Foreign Policy: The Nehru Era

The Basic Parameters

India's efforts to pursue an independent foreign policy was a highlight of post-1947 politics. A product of its long history and recent past, this policy was marked by a great deal of consistency and continuity. Despite revolutionary changes in the international situation, the broad parameters which were evolved during the freedom struggle and in the early years of independence still retain their validity. Jawaharlal Nehru stands as the architect of this not mean achievement. He realized that given her great civilization, India could not but aspire to the right to speak in her own voice. The recent, hard-won freedom from the colonial yoke would also be meaningless unless India found expression in the international arena. Being subcontinental in size, too, ruled out an assumption of client status for India. An independent voice was not merely a choice, it was an imperative.

It was Nehru who gave this voice a shape in the form of the idea of non-alignment and an organizational cohesion through the non-aligned movement. The immediate context for the emergence of this movement was the division of the world into two hostile blocs after the Second World War, one led by the US and the Western powers and the other by the Soviet Union. Nehru's understanding was that newly independent, poor countries of Asia and Africa had nothing to gain and everything to lose by falling for the temptation of joining the military blocs of the big powers. They would end up being used as pawns in contests for power of no relevance to them. Their needs were to fight poverty, and illiteracy and disease, and these could not be met by joining military blocs. On the contrary, India and other similarly placed countries needed peace and quiet to get on with the business of development. Their interests lay in expanding the 'area of peace', not of war, or hostility. India, therefore, neither joined nor approved of the Baghdad Pact, the Manila Treaty, SEATO and CENTO which joined the countries of West and East Asia to the Western power bloc.

But India went far beyond just neutrality or staying out of military blocs. Nehru was quick to reject the charge of 'immoral neutrality' hurled at India by John Foster Dulles. Non-alignment meant having the freedom to decide each issue on its merits, to weigh what was right or wrong and then take a stand in favour of right. To quote:[1]

> So far as all these evil forces of fascism, colonialism and racialism or the nuclear bomb and aggression and suppression are concerned, we stand most emphatically and unequivocally committed against them . . . We are unaligned only in relation to the cold war with its military pacts. We object to all this business of forcing the new nations of Asia and Africa into their cold war machine. Otherwise, we are free to condemn any development which we consider wrong or harmful to the world or ourselves and we use that freedom every time the occasion arises.

Non-alignment came to symbolize the struggle of India and other newly independent nations to retain and strengthen their independence from colonialism and imperialism. India being the first to become independent, rightly gave the lead to other ex-colonies in this respect. And collectively these nations counted for a great deal. In the UN, for example, whose membership had swollen with their entry, the one country, one vote system enabled the non-aligned bloc, often helped by the Soviets, to check domination by the Western bloc. Non-alignment, thus, advanced the process of democratization of international relations.

A basic objective of Indian foreign policy, that of extending support to colonial and ex-colonial countries in their struggle against colonialism, was well served by the policy of non-alignment. Another objective, that of promoting world peace, was also facilitated by it. Nehru's passionate opposition to war and the threat of nuclear conflict which loomed large after Hiroshima is well known. It grew out of his experience of non-violent struggle and his conviction in Gandhi who had resolved to make it his mission to fight and outlaw the atom bomb. Inspired by Gandhi, and supported by great intellectuals like Einstein and Bertrand Russell, Nehru made it India's role to place the goal of peace, nuclear and general disarmament before the world.

At about this time when Nehru was pointing out the dangers of world extinction through nuclear conflict, Chairman Mao, it is believed, told Nehru in a conversation that a future nuclear war was only another stage in the inevitable march towards socialism, and that if 300 million Chinese died in it, another 300 million would survive! Nehru constantly emphasized that peaceful coexistence of countries with different ideologies, differing systems, was a necessity and believed that nobody had a monopoly on the truth and pluralism was a fact of life. To this end he outlined the five principles of peaceful coexistence, or Panch Sheel, for conducting relations among countries. These were mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty, non-aggression, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence.

While Nehru tirelessly articulated his ideas about international conduct of nations in every available forum, there were some landmark moments in his quest. Before independence, in March 1947, at his inspiration, an Asian Relations Conference attended by more than twenty countries was held in Delhi. The tone of the conference was Asian independence and assertion on the world stage. While this conference concerned itself with general issues, the next one was called in response to a very specific problem: the Dutch attempt to re-colonize Indonesia in December 1948. Nehru invited states bordering the Indian Ocean, and most Asian countries as well as Australia came. The conference resolved to deny all facilities to Dutch shipping, and sent its resolutions to the UN. Within a week the Security Council resolved that a ceasefire be declared, and the Indonesian national government be restored. The de-colonization initiative was carried forward further at the Asian leaders' conference in Colombo in 1954 and the Afro-Asian conference called by India and other Colombo powers in Bandung, Indonesia, in 1955. The conference was also a precursor to the Belgrade Non-aligned Conference, as it passed resolutions on world peace and the dangers of nuclear weapons. The pinnacle of Nehru's efforts was reached in 1961 when he stood with Nasser of Egypt and Tito of Yugoslavia to call for nuclear disarmament and peace in Belgrade. By now he was convinced that the remnants of colonialism

would give way soon and the next challenge the world faced was that of preventing a nuclear war.

A major function of Indian foreign policy was to promote and protect Indian economic interests and to facilitate her on the path that she had chosen for herself. Non-alignment, by not tying India to any one bloc, enabled her to develop economic ties with countries on both sides of the divide as and when neccessary. India needed and got capital, technology, machines and food from the Western countries. She also relied, especially after 1954, on the Soviet Union for building up the public sector industries, something which the US was reluctant to do.

For military equipment, India spread the net far and wide across the ideological divide. In the Nehru years alone she bought, for example, for the Air Force, 104 Toofani aircraft from France, 182 Hunters and 80 Canberras from the UK, 110 Mysters from France, 16 AN-12s and 26 Mi-4 helicopters from the Soviet Union and 55 Fairchild Packets from the US. Two hundred and thirty Vampire aircraft were produced under licence from the UK in India. For the Navy and Army as well, similar purchases were made. In addition, efforts were made to establish a defence production base and licences were obtained from various foreign countries to produce the following equipment: Gnat interceptor aircraft from the UK, HS-748 transport aircraft from the UK, Allouette Helicopters from France, MiG interceptors from the Soviet Union, L-70 anti-aircraft guns from Sweden, Vijayanta tanks from the UK, Shaktiman trucks from Germany, Nissan one-ton trucks and Jonga-jeeps from Japan, Brandt mortars from France, 106 mm recoilless guns from the US, Sterling carbines from the UK, wireless sets from different countries.[2]

The variety of sources from which defence equipment alone was acquired shows that India succeeded in maintaining sufficiently friendly relations with a large number of countries. Spreading her net wide also ensured that excessive dependence on any one country was avoided and better bargains could be driven since potential partners knew that rivals existed. In this way, many of the inherent weaknesses of a newly independent, underdeveloped and poor country were reduced. On the same lines, India maintained an active membership of various UN bodies as well as of the IMF and the World Bank. It is no small credit to India's economic diplomacy that she has been the biggest recipient of concessional funding in absolute terms (not per capita) from multilateral international agencies.

Indian foreign policy sometimes linked apparently irreconcilable goals. For example, the Soviet Union and India initiated in 1963 and signed in August 1964, August 1965 and November 1965, major arms deals by which the Soviet Union became the largest arms supplier to India and Indo-Soviet relations entered a qualitatively new phase. At the same time, India decided to adopt the Green Revolution technology for agricultural development which was backed by the US, The arms deals with the Soviet Union and the Green Revolution which led to India becoming self-sufficient in food in a few years' time increased India's capacity to stand on her own feet and take a more independent stand in world affairs. Similarly, both the US and the Soviet Union at different times agreed to be paid in rupees, thus saving India precious hard currency.

India also maintained an active profile in multilateral bodies and sought continuously to use her

presence there to her advantage. Soon after independence Nehru decided to stay within the Commonwealth for this very reason. Despite strong public opinion to the contrary, he felt that once India was independent and there was no question of Britain dominating over her, India could benefit from her presence in a multinational body. Besides, membership of the Commonwealth provided a certain security in a situation when India was yet to find out who her friends (and enemies) were going to be. India also played an active role in the UN peacekeeping forces in various parts of the world, often at heavy cost to Indian lives. A closer look at some of the international situations in which India played an active part would help illustrate the complex tasks dictated by her non-aligned foreign policy.

International Role

The Korean War

The end of the Second World War left Korea divided between a Communist North controlled by the Socialist camp and a South Korea dominated by the Western powers. K.P.S. Menon, who was elected Chairman of the United Nations Commission on Korea in late 1947, had in his report to the UN appealed 'to the great powers to let Korea be united', warning that else 'Korea may blow up'[3] but it was to no avail. When North Korea invaded South Korea in 1950, India supported the US in the UN Security Council, condemning North Korea as aggressor and calling for a ceasefire. But American pleasure was soon to turn into anger when they found that India abstained from voting on another resolution calling for assistance to South Korea and the setting up of a unified command for this purpose. India's main concern was to prevent the entry of outside powers into the conflict. Nehru appealed to Truman and Stalin and received a warm response from the latter.

But meanwhile General MacArthur, at the head of US forces under UN command, after pushing North Korean forces out of South Korea, without the approval of the UN, crossed the 38th parallel into North Korea and continued towards the Yalu river that separated Korea from China. Chou En-lai, the Chinese prime minister, warned the Western powers through the Indian ambassador to China, K.M. Panikkar, of retaliation, but to no avail. (India was the only link between the West and East in Peking at that time.) China thereupon sent in waves of armed 'volunteers' and succeeded in pushing back American troops to South of the 38th parallel, which resulted in huge Chinese, Korean and American casualties. Nehru tried again at this point to bring about an end to the war by organizing a conference but the US queered the pitch with an ill-timed UN resolution declaring China the aggressor. India voted against it because it was clearly MacArthur and not China who was the aggressor in North Korea. A military stalemate ensued but despite India's tireless efforts it took till June 1953 to get both sides to agree to a ceasefire and evolve an acceptable formula for the repatriation of prisoners of war. It was Krishna Menon who finally succeeded in fashioning a formula that the UN General Assembly and, after Stalin's death, the Soviet bloc accepted. A Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission was set up with an Indian, General Thimayya, as its Chairman, and an Indian 'Custodian Force' under his charge was made responsible for the difficult task of repatriation of soldiers.

The Korean war had tested India's faith in non-alignment and commitment to peace to the utmost, and she had not been found wanting. She stoically faced first Chinese and Soviet hostility because she voted to declare North Korea the initial aggressor. India then endured American wrath for refusing to go along with Western intervention in the war, and for refusing to declare China the aggressor. In the midst of this, in 1950, China invaded Tibet and annexed it without any effort to keep India in the picture. Though upset, Nehru did not allow this to influence his stand on the Korean war. India continued to press the UN to recognize and give a seat to Communist China in the Security Council, especially now that the USSR had withdrawn from it in protest. India also badly needed food aid from the US to meet the near-famine conditions at home but did not allow this to blind her to US stance in Korea. India continued to press ahead even if success was not always apparent. In the end, India's stand was vindicated: both sides had to recognize the same boundary they had tried to change. The world now recognized the worth of non-alignment. It was difficult to dismiss it as mealy-mouthed, cowardly neutrality or as idealist hogwash. The USSR clearly began to see India in a different light. The Soviet prime minister, Bulganin, even told the Indian ambassador, K.P.S. Menon, that the USSR 'fully appreciated India's position in the Commonwealth and hoped that India would continue to remain in it'. This was a big change from the time when the membership of the Commonwealth was seen as final proof of India's succumbing to Western imperialism!

Indo-China

The end of the Korean war brought only momentary respite to Asia. In early 1954, Indo-China appeared to be on the brink of becoming the next theatre of the holy crusades against Communism, with the US keen to pour in massive aid to shore up the weary and hesitant French colonial power in its ongoing (since 1945) war with the Viet Minh. Nehru's initiative to appeal for a ceasefire in February 1954 was followed up by his obtaining the support of several Asian leaders at the Colombo Conference in April 1954 for his six-point proposal for a settlement. Krishna Menon was sent to explain the Asian point of view to the Geneva Conference on Indo-China (to which India was not invited as a member). These steps, besides Nehru's meeting with Chou En-lai in 1954 in Delhi, and other behind-the-scenes parleys and assurances helped prevent the further internationalization of the Indo-Chinese conflict. India obtained guarantees from China for the neutralization of Laos and Cambodia and promises from Great Britain and France to China that they would not allow the US to have bases in Laos and Cambodia. The significance of India's role in the negotiations was evident from the reference by Pierre Mendes-France, the French prime minister, to the Geneva Conference as 'this ten-power conference—nine at the table—and India'.[4] At China's request, India was appointed Chairman of the International Control Commission and its work included supervision of imports of foreign armaments into Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam. For the time being, the danger of the Chinese intervening on behalf of the Viet Minh and of the US increasing its support to the French, even to the point of introducing nuclear weapons into the region, was averted. France was tired of the war, Britain apprehensive of bellicose US intentions, and the USSR, particularly after Stalin's death, groping towards 'peaceful coexistence'. While the control commissions were later subverted through US diplomacy, and Indo-China became a major Cold War theatre, all subsequent peace efforts in fact took up solutions prescribed by Nehru.

Suez Canal

In 1956, in an impulsive reaction to US and British pressure to abandon its declared policy of non-alignment, the latest move being the Anglo-American withdrawal of the promised financial aid for building the Aswan Dam on the river Nile, Egypt nationalized the Suez Canal. This alarmed the users of the canal and Britain and France particularly demanded international control over it. India was a major user herself but she recognized that under the Constantinople Convention (1888) the Suez Canal was an integral part of Egypt. She urged both Cairo and London to observe restraint and tried at the London Conference in August 1956 to get an agreement on a formula that included Egyptian control, an advisory role for the users, and settlement of disputes in accordance with the UN Charter. The Indian proposal met with widespread approval, including from Egypt. Later, when France and Britain got Israel to attack Egypt and landed their troops in Suez, they were severely condemned by even the US, and the UN, and Nehru called it 'naked aggression' and a 'reversion to the past colonial methods'. The withdrawal took place under UN supervision and Indian troops participated in large numbers in the peace-keeping force. India continued to support Egyptian interests in subsequent negotiations leading to the settlement even while trying to ensure that British and other users' interests were protected. In time, even Britain accepted the fairness of India's approach and the episode did not leave any permanent mark on Indo-British relations.

Hungary

The Soviet Union's intrusion in Hungary in October 1956 to crush a rebellion aimed at taking Hungary out of the Soviet bloc was severely condemned by the UN and it demanded withdrawal. India abstained from joining in this formal condemnation and received a lot of flak in the West. India's stand was that while the Soviets must withdraw, the situation was not as simple as made out in the West. The existence of two zones of influence, West and East, in Europe, was a fact of post-Second World War life and any disturbance could set off a domino effect. Nothing was to be gained by humiliating the Soviets through formal condemnation, which in any case India refrained from doing as a matter of policy, as it only hardened positions and made future compromise difficult. Nehru himself criticized the Soviet action and did not send an ambassador to Budapest for two years to show his unhappiness. The Soviets reciprocated by abstaining when Kashmir next came up in the UN Security Council. Thereafter, they reverted to their usual practice of vetoing resolutions that were against Indian interests! India's situation was not an easy one but she withstood considerable pressure from both sides and did not flip in either direction.

The Congo

A very major achievement of Indian foreign policy was its role in helping maintain the integrity and independence of Congo. Congo had barely gained her independence from Belgium on 30 June 1960 when its copper-rich province of Katanga announced its independence from the Congo! Its head, Tshombe, was clearly being backed by Belgium and Belgian troops were also sent to the Congolese capital ostensibly to protect Belgian citizens. Lumumba, the prime minister of Congo, appealed to the UN, US and USSR for help, and the UN asked its Secretary-General, Dag Hammarskjold, to organize all necessary help. The next few months witnessed an unseemly drama in which foreign powers propped up their favourite local players in the mad scramble for

power. The US supported the President, Kasavubu, the Soviets backed Patrice Lumumba and the Belgians blessed the army leader, Mobutu. Their tactics were eventually to lead to the murder of Lumumba. Lumumba's murder shocked the world and when Nehru forcefully demanded that the UN play a more decisive part, get rid of the mercenaries and the foreign troops, stop the civil war, convene the parliament and form a new government, and added that India was ready to commit troops for the purpose, the UN agreed. The Security Council adopted a resolution on 21 February 1961 and Indian armed forces successfully brought the civil war to a close, restoring the central government's authority over Katanga and the rest of the country by March 1963.

Dag Hammarskjold is reported to have said, 'Thank God for India,'[5] and the praise was not undeserved. It was indeed one of the finest moments for India's policy of non-alignment, of help to newly independent countries of Africa and Asia, and strengthening of the role of multilateral bodies such as the UN.

Nehru had again shown that given the will, non-alignment could work and there was not just space but also the need for the non-aligned to assert themselves on the side of newly emerging nations, who were sought after by eager superpowers for enlistment in an enterprise that could only take away their freedom even before they had had time to savour its taste.

Relations with Superpowers

USA

Indian non-alignment did not preclude, but in fact desired, a friendly relationship with the US, the leading power in the post-war world. India needed technology, machines, and aid for its development effort, food for its people, and moral support for its nation-building and democratic efforts—all of which it thought the US could provide. The US stand on Kashmir, however, shook this hope of friendship. The UN Security Council, dominated by the US and its allies, in the late 1940s and early 1950s evaded a decision on the Indian charge of Pakistani aggression even after the UN Commission reported the presence of Pakistani troops in Kashmir. All findings by UN mediators that were favourable to India were ignored, and the powerful Western media was used to spread the myth that India was not fulfilling UN directives. Indian requests for food aid were kept hanging because, it was said, Nehru never actually asked for it on his visit to the US in 1949, even though he had explained the drought situation at length. Shipments were sent only after China and the USSR stepped in to help!

The US did not appreciate India's recognition of Communist China in early 1950, nor did it like India's stand that the People's Republic of China be given representation in the UN. India's initial stand on the Korean war was welcomed, but her later position resented. Pakistan was offered some kind of military aid in 1952 itself, though it was made public only in 1953. It was ostensibly given arms against a Soviet Communist threat, but the kind of weapons it got could never cross the Hindu Kush, but could only be used against India. Indian objections were brushed aside by the US with meaningless assurances that they would not be used against India. Nehru expressed his unhappiness at the Cold War being brought to the subcontinent by the inclusion of Pakistan in CENTO, SEATO, etc. US descriptions of non-alignment as immoral did nothing to help matters

either. On Goa, too, the US proved totally insensitive to Indian concerns and supported Portugal's claim in 1955 that Goa was a province of Portugal and attacked India virulently when it liberated Goa by force in 1961 after waiting patiently for fourteen years after independence.

A major reason for the difficult relationship between the world's two great democracies was of course the very different perceptions of the Cold War. The US was obsessed by Communism and could not accept that others might have an alternative set of priorities. The world looked black and white from Washington, but from Delhi it looked grey. Nehru had known Communists closely as comrades in the Indian freedom struggle, he had been deeply influenced by Marxism, and while he had his own differences with them and had even had to suppress a Communist insurgency soon after coming to power, he did not regard them as evil. Nor was India willing to line up behind the West in the Cold War for getting aid and arms, as Pakistan was, even though it hardly shared the US view of the Communist threat. Besides, India had encouraged other nations of Asia and Africa to also remain non-aligned.

It has been suggested, quite persuasively, that US antipathy to India pre-dated India's refusal to side with it in the Cold War and that the US establishment inherited, including via British intelligence officials who helped set up the CIA, the British dislike of the Congress leaders who had brought down the mighty Empire, and a positive attitude towards Muslim League/Pakistan because it was pro-British and helped in the War effort. They also inherited and then made their own, British fears (or shall one say hopes) that India would not survive as a unit. Its very diversity, the US thought, would lead to the disintegration of India. As a result, it was not considered a solid bulwark against the spread of Communism. Therefore, even if India had wanted to, it could not have become a frontline state, backed by the Western alliance, because there was a deep-rooted suspicion about her reliability and stability. It is also felt that while the 'mainspring of American policy is power—and a healthy respect for it', 'India did not have the "power" and the Indian leadership deliberately tried to denigrate it (and) accelerate the process of diminishing the utility and usability of power in international politics. The American leadership and establishment could never understand this.'[6] There was also a strong pro-colonial trend in the American establishment which had supported the French and British to return to their colonies after the war, and even supported Portuguese colonialism in Africa and the internal colonialisms of Vorster and Ian Smith in South Africa and Rhodesia. It was unlikely that India's strong anti-imperialist stance was much admired in these quarters.

This should not suggest that Indo-US relations were marked by unremitting hostility. On the contrary, people-to-people relations remained friendly. Economic ties grew as the US was the source of technology and machines. Large sections of influential opinion in India were pro-US and an important section of informed liberal opinion in the US, which included Chester Bowles, John Sherman Cooper, and Senator Fulbright, was pro-India. Towards the late 1950s there was a considerable improvement in relations, at least partly because the US was acquiring a better understanding of Indian policy and perhaps because greater Soviet friendship increased India's value. The Kennedy administration made a clear effort to improve ties by sending one of its key figures, a man who loved India and got along famously with Nehru, John K. Galbraith, as ambassador in 1961.

The Chinese attack on India in 1962, however, drastically altered the situation. Shocked beyond belief, Nehru turned to Kennedy for help. He was lucky that the awkward situation was partially eased for him because of the presence of Galbraith as the mediator.

But that is a story that is better told as part of the sad tale of China's betrayal of its great friend and well-wisher.

Soviet Union

India's relations with the Soviet Union began on a cool note but ended up acquiring great warmth. The Soviet coolness grew out of their perception of India still being under imperialist influence. Communist ambivalence towards the Indian freedom struggle and the leaders of the Congress party was transferred to Nehru's government. The Communist Party of India was engaged in an insurgency against the Indian state in Telangana. India's decision to stay in the Commonwealth was seen by the Soviets as proof of Indian surrender to imperialism, the Soviet ambassador, Novikov, calling it 'a sad day for India and the world'.[7]

Nehru had, however, from the time of his speech as Vice-President of the interim government in 1946, struck and maintained a friendly approach towards the USSR. He admired the Soviet Union and had visited it in 1927. He refused to interpret Communist insurgency in India as proof of Soviet unfriendliness, and as a special gesture offered diplomatic relations even before independence, as well as sent his sister, Vijaylakshmi Pandit, as ambassador. Characteristically, Stalin never gave her an audience.

However, possibly because of the way India conducted herself in the Korean war crisis, and her evident independence from imperialist influence, signs of a thaw began to appear by 1951-52. The Soviets, along with China, sent food shipments to tide over the drought, at a time when the US was dragging its feet. Stalin met the new ambassador, S. Radhakrishnan, future President of India, a few times, and even offered a treaty of friendship. Signs of support on the Kashmir issue at the UN began to emerge, and the CPI was told to cool off its attack on Nehru's government. The process was speeded up after Stalin's death in 1954. The USSR offered to give military equipment to India in 1954 after Pakistan joined CENTO and SEATO, but consistent with its policy of not accepting free military aid, India refused. In 1955, Nehru paid a highly successful visit to the Soviet Union, followed in the same year by an equally popular visit by Khrushchev and Bulganin. In 1956, the 20th Congress of the Comintern, the Soviet-controlled body which laid down the ideological line for all Communist parties, put its seal on the process of de-Stalinization begun after Stalin's death, and tried to soften the Cold War stance by talking of peaceful coexistence between countries belonging to different social systems. It also introduced the totally new concept in Marxism of a peaceful road to Socialism. It is another matter that the US was so taken up with its own rhetoric that it failed completely to respond to these possibilities. For Indo-USSR ties, this was a great help, for all ideological impediments to cooperation were removed. From 1955, USSR gave full support to the Indian position on Kashmir, and from 1956 used or threatened to use, its veto in the UN Security Council to stall resolutions unfavourable to India on Kashmir. The significance of this cannot be underestimated, as India was in a very awkward situation in the Security Council till the USSR started protecting India. The consistent support on

Kashmir went far in binding Indo-Soviet friendship. Both countries also took a common stand against colonialism. In the UN, the USSR supported India on the integration of Goa in opposition to the US.

The path of economic development that India chose, based on planning and a leading role for the public sector in industrialization, especially in heavy industry, brought India closer to the USSR. While the Western powers, especially the US, hesitated to help, the Soviets readily came forward with assistance in the building of the Bhilai steel plant in 1956. Then followed the British in Durgapur and the Germans in Rourkela. The US was again approached for the Bokaro plant, but when it continued to remain coy, the Soviets stepped in again. In later years they played a critical role in oil exploration as well. In 1973–74, it was estimated that '30 per cent of India's steel, 35 per cent of our oil, 20 per cent of our electrical power, 65 per cent of heavy electrical equipment and 85 per cent of our heavy machine-making machines are produced in projects set up with Soviet aid'.[8]

When relations between India and China began to deteriorate from 1959 with the Dalai Lama seeking refuge in India and military clashes on the Sino-lndian border, the USSR did not automatically side with its Communist brother, but remained neutral, which itself was a great achievement at that time. Nehru was well aware of the significance of the Soviet stance, and he moved closer to the USSR. The Chinese also date the beginning of their differences with the Soviet Union to the same episode. In the same year, India and the Soviet Union signed their first agreement for military supplies and in 1960 India received 'supply dropping aircraft, helicopters and engineering equipment for the Border Roads Development Board which was to construct roads in the areas disputed by China'.[9] In mid-1962, an agreement permitting India to manufacture MiG aircraft was concluded, this being the first time the Soviets had let a non-Communist country manufacture sophisticated military equipment which even the Chinese had not been licensed to do.

The Chinese attack on India in October 1962 found the USSR again maintaining neutrality, at least partly because it occurred when the Cuban missile crisis was at its peak. Later, in December 1962, Suslov, the important Soviet leader, at the meeting of the Supreme Soviet, unambiguously declared that China was responsible for the war.

Unlike the Western powers who failed to deliver on promises of military supplies in the wake of the Indo-China war, the Soviets in 1963 signed more agreements for sale of arms and supplied interceptors and helicopters, tanks, mobile radar sets, surface-toair missiles, submarines, missile boats and patrol ships. They helped India develop manufacturing facilities for MiG aeroplanes and to build a naval dockyard. It was this independent manufacturing base that helped India to win the 1971 war. Importantly, unlike the US, they neither stationed personnel to supervise use of equipment, nor laid down difficult conditions for deployment of equipment.

The Soviet Union too gained from this link. India was an important entry-point to the Afro-Asian world of newly independent countries who did not want to become US satellites and were open to Soviet friendship. This helped the USSR in the Cold War as well. The Soviets had, like India, a long border with China and many unresolved boundary disputes. Friendship with India

kept China in check and this suited the Soviets. Indian non-alignment tilted the balance away from the West and this too was a help. Surrounded by US-inspired pacts and military bases, the USSR could do with a few friends, and therefore the relationship was one of equality. Besides, for all its faults, Marxism is anti-racist, anti-imperialist and pro-poor, and this precluded any adoption of a patronizing attitude by the Soviets, something which the Americans often tended to slip into, much to Indian annoyance. Indo-Soviet friendship thus emerged as one of the most critical elements of Indian foreign policy.

Relations with Neighbours

India's relations with her neighbours were of central concern to her and fortunately, till 1962, apart from Pakistan, she was on good terms with all her neighbours. With Nepal, she signed a Treaty of Peace and Friendship in 1950, which gave Nepal unrestricted access for commercial transit through India, and secured Nepal's total sovereignty while making both countries responsible for each other's security. With Burma, too, the problem of Indian settlers and a long uncharted border were settled amicably. The issue of Tamil settlers in Sri Lanka was not as easy of solution, and tensions remained, but these did not flare up in this period, and otherwise amicable ties were maintained. With Pakistan, however, and in later years with China, serious problems were faced, and the relations with them are discussed at length below.

Pakistan

Nehru and the Congress leaders had agreed reluctantly to the Partition of India as the solution to an intractable problem and also in the hope that this would end the hostility. But, in fact, the acrimony was only transferred to the international sphere. Communal riots and transfers of population on an unprecedented scale had in any case led to strained relations but the Pakistani invasion of Kashmir in October 1947, just two months after independence, unleashed a chain of cause and effect whose latest act was played out in Kargil. Kashmir's accession to India was a troubled one. When the British left, most of the Indian states ruled indirectly by the British but nominally by Indian princes joined up with either India or Pakistan and the very real danger of Balkanization, almost encouraged by the British, was averted. However, a few states, some of whose rulers, encouraged by British officers and Pakistan, entertained grandiose but unreal ambitions of independence, held out for some time. Among these were Hyderabad, Junagadh and Kashmir. Hyderabad and Junagadh had little real choice as they were surrounded by Indian territory. But Kashmir had a border with Pakistan, a majority Muslim population, a Hindu ruler, and a radical popular movement for democracy led by Sheikh Abdullah and the National Conference which was very friendly with Nehru and the Congress—enough potent ingredients for whipping up a recipe for trouble. The Maharaja asked for a standstill agreement for one year to make up his mind. Pakistan formally accepted his request and though India was yet to reply, its stand had always been that the people's wishes should be ascertained by an election and therefore it was quite willing to wait and accept the verdict of the elections. However, clearly worried that the popular verdict in Kashmir was not likely to go in its favour, Pakistan decided to jump the gun and sent in so-called tribesmen from the Frontier Province, aided by regular armed forces, to invade Kashmir. The Maharaja appealed to India for help but India could only send in her armies

if Kashmir acceded to India. The Maharaja signed the Instrument of Accession, the only legal requirement, as had hundreds of other rulers, and Kashmir became a part of India. Indian troops reached Srinagar just in time to save the capital city from falling into the hands of the invaders. India pushed back the Pakistani 'volunteers' to a considerable extent, and also put in a complaint with the UN against Pakistani aggression. There, instead of getting justice, India learnt her first lesson in Cold War politics. Encouraged by the British who continued to nurture a resentment of the Congress and India and a fondness for the Muslim League and Pakistan, and also for strategic reasons of wanting Pakistan as a frontline state against the USSR, the US also lined up behind Pakistan. The Soviet Union had not yet made up its mind whether India was any longer 'a running dog of British imperialism' and so it gave no support. Nevertheless, India dutifully accepted the UN resolution asking for a ceasefire, even though the military situation was to her advantage. Nehru was much criticized later for going to the UN and for offering to hold a plebiscite. But neither criticism holds, as Pakistan could have gone to the UN if India had not, and the UN could have asked for the holding of a plebiscite. India has also been often misunderstood on its later refusal to hold a plebiscite, because it is not widely known that the UN resolution of August 1948 laid down two preconditions for holding a plebiscite. One, that Pakistan should withdraw its forces from the state of Jammu and Kashmir and two, that the authority of the Srinagar administration should be restored over the whole state. These conditions were never met and in the meantime Kashmir went on to hold elections for its Constituent Assembly, which voted for accession to India and drew up a constitution which declared Kashmir an integral part of India. The Indian government now took the stand that the Constituent Assembly's vote was a sufficient substitute for plebiscite. Kashmir later participated in the Indian general elections as well as held its own state elections, thus rendering irrelevant the debate over plebiscite. In any case, India had never accepted the two-nation theory that all Muslims naturally owed allegiance to the Muslim League and all Muslim-majority areas belonged to Pakistan and on that basis Kashmir should go to Pakistan—a Pakistani argument that often appealed to Western observers unfamiliar with the history of the Indian national movement.

There was a brief period in 1953–54 when it seemed the Kashmir issue may be resolved. On Mohammed Ali Bogra becoming prime minister in 1953, following cordial visits between him and Nehru, a joint communique was issued on 20 August 1953, stating that Nehru had agreed to hold a plebiscite in Kashmir. But the brief flame of hope was snuffed out by the exigencies of Cold War politics. The US had decided after Korea that Indian non-alignment was immoral and it should give military aid to Pakistan. In the UN Security Council, while India wanted as Plebiscite Administrator someone from a small neighbouring country, the name that was proposed was of a senior US Service Officer, Admiral Nimitz. The last chance of a compromise disappeared.

The Kashmir issue continued to be used to needle India in the UN, especially as Pakistan became more and more integrated into the US-fed Western alliance system via membership of CENTO, SEATO, the Baghdad Pact and a military pact with the US in 1954. India had clearly refused to play the US game and Pakistan was more than willing. (Before independence too the Muslim League had happily played the British game; its child, Pakistan, now did US bidding. The Congress continued its anti-imperialist tradition.) In this situation, to get a solution on Kashmir would need a miracle. Only when the Soviet Union began to understand the value of Indian non-

alignment and openly supported India on Kashmir could India heave a sigh of relief. From 1956 onwards, the Soviet Union used its veto powers in the UN Security Council to thwart all resolutions on Kashmir unacceptable to India.

India could, with Soviet support, ward off the international pressure on the Kashmir issue through the mid- and late 1950s and early 1960s. But the Chinese attack in 1962 which forced her to turn to the West for help, made it very difficult for her to withstand US and British pressure but Pakistan overplayed its hand by asking for almost the whole of Kashmir and lost its chance. From 1962 Pakistan also began to line up with the Chinese, thus threatening to engulf India in a pincer movement, which almost came true in 1971 but didn't, to the great disappointment of the US. In the mid1960s, for a short while the USSR also explored the possibility of moving a little closer to Pakistan (the Tashkent initiative by Kosygin to end the Indo-Pak war of 1965 was part of that) but fortunately for India, and not without Indian encouragement, the USSR realized that Pakistan was too deeply integrated into the Western system to be of use to it.

The rancour that characterized Indo-Pak relations was a source of great sadness to Nehru and Indians in general. A common history, geography, culture, and goal of improving the condition of their poverty-stricken people should have brought about cooperation between the two countries. Nehru tried his best to remove all other irritants in the relationship, and showed great generosity on the division of pre-Partition assets, compensation to refugees and division of Indus basin waters. He even visited Pakistan in 1953. There is a little-known story about a large sum of money that India was to give Pakistan as part of the Partition settlement. When Pakistan invaded Kashmir, the Indian government held up the transfer. Gandhiji came to know of it and immediately had it sent to Pakistan, brushing aside the objections of Nehru and Patel that they were only withholding it for the time being so that it was not used for the purposes of war. At the same time, Gandhiji fully supported the Indian armed defence of Kashmir.

It is sometimes said that Pakistani foreign policy is better than ours. It may help to remember the comment of K.P.S. Menon:[10]

> The net result of Pakistan's diplomacy, however, was that Ayub Khan lost his job, Yahya Khan lost his freedom and Pakistan lost half its territory.

China

India adopted a policy of friendship towards China from the very beginning. The Congress had been sympathetic to China's struggle against imperialism and had sent a medical mission to China in the 1930s as well as given a call for boycott of Japanese goods in protest against Japanese occupation of China. India was the first to recognize the new People's Republic of China on 1 January 1950. Nehru had great hopes that the two countries with their common experience of suffering at the hands of colonial powers and common problems of poverty and underdevelopment would join hands to give Asia its due place in the world. Nehru pressed for representation for Communist China in the UN Security Council, did not support the US position in the Korean war, and tried his best to bring about a settlement in Korea. In 1950, when China occupied Tibet, India was unhappy that it had not been taken into confidence, but did not question China's rights over Tibet since at many times in Chinese history Tibet had been subjugated by

China. In 1954, India and China signed a treaty in which India recognized China's rights over Tibet and the two countries agreed to be governed in their mutual relations by the principles of Panch Sheel. Differences over border delineation were discussed at this time but China maintained that it had not yet studied the old Kuomintang maps and these could be sorted out later.

Relations continued to be close and Nehru went to great lengths to project China and Chou En-lai at the Bandung Conference. In 1959, however, there was a big revolt in Tibet and the Dalai Lama fled Tibet along with thousands of refugees. He was given asylum in India but not allowed to set up a government-in-exile and dissuaded from carrying on political activities. Nevertheless, the Chinese were unhappy. Soon after, in October 1959, the Chinese opened fire on an Indian patrol near the Kongka pass in Ladakh, killing five Indian policemen and capturing a dozen others. Letters were exchanged between the two governments, but a common ground did not emerge. Then, Chou En-lai was invited for talks to Delhi in April 1960, but not much headway could be made and it was decided to let officials sort out the details first.

The 1962 Chinese Attack

On 8 September 1962, Chinese forces attacked the Thagla ridge and dislodged Indian troops, but this was taken as a minor incident. Nehru went off to London for a conference and after returning home once again left for Colombo on 12 October. A week later, the Chinese army launched a massive attack and overran Indian posts in the eastern sector in NEFA or what is now Arunachal Pradesh. The Indian army commander in NEFA fled without any effort at resistance leaving the door wide open for China to walk in. In the western sector, on 20 October, thirteen forward posts were captured by the Chinese in the Galwan valley, and the Chushul airstrip threatened. There was a great outcry in the country and a feeling of panic about Chinese intentions. It was thought that the Chinese would come rushing in to the plains and occupy Assam, and perhaps other parts as well. Nehru wrote two letters to President Kennedy on 9 November, describing the situation as 'really desperate' and asking for wide-ranging military help. He also sought Britain's assistance. Twenty-four hours later, the Chinese declared a unilateral withdrawal and, as unpredictably as it had appeared, the Chinese dragon disappeared from sight, leaving behind a heartbroken friend and a confused and disoriented people.

The Aftermath

India took a long time to recover from the blow to its self-respect, and perhaps it was only the victory over Pakistan in the Bangladesh war, in which China and the US were also supporting Pakistan, that restored the sense of self-worth. Nehru never really recovered from the blow, and his death in May 1964 was most likely hastened by it. Worse, at the pinnacle of his outstanding career, he had to face attacks from political opponents who would never have dared otherwise. He was forced to sacrifice Krishna Menon, his longtime associate and then Defence Minister. The policy of nonalignment, which he had nurtured with such care, seemed for a while unlikely to be able to withstand the body-blow delivered by a friend. The irony was that it was derailed by a Socialist country and not by a capitalist power. Right-wing forces and pro-West elements loudly criticized Nehru. They used the opportunity to block a constitutional amendment aimed at strengthening land ceiling legislation. The Third Plan was badly affected and resources had to be

diverted for defence. The Congress lost three parliamentary by-elections in a row and Nehru faced in August 1963 the first no-confidence motion of his life.

India's relations with other countries were powerfully affected by the Chinese attack, as the 'China factor' loomed large in foreign policy. The US and the UK had responded positively with help in the crisis, so they could not be shrugged off once it receded. True to form, however, with Pakistani prompting, they tried their best to use India's weakness to get her to surrender on Kashmir, hinting broadly at a quid pro quo by way of military aid, but Nehru managed somehow to withstand the pressure. Nor were these countries willing to really underwrite massive aid in return for abandoning non-alignment. The figures mentioned were in the range of $60–120 million, hardly princely sums! But there was considerable increase in US influence, especially on military affairs. US intelligence agencies developed links in the name of countering the Chinese threat, and even planting a nuclear-powered device in the Himalayas to monitor Chinese military activities. Nehru tried to counter this subtly, and pushed ahead with military agreements with the Soviets, who actually turned out to be far more willing to give India what she needed in the long term than the US, which put impossible conditions for niggardly amounts of aid. Pakistan sidled up to China, and thinking India was truly weakened, launched the 1965 war.

Whose Fault Was It?

At the time of the attack, and afterwards, in the Press and in academic writing, attempts have been made to hold Nehru responsible for Chinese perfidy. One kind of argument sees him as a naive fool who was blinded by sentiment and failed to guard Indian interests in the face of an inevitable Communist betrayal. Another view, expounded most notably by Neville Maxwell in *India's China War,* makes Nehru out to be a stubborn nationalist who, pushed by jingoist public pressure, refused to settle the borders with China on the very reasonable terms offered by the Chinese and instead followed from 1959 a 'forward policy' which provoked the Chinese to attack in self-defence. Neither view does justice to the sophistication of Nehru's understanding of China and the subtlety of his policy.

Nehru's understanding of Chinese history, of the history of revolutions, especially the Russian revolution, had convinced him that China should not be isolated and pushed into a corner, but should be brought into the community of nations and its revolution humanized. 'We know enough history to realize that a strong China is normally an expansionist China,'[11] he said, but did not want to precipitate any conflict with China as it would be as disastrous for both countries as was the French–German conflict. Before the 1962 attack, on 7 December 1961, in the Lok Sabha he said, 'a huge elephant of a country sitting on our border is itself a fact that we could not ignore'. He added that soon after the Chinese revolution he had come 'to the conclusion that our borders were going to be, well, threatened in some way'. Nehru's long statement on 3 September 1963 in the Rajya Sabha explained at length about not wanting to spend too much on the military, about the emphasis on building one's own strength as that was the only security. 'No country that is not industrialised is militarily strong today', and 'the real thing before us is to strengthen India industrially and not superficially, by getting an odd gun or an odd aircraft'. With Pakistan already hostile, India did not need another neighbour as an enemy. Preparing for war on two fronts would have meant an end to development. Therefore, the conflict, even if inevitable, should be delayed

as much as possible by adopting a friendly approach and asking others to do the same, for example by trying to get China into the UN.

He understood that the Chinese occupation of Tibet meant a common border with attendant conflicts. But he also saw that China could not think of expansionism as yet, as it had big problems to solve. After the revolt in Tibet, and the Dalai Lama's arrival, and the border clashes, he was well aware of the dangers, but what good would it have done to threaten China? In an effort to checkmate the Chinese he did make diplomatic preparations, by moving closer to the Soviets. He had never bought the line that Communist China and Communist USSR would team up, and perhaps along with Indian Communists, threaten the Indian state. He did not believe that China was a tool in the hands of the Soviets, nor did he make the mistake of thinking that the Soviet Union would back Communist brothers against Indian friends, as many in India argued.

Nehru was shocked at the scale of the attack, as he had thought that there may be occassional border skirmishes here and there, but not an invasion of this nature. He erred in not anticipating the precise nature of the attack, rather than in the foreign policy he pursued. A further mistake was the panic in appealing to the US and UK for help, as next day the Chinese withdrew. Irresponsible attacks on Nehru by sections of the Press, the Opposition parties, and even members of his own party had led to this knee-jerk response. The failure of nerve on the battlefield was compounded by that in the country at large with Nehru rather than the Chinese becoming the butt of attack! Sadly, the country showed an inability to face adversity stoically, with faith in its proven leaders, and instead fell into despair and mutual recrimination. To his credit, Nehru tried his best to retrieve the situation and get the country back to its bearings.

Most commentators are now agreed that India's defeat at China's hands in 1962 was not the result of Nehru's naive faith in Chinese friendship and Utopian pacifism and consequent neglect of India's defence preparedness. On the contrary, between 1949–50 and 1962, the strength of the Indian Armed Forces doubled from 280,000 to 550,000 and that of the Indian Air Force from seven combat squadrons in 1947 to nineteen by 1962. The war with Pakistan in 1965 was fought with the same equipment and no debacle occurred. Nehru was well aware and had been warning of the possibilities of border clashes with the Chinese since 1959. But neither the political nor the military leadership anticipated the precise nature of the Chinese attack, and were therefore taken by surprise. Apparently, the military leadership thought in terms of either border clashes or a full-scale war in the plains of Assam, but not about the possibility of a limited deep thrust and withdrawal. The Chief of Staff, General Thimayya, believed that a total war with China was unthinkable because China would have full Soviet support. He and other senior officers do not appear to have been aware of Sino-Soviet differences. Nor does he seem to have conceived of a role for the Air Force 'at a time when the Indian Air Force could have swept the skies over Arunachal Pradesh and Tibet without any opposition from the Chinese'.[12] (Nehru asked the US for an air cover without consulting his own Air Force.)

The failure was also, it is felt, due to the lack of a proper system of higher defence command and management, and because there was no system of defence planning, and the structure of civil–military relations was flawed. The chiefs of staff were not integrated into the civilian policy-making structure, but remained theatre commanders preparing for the near-term future

but not for the long-term future security environment. Despite Nehru's warnings since 1959, of trouble with China, much professional thought had not gone into the planning for a war in the Himalayas. It was a failure of logistics, of intelligence, or rather of analysis of intelligence, of coordination of different wings such as the army with the Air Force, etc. It was a failure of nerve on the part of the military commander, who had an excellent record and had been decorated earlier, but withdrew without a fight, though it is believed he could have held out for at least seven days. The Chinese, on their part, withdrew as quickly as they came, having achieved their objective of humiliating India by a quick but limited thrust deep into Indian territory. Again, the Indian side had failed to anticipate the Chinese withdrawal and had now begun planning to face a full-scale war in the plains of Assam.

Maxwell's theory of Indian aggressiveness is not treated seriously by most experts, as it is too obvious that India had no inkling, leave alone intentions, of provoking a conflict. Her prime minister and Defence Minister were out of the country, the chief of staff on leave, a senior commander on a cruise. What was India to gain from provoking a war anyway? On the contrary, it can be shown that it was Chinese imperatives, of which Maxwell shows no awareness, that brought them to war, not Indian provocation. And the factors that propelled China in the direction of conflict were beyond Nehru's control.

Take Tibet. Every strong Chinese government had tried to integrate Tibet. But Tibet wanted independence. Nevertheless, Nehru accepted the Chinese position on Tibet in the 1954 Panch Sheel agreement without even getting a quid pro quo on the border, which was possibly a mistake. Only in 1959 did Chou Enlai claim territory in Ladakh and NEFA, this is in the wake of the Khampa revolt and the flight of the Dalai Lama to India with many refugees. China accused India of instigating the Dalai Lama and objected to the asylum. No Indian government could have refused asylum and India did not instigate the rebellion. Nehru did not allow a Tibetan government-in-exile, or any political activities. But he could not have prevented the Tibetan revolt!

Nor could Nehru succeed, despite his best efforts, in influencing US policy. The US refusal to accommodate China, her insistence that Formosa (later Taiwan) was the only legitimate China, which also meant that Communist China was denied a seat in the UN Security Council the attempt to checkmate her in Korea, and Indo-China, frustrated her and pushed her on the path to aggressive assertion. In fact, the US played no small role in making China paranoid about security and helping the extremist left elements to come to the fore in China.

Nor was Nehru the architect of Sino-Soviet differences which had their own role to play in increasing Chinese insecurity and pushing her in an adventurist direction. These differences had existed for some time but came into the open in 1959. When clashes took place between India and China on the border, the Soviets remained neutral. In April–May 1962, a number of incidents occurred on the Sino-Soviet border in Sinkiang. The Soviets charged the Chinese with more than 5,000 violations of the border, and the Chinese charged the Soviets with enticing tens of thousands of their citizens across the border. In 1959, the Soviets had repudiated the treaty that they had signed with China on development of nuclear weapons. In the first week of August 1962, the Soviets signed an agreement with India on the manufacture of MiG-21 aircraft. They had not

done so with China. In the last week of August, the Soviets told the Chinese that they were going ahead with negotiations for a Partial Test Ban Treaty. The Chinese took this as being aimed at checking their efforts to develop nuclear weapons. This was all the more galling to the Chinese because they felt that the Soviet Union was now in a position to use its weight to secure Chinese interests in the international arena. To quote V.P. Dutt, Sinologist and foreign policy expert:[13]

> China had arrived at a new theoretical understanding of its own national interests. It had despaired of a peaceful solution to the outstanding problems with the United States and the fulfillment of its primary objectives, namely the return of Taiwan . . . acceptance of China as a great power, seat in the Security Council . . . It had now come to believe that the international balance of forces was shifting in favour of the socialist camp in view of Soviet advances in rocketry and ICBMs and that the time had come for the adoption of an uncompromising and militant line in order to compel the United States . . . to make concessions to China.

The Chinese were also upset that Afro-Asian countries were following India's line of seeking friendship and assistance from both the USSR and the US, rather than the Chinese line of keeping a distance from both. By reducing India's stature, they could hope to have their line accepted.

Therefore, it is not at all unlikely that the Chinese attack on India had little to do with issues between India and China, but was a reaction to a feeling of isolation, abandonment and frustration. By attacking India, they may have wanted to topple Nehru or at least push India into the Western camp so that the USSR could have no illusions about Indian non-alignment and would have to rethink its policy of peaceful coexistence, which, the Chinese figured, was leading to their isolation. They failed on both counts. In fact, V.P. Dutt[14] testifies that Deng Xiaoping said later to an Indian delegation of which he was a member that it was Khrushchev who was responsible for the 1962 war.

Thus, the causes of the 1962 attack were related more to China's own compulsions, that to anything that Nehru or India did or could have done. Not being able to get the recognition of the US, a UN seat, leadership of Afro-Asia, Soviet support on the nuclear issue or the border dispute with India, a leftward turn took place in Chinese politics. By humiliating India, it wanted to show that India's policy of peace and non-alignment was not feasible. Nor was the Soviet policy of peaceful coexistence. India would leave the policy of non-alignment under pressure and other countries of Asia and Africa would follow the Chinese lead. Thus, the cause of the Indian military humiliation could not be reduced to Indian foreign policy failure. It could 'only be characterized as one of those unforseeable random events of history'.[15]

If India's policy towards China was a failure, which other country's was a success? The US did a complete volte-face in 1971, and the USSR began changing, at least after 1959.

The debacle of the India–China war in no way raises doubts on the correctness of Nehru's basic thrust in foreign policy. For example, non-alignment ensured that even in the India–China war, the US and the Soviet blocs were not ranged on opposite sides and India succeeded in getting greater or lesser sympathy from both. This was an unusual occurrence in the days of the Cold

War. Secondly, Nehru had been right in pursuing a policy of friendship with China, even if it ended the way it did. Especially given the hostile relationship with Pakistan (which surfaced soon after independence with the conflict over Kashmir and grew into a serious threat when it was exacerbated by the US decision in 1954 to give military help to Pakistan), it was in India's interest to try its best to avoid having another hostile neighbour and thus be caught in a pincer movement. India's espousal of China's right to have a seat in the UN was not given up by Nehru even after the Indo-China war since he rightly believed that the Western powers' isolation of China only pushed China into becoming more irresponsible. Besides, as Nehru was most fond of pointing out, defence was not just a matter of weapons, it was also a function of economic development, of self-reliance; otherwise defence was only skin-deep. A newly independent poor country like India could have ill-afforded to divert her scarce resources into building up a massive military machine. On the contrary, by building up India's economic strength, Nehru enabled his successors to win impressive military victories.

Conclusion

The political foresight and pragmatism that informed Nehru's practice of non-alignment is testified to by the quick course correction that has had to be undertaken every time attempts have been made to move away from it.

When Indira Gandhi became prime minister in 1966, she felt that relations with the US and the West could be and needed to be dramatically improved. This was because, on the one hand, the US had a better idea of Chinese militancy and had promised help if China attacked again, and on the other, the grave food shortages caused by the drought and the critical economic situation caused by the cumulative effect of the two wars in 1962 and 1965 necessitated such help. It was in pursuance of this line that Mrs Gandhi agreed to devalue the rupee on US advice though it is another matter that it might have been in Indian interest to do so. She also visited the US in the hope of receiving economic assistance, expediting food shipments and of evolving a new relationship. She came back sadder and wiser and found that President Lyndon Johnson, despite public posturing to the contrary, deliberately delayed responding to urgent Indian requests for food and other economic help. Indira Gandhi later said that one reason for this was to pressurize India to stop criticism of US bombing of Vietnam. Indira Gandhi was, however, quick to learn her lesson. She set India firmly on the path of agricultural independence via implementation of the Green Revolution strategy and set about strengthening the non-alignment movement and Indian autonomy in international affairs—the latter being intimately tied to the former. She also gradually strengthened ties with the Soviet Union, persuading it through a vigorous diplomatic effort in 1966–67 to resile from a position of treating India and Pakistan on the basis of parity and giving military assistance to Pakistan.

The Janata government when it came to power in 1977 talked loudly about practising genuine non-alignment, but found soon that the earlier article had been genuine enough, and essentially fell back on following the Nehruvian policies. They entered into negotiations for huge arms deals with the Soviet Union which were concluded by Mrs Gandhi on her return to power in 1980. They also had to renege on their promise of cutting down defence expenditure.

Rajiv Gandhi too found very soon that his attempts to come closer to the US were not very fruitful and reverted back to the emphasis on non-alignment, nuclear disarmament, support to South Africa, and so on.

Non-alignment was not a blueprint for policy, it was an approach, a framework, a method, not a straitjacket but a lodestar by which the young nation could steer its course in the dark night. Instead of imposing any rigidity in Indian foreign policy, nonalignment let it evolve to meet the changing needs of Indian society. It did not come in the way of the close relationship that developed with the USSR from 1954 onwards. Nor did it come in the way of India joining the Commonwealth. In fact, Nehru's internationalist and humanitarian worldview did not lead to any sacrifice of Indian interests or neglect of her defence needs, as is sometimes alleged. Nor was Nehru a pacifist who refused to use force to defend Indian interests when necessary. In 1947–48, he ordered the use of force in Kashmir (with Gandhiji's approval), Junagadh and Hyderabad, and in 1961 in Goa.

The visionary nature of Nehru's understanding of international relations is shown by the fact that the rest of the world has slowly come to adopt much of what was dismissed as naive and impractical when first articulated. Nuclear disarmament has become an accepted and much-desired goal globally. Both the US and the Soviet Union agreed that a nuclear war could not be won and therefore must not be fought. In February 1972, the Americans and the Chinese signed the Shanghai Communique which declared their mutual relations to be based on the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence—Nehru's Panch Sheel!

It is no small consolation to India that the Chinese were forced to adopt the very same principles, expounded by the very same man, that they had betrayed so heartlessly in 1962 when they attacked India. These principles were first embodied at Nehru's instance in the Agreement on Tibet between India and China in 1954. In further vindication of Nehru, and Gandhi, the Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev signed with prime minister Rajiv Gandhi the New Delhi Declaration of November 1996, laying down the principle of non-violence in international relations, and in community life within nations. It is being increasingly realized that even conventional wars at the modern level of technology are too destructive. Besides, they have singularly failed either to change borders very much (as in the Iraq–Iran war) or to keep populations under occupation (as in Vietnam, Afghanistan, the West Bank, etc.) The only workable ideal is that of a nuclear weapon-free and non-violent world.

One may conclude with a quote from a letter written to Nehru by Churchill, an old foe:[16]

> I always admired your ardent wish for peace and the absence of bitterness in your consideration of the antagonisms that had in the past divided us. Yours is indeed a heavy burden and responsibility, shaping the destiny of your many millions of countrymen, and playing your outstanding part in world affairs. I wish you well in your task. Remember 'The Light of Asia'.