircraft and missiles. The Saudi Government took the matter seriously enough to issue a public warning that it regarded the sale of weapons as "a test of friendship and a watershed in the relations between the two countries."<sup>15</sup>

An intrinsic implication in arms deals concerns the political objectives of the contracting countries. It is possible that in some cases a recipient of the arms aid may retain a few options of its own in the political and military use of arms; nevertheless these options cannot be at cross-purposes with the interests of the supplying country. Normally the supplier and the recipient countries have a fair concomitance of strategic objectives in the pursuit of which arms are likely to figure. If the Soviet Union and India have chosen to enter into an intimate partnership in the business of arms transfer, it is reasonable to assess that they have some common strategic interests. The mutual strategic interests tend to come closer through an ancillary effect of the arms collaboration which relates to the military strategy of the recipient country. The major weapons with which the armed forces of a country are equipped have a definite bearing on the higher defense machinery, functional organization, operational training and the tactical doctrines of its armed forces. From there the formulation of military strategy is only a short step away. It is inevitable that Soviet military doctrines and strategic thinking should infiltrate the Indian military mind to shape the latter's military policies.

**Indian Stance on Afghanistan Crisis.** The crisis in Afghanistan is the other event that has a direct bearing on the Indo-Soviet relationship. When Soviet military forces landed in Afghanistan on 26 December 1979, India was on the verge of general elections. It was generally felt by outside observers that the Soviet action would come in for attack by the leading Indian politicians, and the issue might receive immediate prominence in the election campaign. Far from it; in India the treatment given to this serious issue was not only subdued but perfunctory. Strangely, the Indian public also did not evince much interest in the matter. A few newspapers and isolated political figures displayed concern over the presence of Soviet troops in Afghanistan and questioned the wisdom of the Indian policymakers in "adopting an ambiguous and somewhat ambivalent attitude on the Soviet armed intervention in Afghanistan,"<sup>16</sup> but in general the Indian politicians pointedly refrained from condemning the Soviet move or even from calling for withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan. Mrs. Gandhi, as a leading contender in the election campaign, assumed an even more ambiguous and noncommittal posture on the issue. After winning the elections she further diluted her government's stand on Afghanistan, sounding less and less critical of the Soviet move. It is possible that Mrs. Gandhi may have reached some understanding with the Soviets on this issue, and may even have been consulted by them before their intervention.

A crucial question—and a most elusive one—is, what are the real aims of the Soviet Union in securing the military occupation of Afghanistan? It is not possible here to enter into a full-scale examination of this point; analysis would indicate, however, that the Soviet intentions could not be confined to just ensuring that Afghanistan not be ruled

by an anti-Soviet regime. The fact is that Afghanistan has all along been under direct Soviet influence, at least since the withdrawal of the British from the subcontinent of South Asia. With its own geographic constraints, and the superpower status of the Soviet Union, Afghanistan could not exist in any other way except by befriending the Soviet Union. The Afghan leadership has maintained this posture for the last 50 years; and every Afghan government including that of the regime of King Zahir Shah had maintained close relations with the Soviet Union in varying degrees. The Soviet grip on the Afghan leadership had been tightening over the years. The Soviets were in a position to manipulate the Afghan government without serious challenge from any quarter. There was no rationale to imagine that the United States, China or Pakistan, collectively or individually, could install an anti-Soviet government in Afghanistan, let alone turn the country into their satellite. There was no likelihood of an Iranian-style Islamic revolutionary cataclysm in the isolated, tribal society of Afghanistan. If under normal circumstances a fundamentalist Islamic government did emerge in Afghanistan, it would have no reason to alienate the Soviet Union. In fact, with patient psychological subversion, at which the Soviets are past masters, they might have been able to neutralize the Islamic resurgence in Afghanistan, while cultivating a largely pro-Soviet middle class in that country over a period of time.

Why did the Soviets opt for a violent change in the favorable status quo in Afghanistan, and rush in with mammoth forces to beget the abiding hostility of millions of Afghans? An obvious conclusion is that their sights are fixed beyond the borders of Afghanistan. In that event India cannot remain untouched, whatever the initial tack of future Soviet moves. Most



people do not seem to realize that Afghanistan, for all practical purposes, is an integral part of the South Asian subcontinent. Its political history of the last thousand years is inseparable from that of the subcontinent. A violent, deep change in Afghanistan, such as the one wrought by the Soviet military forces, is the precursor to change in the subcontinent. Pakistan, the country lying between Afghanistan and India, is rightly worried about future Soviet intentions. The question arises, does India perceive any peril? The Indians cannot fail to foresee the distant ramifications of the Soviet move. In that case their subdued reaction cannot be explained except by the constraints of the 20-year friendship and security treaty that India has with the Soviet Union. It is also likely that in deference to the treaty, and to play to the ego of the Indians, the Soviets have confided to them such aims of their military action as the Indian Government may like to consider to be in its own interest as well, even in a short span of time.

The Afghan crisis is not going to be resolved in the near future; neither is the course of events going to be determined only by the Soviet Union. In the days ahead there will be predicted pressures as well as unforeseen turns in the course of the Afghan crisis that will influence the policies of the regional countries. It is possible that more realistic observers in India may speak out forcefully against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. However, it remains to be seen whether the Indian Government will be swayed more by realism or by the ever-increasing pressures that the Soviets are likely to exert on it. India is a very important country to the Soviet Union in the latter's venture in Afghanistan. The Soviets will leave no stone unturned in keeping India on their side. The recent \$1.6 billion Soviet arms transfer to India is also a measure to the same end.

**Similarities and Disparities.** India and the Soviet Union, although sharing some characteristics, are quite disparate. Their sizes—predominance of territory in the case of the Soviet Union, that of population in the case of India—compare well. Their main similarity lies in the fact that each country is composed of highly diverse political units, many of which are larger than average-sized independent states. Each country's regional diversities are reflected in the mosaic of its numerous races, languages and religions. India is composed of 21 states and 8 union territories. Ten of its states have each an area of over 120,000 sq km and population of over 25 million. There are 15 major regional languages and 7 major religious minorities in India. The Muslims, who form the largest minority group in India, number about 70 million. The Soviet Union is composed of 15 union republics, 20 autonomous republics and numerous regions and territories. Eight of the union republics each have an area larger than 120,000 sq km and population of over 3 million. There are 24 major regional languages and 4 major religious minorities. The Muslims, who form the largest minority group (after the majority group of the professed atheists), number about 70 million. It is inescapable that such large, internally diverse countries would have strong divisive influences operating in them. India's plight on this score has become woefully evident since the outburst of civil rebellion in its state of Assam and six other adjoining states in 1980. The situation in the Soviet Union, being hidden behind the Iron Curtain, is not very well known, although there are indications that regional unrest is assuming definite proportions there, particularly in the Central Asian republics.<sup>17</sup>

One may digress here for a moment to point to an aspect that at present should be categorized as a disparity between India and the Soviet Union, but

might eventually come closer to being a similarity. This refers to the style if not the system of governmental rule in the two countries. Domestic divisiveness poses a serious challenge to the system of democracy in a country. Even long-established Western democracies are faced with this problem, although so far they seem determined to defeat it. The case of Canada in defeating the Quebec separatists is a recent example. The Indian democracy has managed fairly well, or at least had done so until 1973 when Indira Gandhi in her first tenure as Prime Minister turned to superimposing her personal authority on the political system and independent institutions in the country. The secessionist and anarchical tendencies in India are much stronger today than they were 6 years ago, and Indira Gandhi in her second stint as Prime Minister appears to be fairly clear in her mind on how to kill the problem. She has not failed to see, like many a Third World leader, that the single party communist system of rigidly authoritarian governmental rule seems to be better equipped to bind together disparate political regions and to deal with divisive forces. While India is far from adopting a single party communist system in the foreseeable future, the outlook for its political leadership to shift to an authoritarian system of government is not too remote. India's close dealings with the Soviet Union could leaven the process. An Indian political analyst wrote that the 1975 amendments to the Constitution of India, the emergency measures, the 20-point economic program and the like instituted by Indira Gandhi evoked sympathy and appreciation in the U.S.S.R. The same author commenting on the trends toward radicalization of politics in India and the Third World says,

India herself has been moving away from the general euphoria of a Western-type democracy. If the

tendency toward a system collapse is to be arrested, drastic socio-economic reorganisation would be necessary.<sup>18</sup>

The disparities between India and the Soviet Union are pronounced. The two countries stand poles apart on cultural, ideological and historical grounds. Their socioeconomic conditions and the ethos of their people are very different. Hinduism, the religion and creed of over 80 percent of the Indians, must be rated as an ideology on account of its vast body of injunctions designed to regulate the life of its followers. On a comparative study of Hinduism and Communism one reaches the interesting conclusion that amongst the major world creeds no two are more widely opposed to each other as Hinduism and Communism are. In the three major streams of human life, i.e., spiritual, economic and social, the preachings of Hinduism and Communism are diametrically different. Communism recognizes no God, and refutes and rejects the spiritual side of life. Its economic creed is based on state ownership of all property, capital and means of production. Its social doctrines, at least in theory, call for total egalitarianism in society, denying any distinction to people on the basis of caste, creed or profession. Hinduism on the other hand subscribes to a profusion of gods, culminating in one Supreme Divinity. It lays, at least in theory, great stress on the spiritual aspect of life. Its leading economic principles are private ownership and management of capital and property. Its social framework rigidly operates within the inflexible confines of a deeply entrenched caste system. The lower castes, with the "untouchables" being the lowest, cannot aspire to the status, privileges and in some cases even the professions reserved for the higher castes. The stronghold of the caste system became poignantly public in Indian politics in 1979 when Jagjivan Ram, a prominent

Indian politician who has held numerous Cabinet posts, was denied the leadership of the Janata Party because, unfortunately, he belongs to the "untouchables" caste. It was envisaged that he would be unacceptable to the Hindu majority that feels that Mr. Ram has already reached far beyond his stipulated station in life. In India, since its independence, every Prime Minister has belonged to the caste of "Brahmins," the highest caste in the system. One may remark here that while the "untouchables" in India could become a receptive target for communism, the Hindus of superior castes abhor the imposed equality that comes in with communism. Therefore, although India's progressive shift to the Soviet orbit has been smooth so far, it may meet with resistance in the future from the right wing extremists in India who are staunch believers in capitalism and the caste system in the Hindu society, if they feel that their ideology is imperiled by the Soviet influence on India.

Relations between states are governed by various factors, but the development of military bonds between them is dependent upon the identity of their common strategic interests. Strategic interests encompass a wide area of national life, but primarily pertain to politicoeconomic aims and national security requirements. The common interest and common threat between India and the Soviet Union is dictated by their confrontation with certain states and power blocs that are perceived by both India and the Soviet Union as impinging seriously on their individual national interests. These impinging forces originate from China, Pakistan, the Islamic Bloc and the United States. Additionally, the respective interests of India and the Soviet Union complement each other in at least two other fields: the enhancement of their own national power and global influence, and their interest in the Indian Ocean.

**Challenge from China.** Militarily, China is no match for the Soviet Union, but politically China is now considered as the leading adversary by the Soviet Union. The Soviets feel that American global influence is shrinking while that of China is rising. China is looked upon as an ascending power that is rapidly developing political muscle in the international sphere. As such, the main thrust of Soviet strategic policy takes both China and the United States in its sweep. The Soviets are worried at the rise of China at a time when, with their aggressive diplomacy and military power, the Soviet's are just about to seize the initiative from the United States in shaping world events. They are convinced of their emergence as the predominant world power in the near future; but the challenge from China threatens the reign of their absolute supremacy.

It was not so long ago that the Soviet Union was in the same position vis-à-vis the United States as China is to the Soviet Union today. So the lessons of strategic confrontation with an inferior adversary are well known to the Soviets. They may use the same basic strategy of cold war and containment against China that the United States used against the Soviet Union, but they have designed a more sophisticated and effective modus operandi. In the East-West cold war, the United States wore the mantle of leader and set the pace and response of the Western World in the political conflict. The result was that the latter could not generate the same anti-Soviet spirit that the former displayed, and while the United States frittered away its energies in the conflict, its allies kept a less negative profile to the Soviet Union which tended to neutralize somewhat the U.S. stance. The strategy that the Soviet Union has in mind now is to keep itself rather in the shadows and let its allies and friends take the center stage in the anti-China cold war. Again, the United States, after throwing a girdle of

containment around the Soviet Union in the postwar era, had let the matters rest at that, making no effort to strengthen the regional allies or to bring the Soviet Union under active military pressure. The Soviet Union has an improved military strategy against China. Its containment ring around China is not just meant for passive or psychological demonstration but is designed to harass and frustrate China by periodically involving her in military fracas with Soviet regional allies. For the present, Vietnam seems to be the linchpin in this strategy, but the success of the strategy hinges almost equally on India.

India's own problem with China sprang from territorial disagreements since the Chinese action in Tibet in 1959, but snowballed into a serious national conflict after their border war in 1962. The gravity of territorial disputes may not be discounted—states can go to war over them, as India and China have done—but normally a territorial dispute by itself does not drive nations to prolonged antagonism bereft of efforts for settlement. The dispute between India and China seemed fit to lend itself to negotiations. Leaving aside the question of Tibet, the territory involved was tracts of the desolate land of Ladakh and the Northeast Frontier Agency (NEFA), whose settlement demanded inquiry into geographical and historical evidence and could be peacefully reached through arbitration. As for Tibet, there was no hope for India's possession of it, as the Indian claim over Tibet based on the jurisdiction of the British colonial empire in South Asia was somewhat like the Portuguese claim over Goa in India. It was a futile border war in October 1962 which, according to one historian,

was provoked by the Indian government's "forward policy" the effect of which was both to underline India's inflexibility on the issue of the disputed border

and to contribute to the heightening of Sino-Indian tension.<sup>19</sup>

The conflict between India and China has actually been created by political and psychological manipulation both by domestic leadership and foreign powers. The psychological factors are not embedded in the Indian psyche and body politic and are unlikely to be effaced. The role of acting as a counterweight to China has driven India into a perennial contest with that country. India was first pushed into that role by the United States and only subsequently by the Soviet Union. Until about the mid-1960s, Communist China was considered to be as menacing an enemy by the United States and its allies as was the Soviet Union; and the Western strategic policy designed to combat Soviet communism was equally directed against China. India under its Oxford-educated, English-minded Prime Minister Nehru was seen as a natural ally of the West and a potentially worthy democratic counterpart to totalitarian China. The Western Powers bolstered India to check Chinese influence from spreading into Asia and the Third World. Later, with the ascendancy of Soviet influence in India and the U.S. rapprochement with China, India reversed its position in the superpower equation, but its anti-China role remained unchanged, only becoming more accentuated under the Soviet pressure.

The fact that the Indians have not rejected the status sought from them forms the psychological factor in their opposition to China. The Indian leadership and intelligentsia have considered it a matter of national pride to be matched against China, and have transmitted this notion to their countrymen. Domestic and foreign propaganda playing on the same theme has strengthened the belief of the Indian politicians and public that their country provides the balance of power against China. Even before its last two

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wars with Pakistan in 1965 and 1971, India implied that its real equation in power should be considered with the "big" China rather than the "small" Pakistan. After its victory over Pakistan in 1971, India has considered itself raised to a higher orbit of the power struggle in which it stands almost face to face with China while all the smaller regional countries have been left struggling behind.

The India-China adversary relationship has been worsened by two important developments: U.S. ties of friendship with China, and the closer alignment of India with the Vietnam-Kampuchea axis. India is now despaired of any Western support against China. She sees China catapulted into a more prominent role on the world stage on the strength of Western aid and ardor for that country. China's exertion of political influence in Asia and the Third World, hacked by the West and the economic giant, Japan, would smother India's political aims. She finds little choice but to turn to the Soviet Union for support.

At times it seems India and China could move toward a better relationship, and they do appear to try. In the first half of 1980 both countries showed a softened attitude toward each other, and it seemed that conditions were favorable for normalization of relations between them, despite the Afghan crisis, and the visit of the Vietnamese Prime Minister Phom Van Dong to India in April 1980 during which he indulged in a fair amount of rhetoric against China and Pakistan to the delight of the Indians. Indian and Chinese diplomats had several contacts with each other culminating in Indira Gandhi's meeting with the Chinese Premier Hua Guofeng at Marshal Tito's funeral in Belgrade in May 1980. China invited India to hold talks on the boundary problem, and for additional good will offered to send Chinese scientists for training in India. The

events took a nasty turn for China beginning with the public announcement of the huge Indo-Soviet arms deal in May 1980. In early July India announced its recognition of the Vietnam-backed Heng Samrin regime in Kampuchea, and at about the same time Vietnamese troops began military incursions into Thailand's territory. The Chinese must have been cut to the quick at these developments although their public show of anger was relatively restrained, and was pointed more toward the Soviet Union. In the evolving scene no one could fail to notice the heavy hand with which the Soviets had held India back from normalizing relations with China.

**Pakistan plus the Islamic Bloc.** It may seem doubtful that a small developing country like Pakistan, after having been mauled and truncated in the 1971 India-Pakistan war, could pose any challenge to India, let alone the Soviet colossus. But Pakistan is a repository of some singular influences that impinge on the interests of its two giant neighbors. As a strategic entity Pakistan has followed a course viewed as antagonistic by India and the Soviet Union. Both look upon that country as a camp-follower of the West, perpetuating U.S. global interests. During the heyday of the U.S.-sponsored regional pacts of SEATO and CENTO, of which Pakistan was a member, the Soviet Union made that country a special target of subversion and propaganda because it considered Pakistan as a base of American operations. The situation worsened as Pakistan leaned closer to China.

India's unhappiness arose from the suspicion that Pakistan was being strengthened by China and the United States to maintain the balance of power in South Asia. This concept is unacceptable to India as it hits at the core of India's strategic policy. With Pakistan standing at even near-equal

military level, India is reduced to just another regional state in South Asia, her status in international politics is impaired, and even her importance to the Soviet Union, the United States and China is diminished. India's wider objectives would be curbed; she would become embroiled in narrow regional disputes and would face even greater internal unrest. Balance of power has been at the center of the struggle between India and Pakistan. For the latter it means maintaining a rough military parity between the two largest states in South Asia; for the former, to achieve a decisive military predominance over all the regional states.

Military strength enhances the importance of the strategic location of Pakistan. That location, overlooking the north Arabian Sea, adjoining China, and lying very close to its own southern borders is a subject of great interest to the Soviet Union. The point is not lost to the Soviets that Pakistan is the threshold for sweeping into South Asia. Pakistan actually is a far more important factor in Soviet strategy than what the Soviet Union contrives to show. Over the years, while the U.S. leadership has professed to treat the integrity and security of Pakistan as a cornerstone of U.S. foreign policy but done nothing to implement that doctrine, the Soviet leadership has systematically carried out its threats after periodically warning Pakistan to get in step with it or face the consequences. The truncation of Pakistan by India in 1971 with open military support by the Soviet Union provides glaring evidence. What are the future Indo-Soviet designs on Pakistan? The issue is rather beyond the scope of this discussion. However, it is clear that a strong, stable Pakistan is in the interest of neither of these two countries. Ironically, Pakistan's abandonment of the anti-Soviet pacts, its moves for détente with India, its membership in the nonaligned

movement and its genuine disinclination to accept American stewardship has not changed the Indo-Soviet view of its basic alignment. They consider that Pakistan remains tied to America through its intimate ties with Saudi Arabia and China and that the pro-U.S. orientation of its ruling elite and influential business community would foreclose any marked shift in this position.

Pakistan's most important feature that is alien to both the Soviet Union and India is the Muslim nationhood concept, the *raison d'être* for Pakistan. India and the Soviet Union, each with a huge Muslim minority of around 70 million, view Pakistan as a veritable foe. If the consciousness of Muslim nationhood could take birth in South Asia, why should it not be born in Central Asia? If the Muslim majority areas could break away from India to form a Muslim state, why couldn't the more compact Muslim majority areas of the Soviet Union struggle to become a separate state? We do not know about the present religious tempo of Soviet Muslims. But they are the inheritors of a glorious history and their homeland has been the cradle of Islamic military and scientific thought. The Soviet Muslim regions might rise in ideological rebellion even if the example of Pakistan were not there but the existence of Pakistan gives that much more impetus to them. After Iran and Afghanistan, the Central Asian Muslims have the closest cultural, racial and historical bonds with Pakistan. The Muslim character of the state of Pakistan exerts an intangible but distinct pull on the Central Asian Muslims.

For India the Muslim character of Pakistan is even a more thorny problem. The Indian Muslims perhaps do not look upon Pakistan in the same way as the American Jews look upon Israel as their emotional home; but their eyes are no doubt turned toward Pakistan. They have the most intimate

cultural and family bonds with the Pakistanis. They receive psychological motivation and indirect political strength from Pakistan in maintaining their cultural identity and religious freedom within the vast Hindu society of India. A unique feature of Muslim nationalism which is highly unpalatable to India and the Soviet Union is the concept of the Muslim *Ummah*, that is, that all the Muslims of the world, regardless of race and nationality, are members of a single nation-community. The concept envisages close affinity between the Muslim peoples in all countries, and implies that Muslim populations in secular countries may look up to the *Ummah* for guidance and help in all problems. Islamic resurgence, whose form is becoming increasingly vivid, is likely to give greater dynamism to the Muslim *Ummah*, enhancing the freedom of action of the Islamic states like Pakistan on the one hand, and the big Muslim minorities, as for example in India and the Soviet Union, on the other.

Formation of an Islamic Bloc capable of projecting a coherent political policy backed by military power is still a distant dream for the Islamic states. The best they have achieved so far is the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC), formed in 1969, which despite its internal dissension is able to meet fairly often for collective deliberation on political issues. The OIC receives its potency from the oil power of the Middle East and Persian Gulf States who are its members. Besides, many of the Muslim states like Turkey, Egypt, Morocco, Somalia, South Yemen, Iran, Oman, Pakistan, Indonesia and Malaysia are endowed with strategic locations, thus bearing on the global interests of the superpowers. The Soviet Union, finding it improbable to gain influence over the OIC, aims to block or at least divide the movement with the help of an eager India. It is not a coincidence that New Delhi leans

closer to the Muslim states that are befriended by Moscow. Thus in the days of Soviet friendship with Egypt and Somalia, India promoted close ties with them, and when the Soviet Union withdrew from those countries, India followed suit, practically discarding Somalia and cold-shouldering Egypt. Now Libya, Syria and South Yemen are the recipients of Indian political friendship and economic collaboration, as these countries are the current favorites of Moscow in the region. India is highly suitable for advancing Soviet interests in the Islamic Bloc as also in the Third World. A special concern of both countries is access to the Middle East oil resources. As India's alignment with the Soviet Union is intensified, her own access to the Persian Gulf oil could come under increasing jeopardy; and this along with other factors is likely to get India more entangled in the Soviet military strategy on this issue that includes denial of the Gulf oil to the United States and its Western allies.

#### **Conflict with the United States.**

The longstanding Soviet tussle with the United States for shifting the global balance of power is at its prime (although the Soviets like to think that the peak of American power has been turned). In recent years a remarkable success of Soviet strategy has been in drawing India into the Soviet orbit. The beginning of India's political opposition to the United States was by voluntary option and this fact continued to be operative for quite some time, even after the birth of Indo-Soviet amity. However, during the last decade her deeper involvement with Soviet global strategy and her own perception of American policy in the region as being alien to her interests has led India to a sort of permanent opposition to the United States. Ironically, the United States has never really been antagonistic to India, but in fact has tried to woo her all along by conceding most of India's

desires, including treating her as the major power in South Asia. The American public has been even more friendly and, in their attitude to the developing countries, shows the greatest enthusiasm for India after Israel. Consequently the American public is confused and dismayed at the persistent Indian hostility to its government.

In recent years one of the major factors responsible for strengthening the ties between India and the Soviet Union has been their common perception that the U.S. strategic policy has undergone a qualitative change, signaling increased threat to them. In their view the main features of U.S. policy are to strengthen relations, including military cooperation, with China and the Islamic Bloc, and project these two forces to combat and defeat the advance of the Soviet influence and expansionism—in which India by option or compulsion has become a Soviet partner. While the Indo-Soviet view could be challenged on some grounds, in all fairness the prospects of such cooperation between the United States, China and the Islamic Bloc with the support of Japan and Western Europe thrown behind it, would pose a most formidable challenge to Soviet strategic interests and to the allied interests of India. While U.S.-China cooperation would exert a direct deterrent influence on Soviet military policies, including development of strategic arms and deployment of military forces, the Islamic Bloc with American support would thwart Soviet ideological and economic moves in the developing states. As discussed earlier, consolidation of the Islamic Bloc would be a serious threat to the Soviet Union and India. Similarly enhancement of Chinese power would compress the regional or global aims of India and the Soviet Union.

The emerging alignment between China and the United States is an

alarming development for the Soviet Union. Under the circumstances, the Soviet Union has to muster all possible resources and tactics to face this challenge. India is therefore an invaluable ally to the Soviet Union. The rebellion in India's northeastern states has exposed her vulnerability to a Chinese advance, more so if in concert with Bangladesh. The Soviet maneuvers to turn the erstwhile Indochina into a red region with the help of Vietnam are as much designed to encircle China as to secure the right flank of India.

The U.S. Government keeps trying to regain influence with India although instead of making any headway it has been losing ground. President Carter's determination to supply enriched uranium to India against all opposition at home and abroad is a desperate attempt to win India's confidence. While India would always welcome American aid in whatever form, it is unlikely to alter its present strategic orientation. India's own determination in pursuing its strategic course was evident in its recognition of the internationally rejected Hen Samrin regime of Kampuchea in the face of the Carter administration's announcement of the uranium supply to India.

#### **Dominance in the Indian Ocean.**

The main theater for Soviet politico-military strategy for its global aims is shifting to the Indian Ocean. A great deal has been written in recent years on the Soviet interests in this ocean. The resolute manner in which the Soviet strategists have gone about developing their political and military muscle in and around the Indian Ocean underscores the great importance that they attach to this ocean. The Soviet interests are primarily political, for which they find the most suitable strategy to be the military. A significant point concerning the Indian Ocean is that most of the Third World lies around its littoral. The Third World is a very important factor



for the Soviet Union in its attempts to shift the global balance of power in its own favor. Soviet maritime presence in the various regions of the ocean, radiating power to the littoral countries, can be an effective instrument for exerting pressure and influence and changing the perception of the leadership in the various developing states.

Even though devoid of any direct outlet into the Indian Ocean, the Soviet Union desires to be treated as an Indian Ocean power because of its geographic proximity to this ocean. Besides, gaining an outlet into the ocean is one of its goals. The Soviet Union aims to bring about political shifts in the important littoral countries so that a stage should be reached when the Western Powers are treated as aliens and denied a foothold anywhere in the important regions of the ocean. The Soviet strategy envisages a high-level naval buildup to challenge the U.S. naval power; to achieve control over the sensitive ocean regions and straits; to enroll the important regional states into alliances; to exert military pressure on the pro-American regimes; and to pose a direct threat to the Western oil supply lines in the Indian Ocean.

India's vital role in the Soviet Indian Ocean strategy is uppermost in the minds of the Soviet leadership. Consequently the naval field is the area of the most intensive cooperation between the two countries. The volume of naval hardware and technology transferred from the Soviet Union to India is unprecedented. No country, including the Warsaw Pact countries, and Egypt and Indonesia—the erstwhile Soviet naval allies—have ever received such huge proportions of naval hardware. The list of the units transferred to India includes 16 fast missile boats of the *Osa* class, 4 missile corvettes of the *Nanuchka* class, 2 missile destroyers of the *Kashin* class, 10 *Petya*-class antisubmarine frigates, 8

F-class long-range submarines, 6 *Polnocny*-class LSTs, 5 *Poluchat*-class patrol boats, 6 *Natya*-class minesweepers, 2 submarine tenders, and 4 Il-38 maritime patrol aircraft. The naval collaboration is spread over several areas. Soviet technicians have helped India in the development of a naval base and dockyard at Vishakapatnam, naval bases at Port Blair in the Andaman Islands, and at Cochin and Okha on the west coast of India, and are now helping in the development of a naval base in the strategically placed Nicobar Islands.

The full extent of the naval collaboration is not known because the sensitive part of the collaboration and contacts between the two navies is kept secret for strategic reasons. The Soviet Navy in the Indian Ocean normally receives very little publicity while visiting the Indian ports. Such peacetime ploys suit both navies. It would be in times of crisis that the Soviet Navy would turn to obtain support from the Indian ports. Provision for this can be deemed to exist under the Indo-Soviet friendship and security treaty. However, no less a naval authority than an ex-CNO of the U.S. Navy believes that "a secret protocol giving the Soviet Navy base rights at the Indian navy's submarine base of Visakapatnam exists between India and the Soviet Union."<sup>20</sup> It is most probable that similar arrangements exist for the Soviet Navy's use of Port Blair overlooking the Malacca Strait and the port of Okha which faces the Straits of Aden and the routes to the Persian Gulf.

Naval expansion is a coveted goal of Indian national policy. Maritime power is seen as a vital element of national defense, which also serves as a useful instrument for regional diplomacy and projection of power. India has a long coastline and her economy is dependent upon seaborne trade, but being a traditionally nonseafaring people, the Indians were slow in realizing the

significance of seapower for their country. The Soviets are believed to have played a major role in guiding the Indian policymakers toward maritime awareness. From the very beginning of the Indo-Soviet military collaboration, the emphasis has been on the naval development of India. In 1975 a high-powered Soviet delegation consisting of the Defense Minister Marshal of the Soviet Union Andrei Grechko, Chief Marshal of Aviation Pavel Kutakov and Admiral of the Fleet Sergei Gorshkov visited India. The military delegation, whose composition was considered unprecedented, reportedly conducted a thorough assessment of Indian military needs and policies in view of the mutual strategic collaboration between the two countries. Subsequently, India displayed a marked interest in naval affairs. Its leaders came out with increasing statements on the Indian Ocean, stressing the maritime role of India and criticizing the U.S. naval presence in the ocean. The development of the Indian Navy, ports, naval bases and the merchant fleet was stepped up.

Other factors that also gradually brought home to India the need to refurbish her navy were the wars with Pakistan, the British naval withdrawal from the Indian Ocean, increased emphasis in the Law of the Sea on control and exploitation of sea resources, and India's own discovery of offshore petroleum reserves. With the reduced military power of Pakistan, India found an unchallenged field for naval supremacy.

With Soviet naval backing to the hilt, India has emerged as the leading naval power in the northern Indian Ocean region. To maintain and further advance her maritime status, India needs continual flow of naval and technological assistance whose reliable source to India is only the Soviet Union. India wields an assertive voice in Indian Ocean affairs and her support to the

Soviet Union in this respect is a rich asset. In the campaign to oust U.S. naval forces from the Indian Ocean, the Indian Government has been a persistent and vocal critic of the U.S. naval facility at Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean. India wishes to eliminate U.S. naval presence from the region because it interferes with her strategy of seapower as well as tarnishes the image of India's navy. Besides, U.S. naval presence is considered as prohibiting any Indian initiative for possible use of naval forces to which India may like to resort in pursuit of her strategic interests in the region in peacetime.

**Expansion of Power.** A strong compulsion for mutual support between India and the Soviet Union exists on account of their desire for expansion of national power and influence. There are reasons for India to strive for big power status. Her size, population, resources and geographical location give her necessary eligibility in this respect. But her more important incentive comes from the vagaries of history to which India has been subjected for many centuries. Before coming under British rule, India had remained by and large under the constant rule of the Muslims for over 500 years. Prior to that, also, it was usually outsiders who came to establish empires in India. A renowned British historian in a scholarly study on India remarks that "No lasting imperial dominion in India was ever established by a Hindu people."<sup>21</sup> Really the Hindu nation has found its collective identity and the opportunity to govern itself in present-day India for the first time since the days of King Harsha in about A.D. 600 when Hindu suzerainty extended over a great part of southern India.<sup>22</sup> Therefore, there is a psychological urge in the Hindu intelligentsia for establishing a position of prestige and power for their country. Two American analysts in a joint study remark that:

Military defense, aspirations for regional and global influence, leadership in the building of a new international economic order, and the gradual curtailment of super-power dominance over world affairs have been central policies of the Government of India since its founding in 1947.<sup>23</sup>

Also, as discussed earlier, the strategic compulsions for domination in South Asia and for achieving a power equation with China are goading India to expand her power. Finally, in the world of the developing Afro-Asia countries there is a kind of leadership vacuum, and the bigger and more advanced of these countries, including India, are tempted to make a bid to fill this vacuum.

There is no doubt that India is well on its way to gaining higher status for itself. Despite the ahysmal and seemingly everlasting poverty of its public, Indian leadership has relentlessly pursued the symbols of international power, endeavoring to become a member of the so-far exclusive club who have nuclear capability, are equipped with space technology and sophisticated industries and are arms exporters. India exploded its nuclear device in 1974 and since then has obviously advanced further in that field (for there are unconfirmed reports that she can explode a hydrogen device also). Soviet assistance to India in the nuclear field is kept highly classified, and only selective items are exposed to publicity. One such item indicated that between 1979 and 1981 the Soviet Union would supply 250 tons of heavy water to India. To embark on space ventures Indian scientists have been working under Soviet tutelage for several years. In July 1980 India announced launching of a space satellite from its own soil with Soviet assistance. India is also training at least one astronaut in the Soviet Union for a joint space flight with Soviet comrades. Apart from space ventures, India is dependent upon the

Soviet Union in the field of heavy industry and the manufacture of arms in which India aims to become self-sufficient. India is on the verge of entering the arms export market in a substantial way.<sup>24</sup> Sale of 50 tanks to Kuwait has already been made, and negotiations with several African and Latin American countries are in progress for selling Indian-built HAD—16 *Kiran* basic trainer aircraft.

Politics is another vital area of Soviet support to India to advance the latter's image and interests. Actually, in international politics the Soviet Union and India are important to each other on a reciprocal basis. If India has benefited from Soviet support, the Soviet Union has gained equally or maybe more from Indian support. Among the recent examples in this respect, the list is topped by the Afghanistan issue. Having the most important country in South Asia on their side has been a major source of strength to the Soviets in their Afghan adventure. India's recognition of the Heng Samrin regime of Kampuchea in July 1980, which created quite an upset in international circles, was a triumph for the Soviet Union. Earlier in November 1979, India had made intensive efforts at the nonaligned summit in Havana to seat the Heng Samrin regime's representative in the conference, but lost the diplomatic battle. Mutual political support between India and the Soviet Union which dates back to the early days of their friendship is well-documented by Donaldson in his book *Soviet Policy toward India*. In one example he says the

Indian representative's was one of only two noncommunist votes in the United Nations against the resolution calling for free elections in Hungary (in 1956). He had earlier abstained on the U.S.-sponsored resolution calling for a withdrawal of Soviet forces.<sup>25</sup>

He goes on to say,

The Soviet Union did not let India's "independent policy" go unrewarded. In February 1957 a Soviet veto blocked a resolution opposed by India calling for a United Nations force to demilitarize Kashmir. And in 1961, following India's military take over of Goa, the Soviets again used the veto in the Security Council to stop a Western resolution calling for a cessation of hostilities and Indian withdrawal.<sup>26</sup>

Indian support is most desirable for the advancement of Soviet interests in the Third World. India is not a carrier of Soviet ideology (as Cuba is) but is a projector of Soviet technology and armaments in the Afro-Asian countries. India, by its close and smooth relationship with the Soviet Union, also tends to convey an impression to the developing countries that the Soviet grand designs may not be as sinister and fearsome as they are made out to be (by Western propaganda). India is the cornerstone (if not the foundation!) of the Asian Collective Security Plan of the Soviet Union. Currently the Soviet Union has security treaties with eight Afro-Asian countries, leaving aside Egypt and Somalia: India (9 August 1971), Iraq (9 April 1972), Angola (8 October 1978), Mozambique (31 March 1977), Vietnam (3 November 1978), Ethiopia (20 November 1978), Afghanistan (5 December 1978), South Yemen (25 October 1979). On the Indo-Soviet treaty, Donaldson writes,

The meaning and effectiveness of the Soviet-Indian Treaty had been strikingly demonstrated to all concerned but especially to the Indians, who had, with Soviet help, achieved in one stroke the dismemberment and elimination as an effective military threat of their main antagonist (Pakistan) of nearly a quarter of a century.<sup>27</sup>

The outline of the Soviet plan to exploit India for her global aims is fairly visible.

The Indians cannot be blind to it, but they are content to go along with the arrangement because they plan to exploit their Soviet connection for their own regional and global aspirations.

**Conclusions.** India has been moving over the years from a policy of nonalignment with a pro-West bias to a policy of alignment with the Soviet Union under the facade of nonalignment. The Indo-Soviet friendship and security treaty of August 1971, described by an Indian analyst as, "not a sudden happening, but a link in the chain of ties that had been building up for a long time,"<sup>28</sup> was a formal declaration of the Indo-Soviet alliance. Since then both countries have moved on steadily to further promote their mutual ties. The collaboration between them encompasses activities in all the important fields: political, economic, industrial, military, technological, cultural and social. Some forms of collaboration, for example the supply of Soviet nuclear technology and materials to India, assistance in launching of Indian space satellites and training of an Indian astronaut for joint space flight with Soviet cosmonauts in the future, depict the particularly close and lasting nature of their mutual relationship. In recent years the greatest emphasis, however, has been on military collaboration between them. The extent of the commitment undertaken by the Soviet Union in militarily strengthening India is unprecedented. India for its part has been giving sustained political support to the Soviet Union in various international matters whose latest manifestations include recognition of the Heng Samrin regime in Kampuchea and efforts for having it recognized in the nonaligned conference and the United Nations; tacit support to Vietnam in its military engagements with China and Thailand; veiled political support to the Soviet Union on its expansionist policy in Afghanistan

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and vocal support on demanding the withdrawal of the American naval presence from the Indian Ocean.

Development of intimate ties between India and the Soviet Union has come about as a logical consequence of their individual strategic interests, some of which are identical while in the case of some, each country perceives the other as a useful tool if not an ally. India aspires to be a big power. She cannot achieve the status alone, and has chosen to rely on the Soviet Union to get there. India is Soviet interests' extension in the Indian Ocean and the Third World, and the sheet anchor in the Soviet design for an Asian Collective Security System.

The forces that the Soviet Union and India consider to be alien and obstructive to their strategic objectives are the United States, China, Pakistan and the Islamic Bloc. In fact the common viewpoint of India and the Soviet Union is that these forces, while individually undermining their interests, are combining into a formidable concert to thwart the vital interests of both the Soviet Union and India. The threats posed by this concert are military, ideological, political and economic. While the actual turn of events may not produce such a concert of forces, the Indo-Soviet alignment seems destined to grow stronger to confront the single or multiple forces arrayed against its wider interests.

The West, led by the United States, finds it difficult to believe that the world's "largest democracy" should be inextricably tied up with the world's largest dictatorship. But national interest is the governing factor in the alliances and enmities between states. Just because India is a democracy does not mean that her strategic interests and policies should remain tied to the Western countries. The Western, particularly the American, policy of appeasement to India, most recently reflected in the Carter administration's

approval to supply enriched uranium for India's Tarapur nuclear reactor despite strong opposition by the U.S. Congress and the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, has so far proved to be a failure and an embarrassment.

There would have to be a radical development for India to change its present strategic course, for example, the advent of a pragmatic, new Indian leadership committed to ameliorating the subhuman plight of the country's population rather than the pursuit of grandiose strategic designs, or the willingness of Pakistan and China to bow to India's claim of absolute supremacy in the region, and to tailor their regional policies to India's desires, or an undertaking by America, surpassing the Soviet commitments, to give all-out military, economic and political support to India, or a resurrection of the Sino-Soviet friendship. None of these developments seems likely to materialize in the foreseeable future. In the meantime it may be prudent for the United States to carry out a realistic reappraisal of its policies toward India. The Indo-Soviet relationship itself is a very interesting field of study. Various aspects of the relationship, for example, how India is pursuing its intraregional and extra-regional interests with Soviet connivance and how the Soviets by patient and

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### BIOGRAPHIC SUMMARY



Imroz Sagar is a graduate of Karachi University. He has lectured in several forums and institutions and is the author of many journal and press articles on the subjects of international politics and maritime strategy.

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shrewd diplomacy have cultivated India as a strategic ally, are subjects that need to be studied extensively by both policymakers and research scholars.

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