The emergence of Bangladesh as a sovereign nation despite Chinese opposition, proved to be a severe setback to China's populist progressive image. It was a diplomatic defeat too, since the creation of Bangladesh was a tangible victory for Soviet diplomacy in the region, and it heralded the pre-eminence of India in South Asia. Unlike China and the United States, the Soviet Union and India recognised East Pakistan's discontent against the West Pakistani ruling military clique and their demand for separate statehood as the manifestation of the right to self-determination. Both, in accordance with their common principle of supporting liberation struggles,\(^1\) extended moral and physical support to East Pakistan. Furthermore, the instability which preceded the emergence of Bangladesh largely helped to bring the already well-established Indo-Soviet friendship to a better footing with the signing of the famous treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation - thus institutionalising the "special relations". Consequently, the situation in South Asia turned

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\(^1\) During President Bhutto's visit to Moscow in 1972, immediately after the crisis, the Soviet Prime Minister, Kosygin was reported to have told him in a lunch session that Bangladesh crisis was a clash of forces between Indian liberation movement and an anti-popular military dictatorship. While adding, "If history were to repeat itself, we would again take the same position, because we are convinced it was correct", Pravda, 18 March 1972, pp.1, 4; CDSP, vol.24, no.11, p.2.
adverse to China's interests in the sense that the "number one enemy" - the Soviet "social imperialism" considerably increased her influence in the region and secondly, India, her hostile neighbour, augmented her power potentials.

Looking at the subcontinent in its wider regional context, such changes in the power structure of South Asia posed serious problems to the Chinese foreign policy makers. On one hand, by refusing even moral support to Bengali nationalist struggle, China had tarnished its image among the sensitive peoples of the Afro-Asian segment. Besides, South Asian stage being completely surrendered to India and the Soviet Union, the Chinese were put in a serious predicament. How to synthesize the twin problems - namely, reassuring their ideological affinity with the Afro-Asian people, and containing India and the Soviet Union for logistic and political reasons engaged their attention.

In her design to curb Soviet influence, China found the United States the most ideal partner. For both of them, the Soviet Union was the arch enemy. Their realistic assessment of mutual interests and commonality of outlook in a changing international environment and the necessity of expediency dictated them to accommodate their national interests. To the Chinese, such an accommodation with the United States was a "tactical necessity". With the American President Richard Nixon's visit to Beijing and the signing of the
Charter of Friendship, known as "Shanghai Communiqué", between the two states in February 1972, there occurred a major diplomatic breakthrough in Sino-American relations. The text of the communiqué shows that both the parties were much concerned about the growing influence of the Soviet Union, though there was no mentioning by name. Predictably, the Soviet Union projected an appearance of concern to the Chinese move for 'detente' with the United States. In Moscow's judgement, the Sino-American talks amounted to imperialist exploitation of China's "anti-Sovietism". Brezhnev himself, in an article in International Affairs, had commented that it was China's "anti-Soviet policy and the western states in the plea of giving aid in developing China's economy, turning China into a state of capable of realizing its territorial claims on the Soviet Union and bringing under its influence the neighbouring states in the East and South East Asia."  

The Tenth Congress of the Chinese Communist Party, which was held in the following year (1973), affirmed the new orientation of Chinese foreign policy. In contrast to Lin Biao's stubborn opposition to both the Super Powers at the earlier Congress (1969), Premier Zhou Enlai in his report

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rationalised the move for Sino-American rapprochement. Zhou, while defending Beijing's detente with America, stated that "necessary compromise between revolutionary countries and imperialist countries must be distinguished from collusion and compromise between Soviet revisionism and US imperialism." The Chinese leadership no longer considered the United States as the major threat to China, and opposed "Soviet revisionism" much more than "US imperialism".

With Mao's famous Three-World Theory that followed, China thought it could mobilize the oppressed nations and underdeveloped countries of the Third World against the dominance of the two superpowers in the international system.

According to this theory, that found a full exposition in a speech made by Deng Xiaoping at the Sixth Special Session of the UN General Assembly on 10 April 1974, the major contradiction of the present world was not the "conflict between the forces of socialism and those of capitalism". Rather, the real conflict was between "the super powers' struggle for world hegemony and the struggle of other countries in the world to resist them."  

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In order to avoid any scepticism from the third world countries, Deng Xiaoping reaffirmed his faith on the developing countries in their struggle against the super power domination, and categorized China as a socialist developing country belonging to the Third World.

Viewed in its totality, Deng's speech formally inaugurated the Chinese grand design of winning the support of the third world countries in the face of the super powers' "hegemonism". Though he advocated for an "united strategy" against the super powers, it was the Soviet Union which he considered to be the major impediment in the pursuit of China's national interest.

Against this backdrop of the broad Chinese foreign policy framework, one has to assess the Soviet factor in the making of China's India policy in the early '70s. Here, it is

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5 China's performance in the United Nations and major world conferences have shown their interest in the third world countries. By lending support to the efforts of various less developed states to enhance national sovereignty, control natural resources and pursue the development of a new international economic order, all under the cover of "opposing the hegemonism of the super powers - the PRC has staked its claim as an articulator of third world concerns." For details of China's Third World policy, see King C. Chen, ed., China and the Three Worlds - A Foreign Policy Reader (N.Y.: St. Martins Press, 1977), Samuel S. Kim, China and the United Nations and World Order (Princeton, 1979); Yahuda, Michael B., China's Role in World Affairs (N.Y.: St. Martin's Press, 1978); Kim has rightly pointed out their support has always been restrained and undemonstrative - a curious mixture "Symbolic activism and substantive passivism" (p.493).
pertinent to mention that the Soviet Union's policy in the early '70s was largely determined by: (1) Chinese perception of the world order where the "principal enemy" status had been assigned to the Soviet Union, (2) Chinese "strategic cooperation" with the "American imperialism", (3) Chinese efforts in identifying themselves with the Third World countries and their attempts at forming a broad united front strategy against the super powers, (4) the deterioration of Sino-Soviet relations since the Ussuri river crisis of 1969.

Back to South Asia, the prime consideration of the Soviet Union in the early '70s was to deter Chinese influence in the region. India being the major power in the region, the Soviets gave priority to Indo-Soviet relations with the precise aim of strengthening both strategic and economic bonds.

Firstly, India renewed interests in the possibility of a rapprochement with China. Secondly, China moved very cautiously in responding to the Indian overtures and at the same time was critical about the latter's 'link' with the Soviet Union. Thirdly, India tried its best to convince the

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6 The Sino-Indian normalisation process first started in early 1969. But the process was reversed on the eve of Bangladesh crisis. After the crisis fresh attempts were made to restore normalcy.
Chinese that she was not toeing the line of the Soviet Union and still adhered to the policy of nonalignment and independent foreign policy. Fourthly, while continuing its efforts in having a good relation with China, at the same time, India did not expect it to be done at the cost of Indo-Soviet friendship. And finally, the Soviet Union made every attempt to win over the confidence of the Indian people and extended all-out support to Mrs Gandhi's internal as well as external policies.

However, the major task before the Indian foreign policy makers in the post-war period was to convince the outside world as well as the Chinese that India had not given up her traditional foreign policy course of nonalignment. Earlier, China had expressed her serious concern to the signing of the Indo-Soviet treaty of friendship. Thus, in her attempt to normalise relations with China, India first tried to remove the misunderstanding involved in the Indo-Soviet treaty - which was considered to be the hitch in

India's signing of the treaty with the Soviet Union raised serious doubts among the third world countries on the nature of the treaty. Besides, it invited severe criticism from the West and the Chinese. At one point, it was said that India had departed from the traditional policy of nonalignment. India has been branded as a "stooge", "client" or "satellite" of the Soviet Union because of her growing dependence on the latter. To some, the treaty reduced India to the ranks of those Eastern European countries against whom the Brezhnev Doctrine might be applied. On the whole, the very operational principle of India's nonalignment policy was questioned.
their relations. In order to remove this misperception, India's Foreign Minister, Swaran Singh's statement in a Parliament debate was significant. According to him, "the Indo-Soviet treaty is not aimed against any third country. We are prepared to consider similar arrangements with any other country that is willing to do so." Subsequently, in a press conference in Tokyo he expressed his country's desire to initiate dialogue with China. He made it very clear to the Chinese that Indo-Soviet relations had nothing to do with Sino-Soviet rift. While briefing the press people, he stressed for the regional economic cooperation among the Asian nations and observed studied silence over the much-speculated and much-talked Brezhnev's proposal for the collective security system in Asia. However, India's incessant efforts to reassure the Chinese about the nature of Indo-Soviet relationship went on. The process further got a momentum when Mrs Gandhi firmly stated that "India was nobody's satellite."

8 Indian and Foreign Review (New Delhi), 15 December 1972, p.7.
9 Times of India (New Delhi), 10 January 1973.
10 Ibid., 23 December 1972.
Towards the end of 1973, the situation on the Indian subcontinent took a healthy turn with the signing of "Simla Agreement" of July 1972 and the subsequent "Delhi Agreement" of August 1973, relating to the repatriation of civilians and the prisoners of war (POWs). China welcomed these agreements and wished for its speedy implementation. Expressing satisfaction, the Chinese Foreign Minister, Ji Pengfei said, "It had created favourable conditions for a detente in the South Asian region and the normalization of relations among the parties concerned". Still China was sceptic about its implementation. But later on, when China found that the outstanding issues were settled at "Tripartite Pact", reached among India, Pakistan and Bangladesh in April 1974, she favourably reacted. Seizing the opportunity, Deng Xiaoping, while welcoming Pakistani Prime Minister, Z.A. Bhutto in Beijing, commented:

11 For details of the Simla Conference and the subsequent Indo-Pak negotiations please see Mohammed Ayoob, India, Pakistan and Bangladesh: Search for New Relationship (New Delhi: Indian Council of World Affairs, 1975).


13 Under this "Tripartite Agreement" Bangladesh dropped the POW trials and Pakistan agreed to take in more 'Biharis' (who were persona non-grata in Bangladesh). It cleared the way for a greater rapport between Dacca and Islamabad.
"Of late, new developments have taken place in the situation in South Asia. We are glad to see that agreements have been reached among the countries concerned of the subcontinent which have led to the implementation of the relevant resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly and Security Council and thus created favourable conditions for the normalization of relations among the countries of the subcontinent.

.... It is our hope that the countries of the subcontinent will live in friendship in conformity with the principles of equality and mutual respect for sovereignty.... The Chinese Government and people resolutely support the peoples of South Asia in their struggle against hegemonism and expansionism.14

In marked contrast to Chinese comment during Bhutto's 1972 visit, the Chinese spokesman this time refrained from giving any direct criticism to India's policies in South Asia.

On 10 June 1974, when Bangladesh membership issue came up in the Security Council debate, China refrained from vetoing the move - thus paved the way for her to become a  

member of the world organisation. By adopting the dilatory tactics China could manage to manipulate things to her satisfaction. By vetoing Bangladesh's application on the ground of non-implementation of the "relevant resolutions" of the UN, she effectively pressurized the concerned parties to speedily resolve the POWs problem and this helped China to further cement her relationship with Pakistan. Besides, she demonstrated to the Soviet Union and India that she had interests in the region and will not leave them an open stage for furtherance of their respective foreign policy objectives.

Indirectly, though not very successfully, she, through her steadfast support to Pakistan and the resultant diplomacy in the United Nations, instilled confidence among her other weak friends who were disillusioned with her ineffectual role in opposing what she viewed as an "Indo-Soviet design" in the subcontinent.

However, there was no significant change in the Chinese attitude toward India between the period 1972 and the accords reached between the three South Asian states in 1973-74.

The appointment of a new Chinese Charge d'Affairès in March 1973 in New Delhi after a lapse of 18 months indicated Chinese readiness to open a dialogue with India. Soon after,

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15 On 18 September 1974, Bangladesh was formally admitted into the United Nations by the General Assembly.

16 *Times of India* (New Delhi), 22 March 1973.
modest political contacts were made between these two countries. While appreciating the positive trend in Sino-Indian normalization process, Mrs Gandhi in a press interview in Tokyo remarked: "Earlier they (the Chinese) were not on talking terms with us, but now they are... and come for our receptions and the like. This continues to progress."\(^{17}\)

The Chinese must have taken note of Mrs. Gandhi's remark with much curiosity. Their change in attitude toward India was reflected in Zhou Enlai's report to the 10th Party Congress of the Chinese Communist Party in August 1973.\(^{18}\)

The move toward the Sino-Indian reconciliation was watched by the Soviet Union very cautiously and with great deal of apprehension. The main concern of the Soviet Union was that India's new China policy might harm Soviet objective to contain Chinese influence in the region. Besides, it was not in the interests of the Soviet Union to assign China a major role in South Asia. On the other hand, the Chinese were equally alarmed about the growing Indo-Soviet relations. When "anti-Sovietism" was the major plank of the Chinese foreign policy, Brezhnev's visit to India in November 1973 accentuated China's agony.

\(^{17}\) *The Statesman* (New Delhi), 30 April 1973.

\(^{18}\) *Beijing Review*, 7 September 1973, pp.35-36.
Brezhnev's visit to India added to its significance since it immediately followed the 10th Congress of the Chinese Communist Party. It was expected that there would be some change in India's attitude toward Brezhnev's proposed Collective Security System. But the joint communiqué, issued at the end of his visit was conspicuously silent on the "security system". During the visit Mrs. Gandhi repeatedly denied any Soviet influence on India. Perhaps her attempt in this direction was to let the Chinese know that India was not Soviet "satellite" or "stooge".

India's indifferent attitude to Brezhnev's proposed Collective Security System could be viewed in the light of improving trend in Sino-Indian relations. India's endorsement of the proposal would have jeopardized Sino-Indian attempts at normalization. At the same time, it would have confirmed the Chinese that India was acting in collaboration with the Soviet Union in forming "anti-China alliance".

19 Though earlier Mr. Brezhnev in his address to the members of the Indian Parliament emphasized about the need in Asia for a Collective Security System and about Soviet efforts in that direction. The communiqué revealed that India was not going to endorse the proposal. \textit{Pravda}, 1 December 1973 in CDSP, 2 January 1974, pp.11-13.

20 According to Mrs. Gandhi "In all these years Soviet leaders have never put pressure on us, never imposed their will on us", see \textit{Pravda}, 28 November 1973; \textit{Indian and Foreign Review}, 1 and 15 December 1973.
While the subcontinental normalisation process was completed with the removal of the thorny issue i.e. question of entry of Bangladesh to the United Nations - preceded by the repatriation of prisoners of war and the subsequent Pakistani recognition to Bangladesh - two important events in India seemed to rock the boat of Sino-Indian normalization process. These were: (1) India's explosion of a "peaceful nuclear device" on 18 May 1974, and (2) the inclusion of Sikkim into Indian territory.

China and the Soviet Union reacted differently to these developments. A commentary in China's Renmin Ribao was much too critical of India's nuclear explosion. It remarked:

"Harbouring the ambition to become a sub-super power, a certain country, though not super power, is engaged in arms expansion and war preparations and even resorts to nuclear blackmail and threat to realize its expansionist designs."21

In contrast to Chinese condemnation, the Indian explosion evoked no censure from the Soviet Union. It echoed the official Indian view that the device had been exploded solely for the purpose of peaceful uses of nuclear energy.22

According to the International Institute of Strategic Studies, "The Soviet Union far from condemning the Indian explosion seemed to endorse it." 23

The inclusion of Sikkim into the Indian territory invited even sharper criticism from China which viewed the merger as an illegal annexation and accused India of seeking to create a "Great Empire with the support of the Soviet Union". 24 To quote an official statement of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 11 September 1974:

"This is another act of outright expansionism committed by the Indian Government after dismembering Pakistan with the backing of the Soviet Union....

The Indian Government's shameless act of annexing Sikkim has been strongly condemned by all countries and people that uphold justice. The Soviet Union alone, however, has blatantly cheered India and expressed support for Indira Gandhi's government. This is another proof that Soviet revisionist social imperialism is the boss behind the scenes as well as the abettor of Indian expansionism." 25

Besides, China squarely blamed the Soviet Union for creating a destabilized situation in South Asia. The Renmin Ribao said: "Facts have once again shown that Soviet revisionist social imperialism and Indian expansionism constitute a serious threat to the independence and sovereignty of the South Asian countries and are the main cause of the unstable situation in the South Asian subcontinent." 26

Soviet assessment of this development was quite positive, and it endorsed the merger. Justifying the merger of Sikkim into India, a Moscow-based newspaper Sovetskaya Rossia attributed Beijing's protest and condemnation to its desire of "setting up a separate state, and it indicated Beijing has long been showing increased interest in Sikkim which occupies an important strategic position in South Asia." 27

As a signatory to NPT, the Soviets adopted a stance of neutrality and noncommitment on the nuclear test but the fact that India's nuclear and space cooperation with the USSR was not affected by the test was indicative of the Soviet attitude. Similarly, when the Chinese talked of annexation of Sikkim with the help of 'Soviet social imperialism', Moscow was initially hesitant to back India.

26 Ibid., no. 37, 13 September 1974, p.16.
openly but soon came out critically against the Chinese.

The Soviet Union had a tangible political victory over the Chinese so far the subcontinental developments were concerned. A strong India with nuclear potentialities would act as a deterrent to Chinese influence in the region. To the Chinese, Soviet Union still had a considerable influence in India. Their suspicion about the growing Soviet involvement, despite India's repeated reassurances, further enhanced when the Soviet Defence Minister Marshall Andrei Grechko paid an official visit to India in February 1975 (24 to 27 February). Beijing had taken serious note of this visit and alleged that "this was a new step by Soviet social imperialism to intensify contention with US imperialism for hegemony in South Asian subcontinent and the Indian ocean." 29

Though India had been persisting in her efforts to restore good relations with China, the latter followed a dual strategy towards India. She continued her attack on India's domestic as well as foreign policy issues and, at the same time, kept her options open for the normalization. China's unpredictable behaviour put India in a very difficult position. While the

28 It was a high powered military delegation. Along with Marshall Grachko the other two members were Admiral Sergee G. Gorshkov, Chief of the Soviet Navy and Marshall Pavel Kutakhov, Chief of the Soviet Air Force.

29 *Beijing Review*, no.10, 7 March 1975, p.27.
normalisation process was taking a favourable turn with the arrival of a Chinese Table Tennis team in Calcutta to participate in a world championship, an article in Renmin Ribao gave a blow to the Indian initiative toward normalization. It declared Beijing's firm support to the Kashmir people's "just struggle and just stand of the Pakistan government on the Kashmir issue". It added, Indian government not only "brutally suppressed" the people of Kashmir but also launched "armed attack" on Pakistan. The early 1975 witnessed a series of Chinese propaganda attacks and denunciation of India's action and policies over Kashmir, Sikkim, and alleged threat to Nepal. India's long restraint in the face of continued Chinese criticism came to an end when Mrs. Gandhi retaliated and rejected any Chinese legal or moral right of interference in India's internal affairs. While defending the merger of Sikkim with India, Mrs. Gandhi sarcastically recalled the Chinese dualism in the past, and asked what

30 In February 1975, the Chinese team attended the 33rd World T.T. Championships in Calcutta. In the same month the Vice-Premier, Chen Xilien, while passing through Calcutta on his way to Nepal, said "India and China would eventually have friendly relations."


32 China charged India with undermining Nepal's policies of independence, neutrality and nonalignment. It accused India of indulging in anti-Nepalese activities by allowing Nepalese anti-national elements to use India as their base to carry out harassment, sabotage and subversion against Nepal, see Beijing Review, 21 March 1975, p.28.
principle the Chinese had followed when "Pakistan moved into Hunza and what have they (Chinese) done to Tibet." The Soviet Union exploited this situation quite diplomatically and accused China of using specifically the "border problems left behind by the colonialists" to instigate Pakistan and Nepal against India, characterized the Chinese slanders as "absurd accusations". Besides, the Tass criticised the Chinese in their attempts to "undermine the friendly and mutually beneficial relations" between India and the Soviet Union.34

China closely watched the internal developments in India which ultimately led to the proclamation of emergency. While the Soviet Union supported Mrs. Gandhi's measures, China came out with hostile criticisms. As the internal political instability deepened, Pravda welcomed the government's counter-measures and pointed to the "timeliness and expediency of its decision to declare a state of Emergency." The pro-Moscow faction of the CPI supported Mrs. Gandhi's policy throughout the emergency period. Soviet Union's

33 The Statesman, 16 April 1975.
34 Times of India, 20 March 1975.
35 Pravda, 13 July 1975.
primary consideration during the crisis was to endorse a friendly regime as a "guarantee" against an increasingly uncertain future. This is evident from an article in Soviet Journal International Affairs which says, "Prime Minister Indira Gandhi has repeatedly rebuffed the attacks of the Right-Wing reaction on India's relations with the Soviet Union." "Friendship with the Soviet Union", she said, "meets with India's interests and the government will not renounce under pressure from the reactionaries its policy of friendship with the USSR."36

The Chinese perception of the 'State of Emergency' was diametrically opposite to that of Soviet Union. China characterized Mrs. Gandhi's actions as "fascist measures",37 and suspected Soviet hands in it. Commenting on the internal

36 V. Shurygin, "India : A Time of Important Decisions", International Affairs (Moscow), November 1975, p.62. While criticising "reactionary" politicians for urging civil disobedience against the government, the Pravda commentary assessed that the President's proclamation of Emergency was aimed at defending the country's progressive achievements and failing the plans of reaction. Also, the Soviet News Media observed the government's measures had checked "the efforts of reaction as well as left extremists to provoke disorders", see "Pravda Castigates China", Tribune, 2 July 1975.

Internationally, moreover, it has thrown itself into the lap of Soviet revisionist social imperialism and this has brought increasing colonization of India's economy. Gandhi has all along been backed by the lords of the Kremlin. All the Gandhi government's reactionary measures and criminal acts at home and abroad have won the plaudits and support of Soviet revisionism. The sole purpose of the Soviet revisionist social imperialists in trying so painstakingly to prop up Gandhi is to continue their control of India so as to contend for hegemony with the other super power in South Asia. 38

While India had been passing through an internal turmoil, bloody military coup in Bangladesh contributed a new dimension to the South Asian political scenario. 39 China perceived the happening in Bangladesh as a great setback to the Soviet and Indian influence in that country. In fact, China had been waiting for such opportunity to come. A fortnight after the


39 In this coup, President Mujibur Rahman was assassinated and subsequently a new regime was installed headed by Khandakar Moshqtaq Ahmed, a former Commerce Minister in Mujib's cabinet.
coup, the Chinese extended their long-awaited recognition to Bangladesh. What prompted a change in Chinese policy towards Bangladesh might be the new regime's "pro-Pakistan" attitude and lesser intimacy with India and the Soviet Union. The new government of Bangladesh and its policies were enthusiastically supported by China.

"The new President proclaimed the policy of new government, saying, it would adopt a nonalignment policy and would maintain friendly relations with Islamic countries and nonaligned nations. He pledged continued support for Arab countries in regaining their lost territory from Israel. He pointed out that Bangladesh would not tolerate any interference in its internal affairs."40

The swift change in government in Bangladesh had, no doubt, positive impact on the Chinese foreign policy calculations. It was considered as a diplomatic triumph for the Chinese over India and the Soviet Union. Consequently, the political atmosphere became conducive to the Chinese to pursue the normal diplomatic relations with Bangladesh. Later, welcoming the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries, the Renmin Ribao in an editorial on 8 October 1975, commented, "The decision reflects the common

desire of the two peoples and is in accord with their common interests." In an attack on the Soviet Union, the paper added, "We are firmly opposed to hegemonism pushed by the Super Powers in internal affairs of others... and firmly support the people of South Asia in their struggle against hegemonism and expansionism." In November, Bangladesh witnessed another coup overthrowing Khondkar Mashtaque Ahmed's government, pushing Ziaur Rahman to power. Again, India and the Soviet Union were the target of Chinese attack. Renmin Ribao once again accused India of following an "expansionist policy" toward Bangladesh "at the instigation and with the support of the Soviet revisionism". It held "super power hegemonism" and "Indian expansionism to be the main culprits and found that the situation in South Asia remained in a turbulent state.

From the coverage given to Bangladesh in the Chinese Press, it was evident that China was sensitive to Soviet interference in Bangladesh affairs and it was an indirect warning to Bangladesh to keep away from the Soviet Union which China considered to be the main enemy of "proletarian internationalism". Following the rapprochement with Dhaka,

41 News From Xinhua News Agency China, 8 October 1975.
42 Ibid.
43 Xinhua News Agency News Bulletin (Hong Kong), 20 February 1976, p.10.
China tried to operate both through Bangladesh and Pakistan to counteract the influence of the Soviet Union and to contain the power potentials of India in the subcontinent. Such a change in China's perspective on Bangladesh was to a great extent determined by the considerable improvement in Bangladesh-Pakistan relations in the post-Mujib era. Consequently, an entente of China-Bangladesh-Pakistan emerged in the subcontinent which certainly served as an obstacle to Indo-Soviet relations.

**Thaw in Sino-Indian Relations**

Despite China's hostile reaction to Mrs. Gandhi's emergency regime, India continued her efforts for normalising relations with China and made numerous attempts in early 1976 to create a more conducive environment for negotiation. Ultimately, the ice was broken when India's External Affairs Minister, Y.B. Chavan, announced in the Lok Sabha, on 15 April 1976, that India and China were to restore diplomatic relations at the ambassadorial level, and that his government

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44 Early in 1976, the Indian government took a number of modest initiatives towards normalising relationship with China. For example, an agreement was reached to install a general telex link with China on a reciprocal basis; China was invited to participate in UNESCO Conference in India; Mrs. Gandhi signed the book of condolence in the Chinese Embassy, New Delhi when Zhou Enlai died and this led to return gestures of Protocol by Chinese officials.
had decided to send Mr. K.R. Narayanan as India's Ambassador to China. Following the announcement there ended a "frozen relation of fourteen years" between China and India. Chavan said that it was India's understanding that her initiative would be followed by a similar move by the Chinese government. The process of ambassadorial exchange was completed when Mr. Narayanan took up his new assignment in Beijing on 7 July 1976, and the Chinese government reciprocating the Indian move, sent Chen Chao-yuan to New Delhi as China's Ambassador.

In his first official statement, the Chinese Ambassador stated that the normalization of Sino-Indian relations through joint efforts was in full accord with the interests of the people of the two countries, and he hoped that the friendship between the two would grow further and the bilateral relations would improve. Besides, the Chinese media increased propaganda support for Sino-Indian friendship and stopped anti-Indian utterances.

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45 *Times of India* (New Delhi), 16 April 1976. It was for the first time that an ambassadorial appointment was announced in Parliament.

46 The Chinese had insisted all along that since India had withdrawn her ambassador first, she must make the first announcement about the posting of an ambassador.

47 Chen submitted his credentials to President Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed on 20 September 1976.

48 *Indian Express* (New Delhi), 11 September 1976.

49 The same year, the Chinese Badminton delegation arrived in Hyderabad on 26 October 1976 to take part in 4th Asian Badminton Confederation Championship. Subsequently, Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries delegation arrived on 9 December 1976. To participate in the opening ceremony of Dr. Kotnis Memorial Hall, an Indian delegation was sent to China in the month of December the same year.
Moscow remained silent over the announcement of 15 April 1976, that India would send an ambassador to China. Probably, the Indian move created some uncertainty about the Indo-Soviet relations, and the visit of Mrs. Gandhi to the Soviet Union in June (8-13) was to assure the Soviet Union that any improvement in India's relations with China would not be at the cost of "time-tested" Indo-Soviet friendship and would not weaken its ties with the USSR. Soviet coolness to India's move for friendship with China got reflected in the Joint Communiqué, issued at the end of Mrs. Gandhi's visit, which made no reference to it. Instead, the Soviet Union expressed its satisfaction

50 Instead, during the week immediately following the Indian announcement, the Soviet press emphasized the five-year Soviet-Indian economic agreement which had been signed on 16 April 1976.

51 Moscow was notified well in advance about the exchange of ambassadors between the two countries. The Hindu says that "In consonance with the true spirit of Indo-Soviet Treaty India took the Soviet Union into confidence before the final move was made to arrive at an understanding with China over the resumption of Ambassador-level relations. The Prime Minister's Secretary, P.N. Dhar, spoke to the Soviet Ambassador in Delhi, Viktor Maltsev, last month about the rationale behind the move and later on Mr. Kewal Singh had a more detailed discussion with him." (International edition), 7 April 1976.

52 For the text of Soviet-Indian Joint Communiqué, Soviet Review, 21 June 1976; also Foreign Affairs Record, June 1976, pp.188-93.
over the results of Indo-Pak talks. While India did not want to hurt Indo-Soviet relations even slightly, it attached considerable importance to China. This was evident in Mrs. Gandhi's reply to a question at a Press Conference in Moscow, when she said, "When we discuss the international situation, we cannot leave out a country like China."

Post-Mao Chinese Foreign Policy and the Soviet Union

The death of Mao in September 1976 and the subsequent power struggle leading to the purge of the "Gang of Four" led to a speculation among the western Sinologists that there would be some lessening of hostility between China and the Soviet Union. This speculation was primarily based on the character of the new leadership who appeared to be dominated by "moderates" and "pragmatists". However, the possibility

53 While expressing his happiness over the Indo-Pak normalization process, Brezhnev said, "Certain positive changes are taking place in South Asia. We have learnt with satisfaction of the results of the recent Indo-Pakistan talks which will, in our opinion, contribute to the further normalization of the situation in that region". Speech made at the Kremlin banquet in honour of Mrs. Gandhi on 8 June 1976; Soviet Review, 21 June 1976, pp.14-18.

54 Times of India, 12 June 1976.
of a "thaw" in Sino-Soviet relations was ruled out. 55 Despite initial Soviet overtures immediately following Mao's death there was no overt sign of any decline in Beijing's hostility towards Moscow. On the contrary, China's anti-Soviet propaganda became more strident and when the Soviet Union made conciliatory gestures China rudely rejected them. Though there were small hints of restraints on the part of China, such as, somewhat more cordial congratulations on the Bolshevik

55 Donald S. Zagoria writes: "Probably the most important factor is that the new Peking leadership is still divided and would require a united leadership to undertake such a substantial change in foreign policy. Moreover, Chairman Hua Guofeng's legitimacy derives from the fact that he was Mao's candidate for the top job in China, if Hua were now to agree to what looked like a radical change in Maoist foreign policy, he would weaken his own position. Finally, the new Chinese leaders may have decided that they have at least for the time being, more to gain from the West than the Soviet Union. They will want increased trade technology and credits from the West in order to develop China; the Soviet Union cannot supply these in the amounts needed. And so long as China genuinely fears Soviet expansion in Asia and the possibility of Soviet military action against China, Peking will need the cooperation of the West to maintain an effective balance of power against Moscow". See Donald S. Zagoria, "The Soviet Quandary in Asia", Foreign Affairs (New York), January 1978, pp.308-9.

56 Hours after the announcement of Mao's death, a Radio Moscow commentary emphasized Brezhnev's statement at the 25th Soviet Party Congress that USSR would "respond accordingly" if Peking dropped its anti-Soviet policies. Moscow Radio Peace and Progress, 9 September 1976. In the first statement on post-Mao China by a Soviet official, Foreign Minister Gromyko in his speech to the UN General Assembly on 26 September made an ostensibly conciliatory bid to the Chinese: "The Soviet Union has attached and still does attach great significance to relations with the PRC. Normalisation of these relations undoubtedly would have a positive effect on the situation in Asia as well as on a broader international plane. Pravda, 29 September 1976. In the month of November the Soviet Union sent their Deputy Foreign Minister Leonid Ilychev to Peking for the Sino-Soviet talks which had been suspended for eighteen months.
Revolution anniversary, the "non-walkout" during those celebrations in Moscow and a willingness to resume the border talks with Moscow, Chinese policy, in general, remained unchanged. China still considered "Soviet social imperialism" as the major enemy and "principal threat" to her national security.

Defeat of Mrs. Gandhi and Janata's "Genuine Non-Alignment": Chinese and Soviet Perception of the New Janata Leadership

The defeat of Mrs. Gandhi's Congress Party in March 1977 general election was a significant development in the history of Indian politics. This brought to an end three decades of Congress rule in India, thus providing an opportunity to the opposition Janata Party to rule the country for the first time. The assumption of power by the Janata Party provoked a widespread speculation that there would be a great shift in India's foreign policy. The New York Times editorialized: "All indications from the victorious alliance, known as Janata, are that a friendly attitude can be expected toward the United States, with a noticeable cooling of feelings for the

57 There was no mention of the border dispute and a new sentence was included: "The Chinese people have always cherished their revolutionary friendship with the Soviet people", Far Eastern Economic Review, 26 November 1976, p.13.

Soviet Union"). A week later, commenting on the future Indo-Soviet relations, its political commentator C.L.
Sulzberger observed that "Moscow's relations with India have been worsened by the election". The uncertainty that arose over the turn India's foreign policy might take can largely be attributed to the Janata Party's pronouncement of such concepts as "Genuine Nonalignment", "beneficial bilateralism", and foreign policy based on "national consensus". At his first press conference on 24 March 1977, the new Prime Minister Morarji Desai explained that "genuine nonalignment would work without fear and without leaning on one side or the other". He declared, "We will not allow our relation with one country to come in the way of our relation with other, we will not have special relationship with any country." Initially, all these policy statements gave the impression that India was going to correct the so-called 'tilt', and there would be a "proper nonalignment" in India's foreign policy. The Indian Foreign Minister, Mr. Vajpayee, in an interview with the correspondent of


India Today, a leading Indian fortnightly, explained "genuine nonalignment" thus:

"When we decided to use the adjective "genuine", we had two things in mind. Firstly, the entire nonalignment has to be developed on the basis of fundamental principles which have guided the movement since the inception. Secondly, the basic philosophy of the movement is that all international issues should be judged on the merit. The concept of neutrality has to be a positive one. The policy must be pursued in such a manner that the countries of the world should feel that India is really nonaligned. We not only have to be nonaligned but we must appear to be nonaligned." 62

Thus, it became clear that the "shift" in India's foreign policy was, indeed, due to total disapproval of the Janata Party's predecessor's handling of foreign relations and to their own conviction that Mrs. Gandhi had followed a "pro-Soviet" line. In order to correct the so-called "tilt" towards the Soviet Union, the new leadership launched a massive campaign in favour of "proper nonalignment". Besides, they preached "beneficial bilateralism" while dealing with the neighbouring nations. On 29 June 1977, replying to the very

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first debate on foreign affairs, the new Foreign Minister Vajpayee stated that although the basic problems dividing India and China remained unsolved, his government would welcome the re-establishment of normal diplomatic relations between them. The government's aim, he declared, was to develop "beneficial bilateral relations" on the basis of "Panchsheela", as would be appropriate to the two vast countries of Asia like India and China. India's desire to have good and cordial relationship with China preoccupied the Janata leaders and from their policy pronouncements it was evident that there would be increased interaction between the two countries. Mr. Vajpayee, in an interview with a correspondent of the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, said:

"Government of India's policy is to improve relations with all its neighbours. With those neighbours like China with which there has been a past history of differences, it would like to improve relations on the basis of Five Principles to the mutual benefit of the two countries and peoples through direct bilateral negotiations. The important thing to remember is that in keeping with India's policy of genuine nonalignment, it does not feel that the process of normalization between India and China should be at the cost of India's friendship with any other country. India's
existing good relations with any country need not be an obstacle to the promotion of better relations with China."\(^{63}\)

**Chinese Perception of Janata Regime**

The change in leadership in India had a positive impact on the new leaders of China. India's avowed policy of "genuine nonalignment", which has been interpreted to mean 'neutrality' between and 'equidistance' from the great powers,\(^{64}\) convinced the foreign policy makers of China that India was not going to have 'special relationship' with the super powers. China had received the Indian election result with a great deal of enthusiasm perceived it as a "significant change" as well as a "serious setback" to the Soviet Union. As its first reaction, the *People's Daily* on 30 March 1977, in a lengthy commentary entitled "The Indian General Election and Soviet Setback in South Asia", stated:

"The results not only declared the bankruptcy of the internal and external policies pursued by Indira Gandhi who had tailed after the Soviet

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63 *Far Eastern Economic Review* (Hong Kong), 7 October 1977, p.22. In his statement in the Lok Sabha on 16 March 1978, the Prime Minister, Morarji Desai, said: "Our policy is, of course, as has been stated frequently by the Minister of External Affairs and by myself to seek an improvement of beneficial bilateral relations with China", *Foreign Affairs Record*, March 1978.

Union, policies which harmed the country and brought suffering to the people, they also marked a serious setback to Moscow's expansionist scheme in the South Asian region.... To realize their fond dream of dominating the world the new tsars curried favour with the Indira Gandhi government and tried to drag India into the orbit of their counter-revolutionary global strategy.... The Kremlin rulers tied India to their rickety chariot of social imperialism to make it an important bridgehead for extending Soviet spheres of influence in South Asia and the Indian ocean and contending for hegemony with the other super power.65

This commentary makes it clear that China, while denouncing the Soviet Union for its 'expansionist' policy in the South Asian region and for lending support to Mrs Gandhi's government, was anxious about the state of Sino-Indian relations. The Chinese, who were apprehensive about the secret move of the Soviet Union, reproduced approvingly the comment of the Indian Prime Minister Morarji Desai that "If the Indo-Soviet friendship treaty involves any lack of friendship with others, then it will have to change". The Prime Minister's statement was quoted with the

65 Beijing Review, no.15, 8 April 1977, p.23.
added remark that "it was left to Russia to do whatever it wants to do." No doubt, Beijing expected a major change in India's foreign policy, and that too in her relation with the Soviet Union.

**Gromyko’s India Visit and Soviet Uncertainty about India**

The Soviet Union that had earlier characterized the new Indian leadership as the "tool of extreme reactions, the defender of landlord interests, financiers, local and foreign monopolists", found itself in a very uncomfortable position. Thus, the immediate task before the Soviet foreign policy makers was how to build up a body of confidence among the new ruling elite of India. Meanwhile, they had taken note of the changed Chinese attitude towards the new Indian regime. Against this backdrop, the visit to India to Mr. Gromyko, the Soviet Foreign Minister, and a member of the Party Politburo, earned a considerable importance. Prior to his visit, a change in Soviet attitude toward the emergency in India and the Congress defeat was discernible from the fact that they attributed the defeat of Mrs. Gandhi to "mistakes

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66 Beijing Review. 1 April 1977, p.31.

67 Pravda. 12 March 1977, p.5. Interestingly enough, a Soviet political commentator noted that "the actions taken by the Indian government against internal and external reactionaries were responded to with full understanding in the Soviet Union". Y. Tsaplin, "The Sound Foundation of Indo-Soviet Ties", International Affairs (Moscow), no.8, August 1976, p.73.
and excesses", committed after the introduction of state of emergency. It also blamed Mrs. Gandhi for her refusal to cooperate, in the majority of Indian states, with the Communist Party of India. Gromyko's visit at this juncture, was considered to be an attempt to make amends for the Soviet criticism of Janata leaders during the emergency. On arriving in New Delhi, Gromyko, in order to remove the misconception about the Indo-Soviet treaty, unequivocally declared that the Indo-Soviet Treaty was not directed "against third country". In the joint Indo-Soviet communique, signed before he left for Moscow on 27 April 1977, the two countries reaffirmed their faith to further strengthen "equal and mutually beneficial cooperation in the spirit of Indo-Soviet treaty of peace, friendship and cooperation of August 1971."

On major international issues, their perceptions were recorded as being "identical or close." Janata government's satisfaction over the visit could be well seen from Mr. Vajpayee's speech at the luncheon held in honour of the Soviet visiting delegation. He assured the Soviet Foreign Minister that "the

68 The fate of the Congress was now seen as a consequence of the "abuse of power", the "destruction of democratic norms", and the "denial of the rights of the working class", Pravda, 10 April 1977, p.5. The article, which reported on a plenum of the Communist Party of India's (CPI) National Council, noted, however, that the lack of a left-wing alternative had enabled the victory of the Janata coalition, some members of which had in the past opposed progressive measures.

bonds of friendship between our two countries are strong enough to survive the demands of divergent systems, the fate of an individual or the fortune of a political party."\textsuperscript{70} Indo-Soviet relations entered into a new phase with the signing of a number of trade and economic agreements involving a Soviet loan, a supplement to the bilateral trade plan for 1977 and Soviet technical assistance for the Srinagar-Tashkent trans-Himalayan troposscatter tele-communication link.\textsuperscript{71}

Gromyko's visit to India was quite timely, and its purpose of a fruitful dialogue with the government was achieved. The suspicion and uncertainty, which had been haunting the Soviet Union since Janata Party came to power, was removed.

The return visit of Mr. Desai and Mr. Vajpayee in the same year (October 1977) further consolidated the "time-tested" friendship and wide-ranging interests between India and the Soviet Union. In a speech made at the dinner given in his honour in Moscow, Mr. Desai noted that the differences in political and economic systems of the two countries had not prevented close cooperation in a number of fields, and pointedly referred to the Indo-Soviet treaty as a high point in the relationship. Besides, he assured

\textsuperscript{70} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{71} Hindustan Times (New Delhi), 28 April 1977.
his hosts that there would be no change in their policy
towards the Soviet Union as a result of change in government.
He pointed out that the two countries were bound not by
transitory issues, such as ideology and personality, but by
their "national interest and common purposes." While
emphasizing that India's basic commitment to nonalignment
provided a flexible base for working toward friendly ties
with all states, he added that established friendships would
not suffer in the process.72

As noted earlier, the installation of Janata government
provided an impetus to the post-Mao Chinese leadership for a
better understanding with the Indian counterpart. Beijing
was watching the post-emergency political situation in India
with a great deal of enthusiasm and curiosity. Beijing even
expected a major shift in India's foreign policy. But, the
course of Indo-Soviet relations, the frequent visits of the
leaders of two countries, and the subsequent signing of trade
and freight agreement—confirmed the Chinese that India was
not going to deviate from their predecessor's foreign policy.
However, ever since Janata came to power, India and China
seriously looked forward to a cessation of strained relations.
As a goodwill gesture, China invited an Indian business
degelation to participate at Canton Trade Fair in April 1977.

72 For the text of Desai speech, see Pravda, 22 October
1977, p.2.
Deals were immediately concluded for exporting Indian shellac and pig-iron in exchange for Chinese non-ferrous metals. But their enthusiasm for better relations did not last long. It took a retreat when Mr. Desai met the Dalai Lama at the latter’s request in August 1977. Beijing accused the Indian government of "conniving" at the anti-Chinese activities of the Tibetans in India and even alleged that some Ministers of the new government as well as some Members of Parliament of the ruling Janata Party had "flagrantly assured the rebel bandits of their support." In a protest note to Indian government it added, "Such encouragement and support given by the Indian government to the Tibetan rebel bandits in their traitorous activities constituted an interference in China's internal affairs and an obstacle to the improvement of China-India relations." In reply to Chinese accusation, the Indian government conveyed to them that it had always regarded Tibet as an integral part of China, that India's traditional policy towards the Tibet question was still followed, that there was no evidence of Indian support to such activities of the Tibetan refugees as were directed against another country.

73 The Economist, 18 March 1978, p.63.
74 Amrita Bazar Patrika (Calcutta), 7 August 1977.
75 Beijing Review, no.33, 12 August 1977, p.7.
Such repudiation notwithstanding, Sino-Indian thaw continued. In his report to the National People's Congress, on 26 February 1978, the Chinese Premier Hua Guofeng expressed his desire for improved relations. He said:

"The Chinese people have always cherished feeling of friendship for the Indian people. The people of both countries wish to see an increase in friendly contacts and an improvement in their relations.... There are questions pending between India and China. Nevertheless, relations can be further improved provided serious efforts are made on both sides."76

Later, the visit of Mr. Wang Bingmun, President of the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries, initiated fresh talks between India and China, and on a firmer basis. However, the major obstacle remained to be the "border issue". Vajpayee indicated that full normalization of relations with China would not be possible until this was resolved.77 Till then, two countries could develop contacts in other fields.78 During his visit, Mr. Wang, on

77 *Sunday Standard* (New Delhi), 3 June 1978.
78 A delegation of Indian newsmen went to China. An Indian Cultural troupe was invited by the Chinese in early 1979, a big Chinese business delegation paid a visit to India and toured Indian factories and declared it was "amazed beyond all expectations" at India's technological progress.
behalf of the Chinese Government, extended an invitation to Indian Foreign Minister, Mr. Vajpayee, to visit China. While accepting the invitation, Vajpayee made it clear that "the visit could take place only at an appropriate time after careful and adequate preparations".  

In the meantime, the news of Desai's Moscow visit was publicised in the Chinese media. China had already perceived the political situation in India, that arose out of the defeat of Mrs. Gandhi, as "great setback" to the Soviets. The New China News Agency (NCNA) quoting on 28 October 1977 denounced the "very clear" intention of the Soviet Union which, it said, invited Mr. Desai because of a significant lessening of Soviet influence in the area.

Vajpayee's Mission to China: India's Diplomatic Activity

By the end of the year 1978, it was known that India's Foreign Minister, Vajpayee, would be shortly on a trip to Beijing for a useful dialogue with the Chinese leaders. Prior to his visit, for months together, the Indian Parliament debated whether or not he should go, and if so,

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80 Times of India (New Delhi), 3 June 1978.

81 Indian Express (New Delhi), 29 October 1977.
under what conditions. While the debate was on, the People's Daily, the official organ of the Chinese Communist Party, in a commentary condemned the Soviet Union for criticising the External Affairs Minister, Vajpayee. While the "Kremlin policy-makers have continuously proclaimed their desire to advance the course of detente", it said, "they were getting irritated and uneasy upon hearing about the increase of friendly exchanges between other countries to improve mutual relations". It added, the Soviet Union had made itself "ridiculous" by stating that the development of better

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82 The Communist Party of India considered Vajpayee's visit as "against India's interests". Mr. Rajeswar Rau, General Secretary of CPI observed, "Peking ruler would use Mr. Vajpayee's visit to "sow doubt and distrust in Indo-Soviet relations and weaken the friendship between two countries. He rationalised his argument by pointing out that "China has not stopped its anti-Indian postures nor has it stopped ranking up the so-called Kashmir issue": "China Continues to Supply Arms to Pakistan", Patriot (New Delhi), 7 October 1978. In contrast to CPI's reaction the CPM conceives the proposed visit as "an effort at normalizing relations with that country". E.M.S. Nambodiripad at the same time said normalization of relations with China should go hand in hand with strengthening of friendship with the Soviet Union. Hindustan Times (New Delhi), 17 October 1978.

Mr. Bahuguna, the Minister for Petroleum and Chemicals, said, "India, under no circumstances would cultivate friendship with China at the cost of its love and respect for other friendly countries which had stood by the country through thick and thin", Times of India, 11 October 1978.
relations between India and China was aimed at undermining Indo-Soviet ties. Probably, the Chinese were annoyed by the discussion Mr. Vajpayee had with the Soviet leaders prior to his China visit. Considerable importance had been attached to Mr. Vajpayee's visit to the Soviet Union in September 1978. It appeared that Vajpayee's visit to Moscow was mainly to reassure the Soviet Union that India's relations with China would not be at the expense of Indo-Soviet relations. During his visit, it was learnt that Brezhnev, while appreciating India's efforts to improve the situation on the Asian continent, at the same time he showed concern about the security problems of South Asia and South East Asian and Chinese activity in the region. Besides, during his talks with the Soviet Foreign Minister, Andrei Gromyko, Mr. Vajpayee was told that "the Soviet Union had to adjust its policies to defeat the moves of some forces which proclaimed the inevitability of war" (indirectly referred to China), which finally took place on 11 February 1979.

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83 As Izvestia wrote on 29 September 1978, shortly after Vajpayee's departure from Moscow: "It is obvious that Beijing, making active use of anti-Sovietism in elaborating and implementing its foreign policy actions, would like the normalization 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 Beijing at all costs, including the undermining of Soviet-Indian friendship and cooperation."

84 Hindustan Times, 14 October 1978.
despite misgivings within Janata and opposition from Mrs. Gandhi's Congress. Reiterating the earlier statement that nothing significant could be expected from his visit, Vajpayee made it clear that the mission was of an "exploratory" nature and that the talks in Beijing would be "essentially preliminary". 85

While stating the purpose of his visit, Vajpayee said, "I am hopeful that a beginning would be made to explore the possibilities of resolving the problems between our two countries on the basis of the well-known principle of Panchshila. 86 He had an extensive and wideranging discussion with the Chinese Foreign Minister Huang Hua, Vice-Premier Deng Xiaoping and Premier Hua Guofeng. In course of discussions with the Chinese leaders, Vajpayee wanted to know their stand on the Kashmir question, the reason for constructing the new Karakoram highway between Pakistan and China's Xinjiang province, and the Chinese attitude towards the insurgents in India's North Eastern region. He "was a thing of the past". 87 Regarding the complex border question, though Chinese leaders expressed their desire for settlement, 88 it seemed that their strategy was to

85 *Times of India* (New Delhi), 9 February 1979.
86 *SWB*, no. 6043, 15 February 1979.
88 China's view on this subject was expressed by the Chinese Foreign Minister, Huang Hua who told PTI that "China takes a forward-looking approach and it is optimistic", *Tribune* (Chandigarh), 12 February 1979.
postpone the debate. Deng told visiting Indian pressmen: "We do have some issues on which we are far apart. We should put those on the side for the moment and do some actual work to improve the climate to go about the problem."\(^89\)

The thaw in Sino-Indian relations was cooled down by the Chinese 'punitive' attack upon Vietnam at a time when the Indian Foreign Minister was on the Chinese soil, and he was not even sounded about the Chinese motivation. This had a negative impact on India, and Vajpayee, by cutting short his visit, returned to India on 18 February, a day earlier than the schedule. In an official statement on the same day, Prime Minister Morarji Desai expressed "profound shock" and distress at the outbreak of hostilities between two neighbouring countries. He hoped for restoration of peace and, as an initial step, stressed the need for withdrawal of Chinese forces from Vietnam.\(^90\) On 21 February Vajpayee stated in the Parliament that "the primary focus of my visit was on the difficult and complex questions which beset relations between India and China", adding that "these exploratory preliminary contacts have at least unfrozen

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the issue" of the Sino-Indian boundary dispute. He conveyed to the House the Chinese assurance of not giving moral and material support to the insurgents in Manipur, Mizoram and Nagaland.91

The Chinese attack on Vietnam which was aimed at teaching the latter - "the Cubans of Orient" - a lesson for violating Chinese territory, evoked a hue and cry in Indian Parliament. In course of debate, China was outrightly criticised and called an "aggressor" for "continuing its policy of seeking to settle disputes with neighbours through the use of force", in violation of the United Nations principles.92 On 22 February, Vajpayee - after prolonged discussions - appealed to the Chinese for an immediate withdrawal of their troops from the soil of Vietnam. Vajpayee, at the same time, requested the members of the Parliament not to mix up his visit to China with the events that led to the Sino-Vietnamese war, and argued that Sino-Vietnamese developments could not be

91 Indian and Foreign Review, 16 March 1979, pp.5-6. Being an "exploratory mission" Vajpayee believed that the preliminary contacts had "at least unfrozen the issue and both governments are agreed on the need to reflect further on possible ways to resolve this crucial question. The common willingness to recognize it as such is not an insignificant step". See Lok Sabha Debates, vol.22, no.3, cols.246-7 and no.5, cols.30-31 and 371-5.

92 Financial Express (Bombay), 23 February 1979. Mr. Limaye of Janata Party accused Vajpayee "of being instrumental in creating illusions about China in the country" and for having "committed the same mistake as Nehru did in the fifties with grave consequences". See Hindustan Times, 24 February 1979. In another statement, his visit was described as "ill-conceived and ill-timed" by him (Limaye). Times of India, 26 February 1979.
allowed to hinder the full exploration of the country's bilateral relations with Beijing as with Moscow or Washington.

**Soviet Perception of the Chinese Invasion and Kosygin's Visit to New Delhi**

Chinese attack on Vietnam posed a serious problem to the Soviet policy-makers, as it disturbed the power equation in Asia. Immediately after Vajpayee landed in New Delhi from his Beijing trip, the arrival of Soviet Prime Minister A.N. Kosygin along with his 100-member entourage confirmed the Soviet concern for the fluid situation in the region. His visit was significant in the sense that it took place against the backdrop of fast changing world scenario - the establishment of diplomatic relations between Washington and Beijing in January 1979, Deng's visit to Washington, overthrow of Pol Pot regime in Kampuchea by Vietnamese troops, subsequent

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retaliation by the Chinese against Vietnam, fall of the
Shah of Iran, and the US decision to resume supply of lethal
weapons to Pakistan. All these had certainly influenced the
Soviet policy-makers in chalking out their new Asian policy.
A considerable significance was attached to Soviet Premier's
visit to India. While a fierce fighting was going on
between China and Vietnam, Kosygin did not miss any opportunity
in lashing out at China's policy of "hegemonism and expan-
sionism". During the visit, Kosygin had wideranging and
indepth discussions with his Indian counterpart on various
international as well as bilateral issues. Both Soviet Union
and India condemned the Chinese action in Vietnam, though
they differed on the question of recognition of the new
regime in Kampuchea, and demanded an "immediate unconditional
total withdrawal" of Chinese troops from the territory of
Vietnam. "When we are sure that the new regime is in full
control of the situation, we would consider the question
of recognising it" — that was the Indian position. India
handled the situation tactically as she was hoping for a
good and normal relation with China. India observed that
Beijing would retreat from its adventurous way since contin-
ued hostilities would strain China's relations with other

94 Indian and Foreign Review, 16, 15 March 1979, p.5.
95 Joint Communique issued at the end of the visit,
Hindustan Times (New Delhi), 16 March 1979.
neighbouring countries. Throughout the hostilities between China and Vietnam, New Delhi lost no sight of its long-term objective of normalising relations with China. While refusing to toe the Soviet line, India made it clear that any attempt at improving relations with China would not affect adversely her relations with the Soviet Union. In an obvious reference to India's relation with China, the Indian Prime Minister said:

"We do not reject overtures for normalisation of relations in keeping with our policy of friendship with all, but I should like to stress that the normalisation of relations with one country will not in any way impinge upon the strength and the quality of our relations particularly with good friends such as the Soviet Union."

The Joint Communique, which reflected their shared perceptions of global as well as regional objectives, also noted their difference on the methods of dealing with China. China perceived the visit of Kosygin to India "as trying to sow discord between China and India." Kosygin's attack on China during the visit was seen by the Chinese as "diverting the public attention to cover up the fact that big and small

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96 Hindustan Times (New Delhi), 10 March 1979. Also see Indian and Foreign Review, 15 March 1979, p.5.
neighbours - the Soviet Union and Vietnam are committing aggression and expansion in Indo-China.\textsuperscript{97} Surprisingly, the omission of India in the Chinese comment on Kosygin's trip suggested that China was equally anxious to continue the friendly relations with India.

**Implication of the Afghanistan Crisis and Sino-Indian Interaction**

After the Vietnam crisis, the major event that destabilised the Asian politics was the Afghanistan situation.\textsuperscript{98} Ever since the coup in Afghanistan India had been following the internal development there with increasing uneasiness. India's quick recognition of the new communist regime in Kabul close on the heels of Soviet recognition was symbolic of its keen hopes for the return of the stability and normalcy there. It seemed, New Delhi's perception of the development in Afghanistan was similar, if not identical with Moscow's - both viewed the situation as an internal matter of Afghanistan and all powers should refrain from interfering in the internal affairs of Afghanistan. However, in the aftermath of the

\textsuperscript{97} Beijing Review, no. 12, 23 March 1979, p. 28.

\textsuperscript{98} The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan on 27 December 1979 occurred during the final days of Charan Singh's caretaker Government. It may be noted here that only twenty months earlier a coalition of the rival Parcham and Khila factions of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) had toppled the republican government of Mohammed Daud in a military coup.
events in Kabul in late December 1979, the Indian reaction focussed on two themes and these with shifting degrees of relative emphasis, have dominated the Indian stance ever since.

During the initial days of Soviet intervention, when Mr. Charan Singh was the caretaker Prime Minister, India's reaction to Soviet intervention in Kabul was critical. It may be recalled here that Charan Singh expressed deep concern at Soviet action and summoned the Soviet ambassador to make it clear that in India's view, the sending of troops would have "far reaching and adverse consequences" for the entire region. He also appealed to the Soviet Government to withdraw their troops and return the situation to "normal".99

However, it may be discerned from later developments that India's criticism of Soviet action in Afghanistan mellowed when Pakistan with whom India went to war thrice, started obtaining advanced weapons from the USA under the pretext of "threat to its security" from Afghanistan. New Delhi apprehended arms race in the subcontinent which would be detrimental to its security. One New Delhi newspaper said that "Washington's decision to lift its earlier embargo on arms sales to Pakistan" was "still worse"100 news than the

100 Ibid., p.182.
Soviet move. Despite attempts by President Carter and US Ambassador Goheen to persuade the Indians that the new arms for Pakistan would only be used to contain the Soviet intervention along Pakistan's borders, New Delhi was rather rigid in professing to see the move as a threat. The Foreign Office stated that it was "the Government of India's earnest hope that no country or external power would take the steps which might aggravate the situation". 101

It may also be noted here that when the Afghanistan issue was debated in the Security Council at the request of United States and 51 other states, India's representative, B.C. Mishra, was silent. It was an embarrassing experience for India because the issue was backed by some nonaligned countries. After the issue was transferred to General Assembly under the "Uniting for Peace" process, Mishra became the first non-Soviet bloc envoy to speak essentially the USSR position. India's endorsement of Soviet position in Afghanistan had tarnished India's image among the Western countries as well as the nonaligned countries.

It is in this context that India acted quickly to remove any misgivings among the western and nonaligned countries. The fact that India was not completely supporting Moscow, however, became apparent first of all in the vote on the UN resolution appealing all states to refrain from

101 Ibid.
interfering in Afghanistan. India joined 17 other countries in abstaining while the resolution was passed overwhelmingly; Mrs. Gandhi made her first statement on Afghanistan since assuming office. After a meeting with British Foreign Secretary, Lord Carrington, she said categorically that "no country is justified in entering another country." 102

India's milder criticism of Soviet action in Afghanistan created confidence among the foreign policy makers in Beijing. Hence forward, Beijing never missed any opportunity for a better understanding and amity with India. As a matter of fact, the early signals for a better relation came from Chinese side. Beijing soon deputed its Ambassador to New Delhi. Another evidence of Chinese eagerness to establish cordial relationship with India may be derived from the presence of Chinese Foreign Minister, Huang Hua, on India's Republic Day celebration in Beijing. It was significant that a high level Chinese delegate in the rank of Foreign Minister participated in India's Republic Day celebration after nearly twenty years. 103 These friendly gestures explained at least two things. First, the Chinese were satisfied at India's milder criticism of Soviet action in

Afghanistan in spite of India's Friendship Treaty with the Soviet Union. The Chinese must have been convinced that Moscow would not take India for granted. Second, Beijing felt that the Soviet intervention necessitated the need to have a climate of confidence with such a powerful and potential nation like India.

It is in this backdrop that India and China announced in mid-June 1980 that China's Foreign Minister Huang Hua would visit New Delhi before the end of the current year. The visit in early May 1980 of the Pakistani President, Zia to China provided further evidence to India of Beijing's positive intentions. It is pertinent here to note that, for the first time, the Chinese leadership failed to take up the Kashmir theme after the Pakistani leader introduced it. Another impetus was given to Sino-Indian normalisation when India's Prime Minister Mrs. Gandhi and the Chinese leader Hua Guofeng met at Belgrade on the occasion of President Tito's funeral in mid-1980. These informal summit meetings provided ample opportunity to exchange mutual views and perception of international situation.

However, these developments were not appreciated by Moscow. Moscow began highlighting the bogey of "Sino-Pak-US" axis, a pet but well conceived strategic propaganda ploy to

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ward off Sino-Indian cordiality. Moscow projected that the summit meeting between the leaders of Pakistan and China was based on "militarist basis". It also reminded India of the construction of Karakoram Highway linking Pakistan and China, also the unresolved Kashmir issue. These reminders indicated Moscow's unease at the growing Sino-Indian cordiality. In early August 1980, just prior to the scheduled visit to India of Huang Hua, Pravda once again published a lead story on Chinese threat to India. It criticised China's "anti-Sovietism" and pointed out that "China has officially branded the Soviet Union as its enemy no.1, whereas India correctly regards it as a dependable and selfless friend, which has always given a helping hand to the country at times of trial". In an indirect way it warned India "to be very cautious and avoid hasty steps that could be detrimental to the country's national interests".

It was in this background that the Soviet President, Brezhnev visited India towards the end of 1980. India took the first opportunity when President Sanjiva Reddy, at a vanquet hosted in honour of visiting head of the state, Mr. Brezhnev, stated that "India does not approve the inter- vention of outside power in Afghanistan and that she wishes

that the sovereignty, territorial integrity and nonalignment status of that country is restored forthwith." In reply, the Soviet Union laid down certain conditions for their withdrawal from the Afghan land and told India that she stood by her commitment to withdraw their troops from Afghanistan "if the other parties - Pakistan, Iran and the US which, according to Soviet assessment were the agent provocateurs - agreed to the May 14 proposals put forward by the Kabul government, guaranteeing non-interference by them in the internal affairs of Afghanistan. Though India and the Soviet Union differed on the Afghan crisis, the former, at the same time, shared the Soviet view that the latter had been surrounded by the enemy camp comprising the United States, China and Pakistan. However, during Brezhnev's visit to India in December 1980, India showed interest in their "New Asian Security Plan". Mrs. Gandhi described Brezhnev's "peace proposal regarding the Gulf"

107 Statesman (New Delhi), 9 December 1980.
as "constructive and worthy of careful consideration". 110

China, on the contrary, called the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan as "hegemonistic action" and demanded the cessation of this aggression and intervention in Afghanistan and the withdrawal of all Soviet armed forces. 111 It saw the Soviet action as a part of her "grand design to encircle Pakistan, as well as an important component of the Soviet global strategy of pushing Southward to the Indian ocean". 112 China outrightly refuted the Soviet claims that "its armed intervention in Afghanistan was undertaken in fulfilment of treaty obligations at the request of the Afghan government". 113

110 Indian Express (New Delhi), 16 December 1980. A notable feature of Mr. Brezhnev's present visit was that in his address to Members of Parliament, the Soviet President came out with a revised version of his earlier doctrine for Asian security involving the US, the Soviet Union, China and Japan with the regional states to make the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean free from current tension. He put forward a five-point formula for the liquidation of foreign military bases, non-deployment of nuclear weapons, non-use of force against countries of the region, respect for the non-aligned status of these states and removal of all obstacles to normal trade and unfettered use of sea lanes for peaceful purposes.


112 On March 30, 1980, the Chinese Vice-Premier Mr. Deng Xiaoping, in a meeting with a delegation of the Japanese daily, Yomiuri Shimbun, said that Moscow's next target was Pakistan. See The Statesman (New Delhi), 31 March 1980.

It is clear that India, while pursuing an independent foreign policy line on both the situations — Sino-Vietnamese conflict and Soviet intervention in Afghanistan — had been quite cautious at the same time not to jeopardise the emerging thaw in Sino-Indian relations as well as the increasing Indo-Soviet cooperation. By refusing to recognise the new Kampuchean regime, and by stressing the need for withdrawal of foreign troops from the site of Afghanistan, India might have induced Chinese policy-makers to reassess their attitude towards India, and even to declare that India was not the vassel of any super power and "there was no basic conflict of interests between Beijing and New Delhi."114

114 An official Chinese magazine, Liaoyang (Observation Point) commented on India's stand on Afghanistan crisis. See Patriot (New Delhi), 22 September 1981.