India-Ussr Relations in Cold War Era: A Study of Various Issues

Javid Ahmad Mir
Research Scholar at School of Social Sciences (Department of Political Science) DAVV Indore (M.P) India

Abstract: India’s attitude towards the USSR has been derived from its foreign policy objectives. In understanding and evaluating this attitude, it is therefore, indispensable to keep in view two important considerations. First the assumption, motivations, style basic goals and the principles of India’s foreign policy which governed her relations with other states in general, second the specific goals which India sought to achieve in her relations with the USSR. In this study an attempt has been made to analyze various issues and the support of both the countries for each other.

Key Words: Ussr, India, Hungary Crisis, Bangladesh Crisis, Goa Issue, Kashmir Issue.

INTRODUCTION

Even though the history of diplomatic relations between India and the erstwhile Soviet Union is of recent origin, the history of economic and cultural contacts between the peoples of these two countries starts earlier than the October 1917 revolution in Russia or the British conquest of India. To a Russian in the medieval period, India was a land of plenty and splendor. The first Russian account of India, written in the 12th and 13th century, is known as "The Relation about India" or "The story of India the Rich". It was a Slavonic translation of a Latin tale. The story is about a rich Indian merchant who introduced new standards of tastes to the Russians. The centuries old history of Indo-Russian friendship has many red letter days. Russia has been displaying a genuine interest towards India for a long time. Indo-Soviet relationship had its roots on the one hand in the struggle against Western imperialism, colonialism and on the other hand in India’s national interest. This growing friendship between India and the USSR was strongly resented by the United States which saw in the emerging relationship, the soviet attempt to spread communist ideology in South Asia.

Objectives:
1. To study India-USSR relations during Nehru era.
2. To study the various issues between both the countries.

Methodology
For the purpose of the study, both published and unpublished secondary data has been utilized. The data of India-Russia relations were also analyzed and the data has been collected from International Security, Centre for Policy Research, Indian Institute of Defense and Analysis etc and from various Books, News Papers and also from Internet.

India’s relations with Soviet Union during Nehru era: India since its independence in 1947 has followed a policy of peace and non-alignment. India has always raised its voice in favour of truth and Justice. It was after India got its Independence in 1947 that the Nation has able to form its own foreign policy. India relationship with the Soviet Union started off very well due to Pandit Nehru’s initiative. India’s relations with the Soviet Union in those first five year after independence were ambivalent, guided by Nehru’s decision, to remain non-aligned and take active part in the Commonwealth of Nations. A cordial relationship with India that began in the 1950s represented the most successful of the Soviet attempts to foster closer relations with Third World countries. The relationship began with a visit by Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru to the Soviet Union in June 1955 and Khrushchev's return trip to India in the fall of 1955. While in India, Khrushchev announced that the Soviet Union supported Indian sovereignty over the disputed territory of the Kashmir region and over Portuguese coastal enclaves such as Goa. However in February 1954, when the US administration announced the decision to provide arms and supply sophisticated military hardware and economic aid to Pakistan, this development alarmed India. This close Pakistan-US relationship also did not down well with Soviet Union, which also utilized this opportunity to develop a closer relationship with India. Although Indo-Soviet cooperation had begun much earlier, Soviet defence and military cooperation with India began mainly when Sino-Soviet and Sino-Indian relations started deteriorating. Following the 1962 Sino-Indian war,
the Sino-Pakistani axis was also a force for growing cooperation between India and Soviet Union.

There were various issues on which India and USSR support each other during cold war era at international level. Some of the major issues on which both the countries support each other are discussed below.

**Hungary Crisis:** Amid this growing campaign of courtship, the Soviet military intervention in Hungary in the winter of 1956 created a great disappointment in India. Nehru was greatly shocked by the Soviet armed action in Hungary for it came at a time when he believed that post Stalin leaders were liberalizing their regime at home. On Nov 5, 1956 Nehru addressing the UNESCO Conference in New Delhi Bracketed Hungary with Egypt as cases of “outrage of human dignity and freedom” and implicitly criticized for violating the five principles of peaceful coexistence. India half hearted demand that the people of Hungary should be allowed to determine their future according to their own wishes and that the foreign forces (Soviet forces) should be withdrawn was greatly resented by USSR though many critics in India opined that Nehru government should have been more forthcoming in its criticism of the Soviet intervention in Hungary. As a matter of fact, when the question of Soviet intervention was debated in the UN General Assembly and a resolution condemning armed Soviet interventions in Hungary was put to vote, India had abstained. Thus India did not unequivocally condemn the Soviet action. What was not unfortunate was India’s decision to vote in favor of the Soviet Union when a 5-power resolution calling for free elections in Hungary was put to vote. In other words India, indirectly supported the Soviet action. There was a strong reaction in India against our pro-soviet stand in the United Nations.

**Soviet Support on India on Goa and Kashmir:**

The Soviet support to India’s claims on Goa and Kashmir had been made public from the very outset. During their 1955 visit leaders had expressed the hope that Goa and Kashmir would soon become a part of India. At the time of Indian operation in Goa, Leonid Brezhnev came to India on an official visit as chairman of the President of the USSR Supreme Soviet. Affirming the Soviet support to India's action, he declared, “The Indian people have got now the opportunity to see clearly who are their real friends and supports of national liberation of the peoples, and who are the peoples who merely camouflage their intentions with talk about friendship and, renouncing colonialism in words, are trying in fact to hamper, by all means, the liquidation of last bases of their system of plunder.” The Soviet prime minister in a telegram to Nehru, conveying his cordial and sincere congratulations on the liberation of Goa and its reunification with India said the Indian Governments step was a great contribution to the cause of the noble struggle of the peoples for complete and immediate abolition of the disgraceful system of colonialism”. In February 1957 when the UK and USA came up with proposals in the security council for induction of UN force into Jammu and Kashmir the Soviets opposed it and vetoed the resolution. This electrified Indian public opinion, but was the logical culmination of the stand taken by Soviets five years earlier when they had strongly criticized DR Graham for having proposed such a step (without the authority of the council and contrary to the UN charter. In his communications to the two governments of India and Pakistan, the Anglo-Americans again came up with similar proposals and sought to renew the Graham mission in November 1957, the Soviet Union reiterated its position and made it clear that she would veto the western resolution as before.

**China as a factor in Indo-Soviet Relations:** The general bond of friendship between the two countries have been strengthened from time to time by state actions of the two countries in support of each other and for wider causes like decolonization and the fight against imperialism, Racialism and apartheid and for preserving peace. After maintaining a long silence on the Sino Indian dispute the Soviet Union came out with a cryptic statement on 8th September, 1959 in the TASS. According to it, the USSR had friendly relations with both china and India, built respectively on “fraternal ties” of international socialism and “friendly” collaboration in accordance with the idea of peaceful co-existence. It expressed the hope that India and China with both of whom the Soviet Union enjoyed friendly relations would settle their disputes peacefully.

**Indo- Pak War of 1965 and Soviet Role:** When in September 1965, the Indo-Pak war broke out; Moscow initiated important measure to limit it and issued a warning to both India and Pakistan. It also warned china to keep off from involvoment in the Indo-Pak war. On 20th Sep 1965 Russia came out with the offer of its good offices for ending the strained and hostile opportunity for bringing the two countries together on the soil. They offered their good offices for a meeting between India and Pakistan at Tashkent. It was subtle Soviet move to prove its growing interest and influence in soviet Asia, after some initial hesitation both India and Pakistan accepted the soviet offer to meet in
Tashkent. The Tashkent summit between India and Pakistan opened in first week of Jan 1966.

The Bangladeshi crisis and Indo-Soviet Friendship: The crisis in Bangladesh was caused by the short sighted policy of Pakistani president Yahiya Khan and his administration. Till 1971, the present Bangladesh was a province of Pakistan, and was called East Pakistan. Elections were held in December 1970 for Pakistan’s central legislature, the national Assembly. The elections resulted in absolute majority of the Awami League led by Sheikh Mujibur Rehman, Awami League was essentially a party, should have been appointed Prime Minister of Pakistan. But, the president and leadership in West Pakistan did not want to allow Mujib to become the Prime Minister. It was reported that Z.A. Bhutto could not bear a person from East Pakistan to be Prime Minister of the country. The session of the newly elected National Assembly scheduled for March 1971 was postponed rather than being appointed the Prime Minister; Sheikh Mujib was arrested and detained in West Pakistan. A revolt out in East Pakistan which was ruthlessly suppressed by Yahiya Khan Government, hundreds of people were killed in the atrocities committed on the people. Millions of people from East Pakistan fled and came to India as refugees. India’s economy was naturally affected by the influx of refugees. The United States earned down a request of Mrs. Gandhi to put pressure of Pakistan to normalize the situation so that about 10 million Bangla refugees could go back home. Pakistan decided to wage a war against India on the basis of allegation that India was responsible for unrest in East Pakistan, and the false propaganda that Indian troops were fighting as Mukti Bahini to defeat the Pakistani security forces. Pakistan had full support not only of the United States, but also of China. President Nixon of United states had told Mrs. Gandhi that if a war broke out between India and Pakistan, America might intervene on the side of Pakistan.

Indo-Soviet differences over Afghanistan issue: In January 1980 elections Mrs. Indira Gandhi made a spectacular return to power in India and this change of government in India once again revive the pre friendship and close cooperation between the two countries. The Soviet optimism proved to be correct when under Mrs. Indira Gandhi’s directive the Indian ambassador to the United Nations revised the Indian stand on Afghanistan crisis. Such an Indian stand however did not mean full support of soviet action as India expressed her dissatisfaction with the soviet action in a non-aligned third world country-Afghanistan. In February 1980 the soviet foreign minister Mr. Gromyko visited India and tried to enlist Indian support for soviet action. India on the other hand clearly expressed her unhappiness to him. Mrs. Gandhi made it clear to him that the third world countries were unhappy over Russian presence in Afghanistan. Differences between India and soviet union over Afghanistan crisis became clearly known when the joint declaration issued at the end of Gromyko’s visit did not gave any mention to Afghanistan, India and soviet union simply expressed their faith in the maintenance and further development of Indo-Soviet bilateral cooperation and mutual friendship. Both the countries agreed to keep aside the differences over Afghanistan and work for developing mutually beneficial cooperation between them.

CONCLUSION

In the phase of interdependence, no country large or small, powerful or weak, can afford to live in isolation. In course of interaction nation’s behavior has been constantly changing and influenced by each other. Though such interactions, each state pursues a broad range of policies in order to create an environment in which its interests can be served. Therefore, foreign policy becomes a crucial instrument to operationalize objectives of nation-states in the international arena. The relationships between the two countries - India and Russia (erstwhile Soviet Union) maintain a basic continuing from their accumulated inheritance stretching back to about 65 years after India got independence. India and Russia are democracies with a commitment of freedom of speech, assembly, press and a strong parliament and judiciary. Both countries enjoyed a close strategic relationship during the major portion of the cold war era. India's relations with the Soviet Union / Russian Federation have been profoundly shaped by the nature of her relations with the United States, China and Pakistan. USA arm s aid to Pakistan and its stand on Kashmir, Goa and Bangladesh; China's aggression against India and its continued support to Pakistan to wage tacit wars against India.

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Visit https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India%E2%80%93Russia_relations.