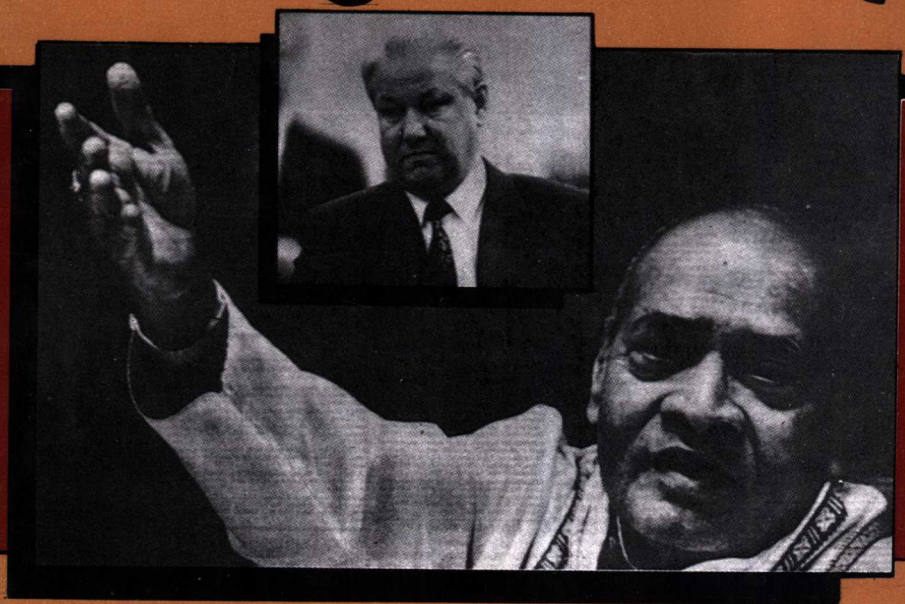
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND FOREIGN POLICY OF INDIA – 7

USSR/CIS and India's Foreign Policy



Edited by
VERINDER GROVER

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PREFACE

This book deals with the foreign policy and international relations of India with the Commonwealth of Independent States (former Soviet Union). The book starts with the article, "End of the Soviet Union and the Formation of CIS"; Martha Brill Olcott's excellent article, "The Slide into Disunion" gives a clear picture of changes that brought about a sea-change in the erstwhile Soviet Union. Professor Michael Mandelbaum's well-documented article, "Coup De Grace: The end of the Soviet Union" gives an excellent insight into those fateful years. Thought provoking articles of Girish Mathur and Swaminathan S.A. Aiyer focus on the Indo-Russian ties. The book is further divided into three parts. Part I of the book deals with Indo-Soviet relations in general. Hiren Mukherjee in his learned article recalls India's early contacts with the Soviet Union; E.N. Komarov in his article, "Historical Roots and Contemporary Development of Indo-Soviet Co-operation", makes an in-depth study of the historical background of Indo-Soviet relations. Dr. Mahavir Singh in his well-researched article goes into the early Soviet view of Indian political developments during the period 1947 to 1955; Professor Arthur Stein also makes a study in this field in his article, "India's Relations with the USSR 1953-63". Dr. A. Appadorai in his excellent article, "Indo-Soviet Relations", tries to convince that "politically and militarily India owes much to the Soviet Union."

Dr. Kuldip Singh highlights in his article the ideological context of Soviet aid to India during the Khrushchev era; Prem Varma puts forward convincingly the legalist analysis of the Indo-Soviet Treaty of Friendship and Non-alignment; Nishad in his article, "Soviet Social-Imperialism's Stranglehold over India", points out certain aspects of the exploitation of the Indian people by the ruling elite of USSR. Tribhuvan Nath in his article surveys the Soviet-Indian diplomatic relations and emphasises that these relations would serve the interests

of all peoples and the interests of universal peace, progress and prosperity. V. Sekgeyev's article, "Soviet Indian Co-operation at UNO", throws light on this co-operation which lasted many decades. A.D. Gorwala, however, strikes a discordent note in his article, "India should Keep Away From the Soviet Embrace", and criticises the Government of India for blindly following the Soviet Union.

Part II of the work deals with India's relations with the Soviet Union and the influence of other factors on the formation of these relations. Dr. Harish Kapur's article, "The Soviet Union and Indo-Pakistan Relations", throws light on the subject; and S.P. Seth in his article studies the role of Soviet Union in the Indo-Pak politics. Professor Raghunath Ram makes an incisive study of the "Soviet Policy Towards the Kashmir Issue". A.G. Noorani makes a balanced study of the Russian interests in Kashmir in his article, "Russia and Kashmir"; and Surendra Chopra's article, "Kashmir As a Factor in Indo-Soviet Relations", is a well-documented research article on the subject. Raghunath Ram neatly presents the Soviet policy towards India in his article, "Soviet Policy Towards India from the Tashkent Conference to the Bangladesh War." The latest period of Indo-USSR relations is covered by Professor Devendra Kaushik in his informative article, "India, USSR and East Europe: Emerging Trends under Rajiv Gandhi".

Part III of the book is devoted to the Indo-Soviet economic co-operation. A former President of India, Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed, gives a bird's eye-view of the Indo-Soviet industrial collaboration; Dr. B. Natarajan throws light on the Soviet aid to India; Kh. Papikyan in the article, "Soviet Assistance in Developing India's Power Industry", shows how co-operation between the two countries has "produced good results in developing India's power industry"; Veniamin Dymshits's article, "How Bhilai was Built", is an in-depth study of the project undertaken by India with the help of the Soviet Union; and O.P. Dhingra's article, "Impact of Soviet Co-operation on India's Industrial Development", gives a lucid account of the various projects which are "living monuments of international co-operation." These are important landmarks of this part of the volume.

This anthology is a systematic piecing together of articles contributed by scholars and specialists to the various journals of national and international repute. My special thanks are due to the *Indian Political Science Review, Punjab Journal of Politics, Yojana, India Quarterly, Eastern Economist, Journal of Constitutional and Parliamentary Studies, Orbis, International Studies, Asian Survey, Swarajya, Political Science*

Review, Commerce Current History, Link, World Focus, Foreign Affairs, the Times of India and the *Soviet Review* from which I have drawn freely. I express my deep sense of appreciation to all the contributors for their scholarly papers and gratitude to the various librarians and eminent scholars in the field who extended their co-operation to me.

New Delhi VERINDER GROVER

FORMATION OF COMMONWEALTH OF INDEPENDENT STATES (CIS)

I

END OF THE SOVIET UNION AND THE FORMATION OF CIS

VERINDER GROVER

The Soviet Union was declared defunct on 8 December, 1991 when the leaders of the Slav republics of Byelarus, Russia and Ukraine met near Minsk (Byelarus). The Presidents of Russia and Ukraine, Boris Yeltsin and Leonid Kravchuk, and the Chairman of the Supreme Soviet of Byelarus, Stanislav Shushkevich, issued a statement: "The USSR, as a subject of international law and geopolitical reality, ceases to exist." They announced that the new body which they had established, the Commonwealth of Independent States, was open to all republics of the former Soviet Union, and to any other state which shared its aims.

Gorbachev described the Minsk declaration as an "illegal and dangerous" constitutional coup. He attempted to use the union structures to guide developments, calling on 9 December 1991 for a Congress of Peoples' Deputies to be convened to discuss the Minsk agreement. The Kazakhastan President, Nursultan Nazarbayev, was also initially unenthusiastic over the exclusively Slav composition of the Commonwealth, and at a meeting on the same day between Nazarbayev, Gorbachev and Yeltsin, who was acting as the envoy of the Commonwealth, he said that Gorbachev was still needed as a central force.

The leaders of Kazakhastan and the Central Asian republics (Kirgiztan (formerly Kirghizia), Tajikistan, Turkenistan (formerly Turkmenia), and Uzbekistan) met in Askhabad in Turkmenistan on 12 December to discuss their reaction to the Minsk declaration. They decided to become members of the CIS provided they were given the status of its co-founders.

An important meeting of the leaders of the republics who had met in Minsk and Askhabad alongwith that of Moldova and the trans-Caucasian republics of Azerbaijan and Armenia was held on December 21, 1991. The participants in the meeting signed the December 8 protocol on the formation of the CIS. They signed a declaration which: (i) stated that the CIS was open to all former Soviet states and any other countries which shared its objectives; (ii) stated that strategic forces would remain under unified control; (iii) confirmed cooperation on a single economic space; and (iv) stated that member-states of the CIS undertook to honour the international obligations of the former Soviet Union.

Thus the Soviet Union was on 21st December 1991 replaced by a Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), grouping 11 of the former constituent republics of the Union (except Georgia) in a loose alliance, without central governing bodies. The CIS was formally established at a meeting in Alma Ata, when assurances were given to the world community that a single control would be maintained over the nuclear weapons on former Soviet territory, and that the treaty obligations of the Soviet Union would be respected by the newly independent states. The Russian Federation took over many of the functions of the former Union. On December 26 a joint session of the Soviet of the Republics and the Soviet of the Union issued a declaration on their abolition. Thus, completing the process of the demise of the USSR.

At a meeting in Minsk on 30 December further steps were taken to consolidate the CIS and temporary agreements were signed setting up councils of heads of state and of heads of government. The supreme body was the Council of Heads of State, which would take on the responsibility of legal succession from the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The councils would normally meet in Minsk, the Council of Heads of State at least every six and the Council of Heads of Government at least every three months; both would have rotating chairmanship. Joint sittings were allowed, as was the creation of working bodies.

While the working language would be Russian the official languages would be the state languages of the participating states. Agreement was also reached on strategic forces, whereby the CIS states undertook the former Soviet Union's obligations in international treaties, and pledged to pursue a coordinated policy in the areas of disarmament and international security.

II

THE SLIDE INTO DISUNION

MARTHA BRILL OLCOTT*

The days following the August coup attempt saw the Russian republic become the Soviet Union's dominant political power and many of the other republics rush to announce declarations of independence. The bids for independence were the culmination of nationalist aspirations that had been unleashed by Gorbachev's reform program. The task now is to "devise a new constitution to regulate the country's competing political intersts.....This would be a formidable task for even the most experienced constitutional lawmakers. It may be an impossible one for the Soviet Union's new democrats."

When Mikhail Gorbachev became Soviet Communist party general secretary in 1985, he seemed confident that he had the vision and the talent to imbue the soviet political system with the legitimacy needed to good the population into accepting possibly disruptive but nonetheless necessary economic reforms. His assessment was partly correct—the Soviet Union's political survival depended on the regime's ability to reform the economy. But the Soviet leader woefully underestimated the

* Martha Brill Olcott *is Professor of political science at Colgate University. She is the author of* The Kazakhs *(Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1987), and the editor of* The Soviet Multinational State *(Armonk, N.Y: M.E. Sharpe, Inc., 1990), as well as* Religion and Tradition in Islamic Central Asia *(Armonk, N.Y: M.E. Sharpe, Inc. forthcoming).*

complexity of his task. Political and economic reforms were not only inter-twined with, but also complicated by, the Soviet Union's "nationality problem".

In his early calculations Gorbachev simply overlooked this problem. Even after he realized that nationalism was an important political force, he continued to underestimate its disruptive potential. Until the failed coup in August, Gorbachev believed that economic recovery—based on preserving the Soviet Union as an integrated economic unit—would cause the nationalist movements to lose their political legitimacy.

Thus, the basic tension between economic and political reforms escaped Gorbachev's attention; his decision to open the political process brought to power nationalists, who opposed a united country. Given this flaw in his thinking, Gorbachev consistently stumbled over nationality relations be offering the republics too little, too late.

THE ERUPTION OF THE NATIONALITY ISSUE

During his first years in office, Gorbachev was influenced by his late mentor, General Secretary Yuri Andropov.[1] Like Andropov, Gorbachev believed that economic reform could not succeed without the removal of corrupt Communist party cadre who were preventing the Soviet economy's modernization. On coming to office in 1985, Gorbachev launched an anti-corruption campaign against the powerful political bosses who ran the Soviet republics. One by one the longtime republic overlords were disgraced and forced to retire. Some were ousted with relative ease, but a few demonstrated their political skill by successfully parrying Moscow's best efforts to bring about their dismissals.

Dinmukhammad Kunayev, a member of the Politburo for 15 years and Head of Kazakhstan's Communist party for more than 25 years, proved among the most tenacious republic leaders. However, on December 16, 1986, at a session of Kazakhstan's Central Committee that had been convened at Moscow's order, Kunayev announced that he was retiring and that his replacement would be Gennadi Kolbin, a Russian from outside Kazakhstan. As news of Kunayev's retirement spread, protesters demanding an explanation for Moscow's actions began to fill the main square in the republic's capital of Alma-Ata.

The demonstrators stayed in the square overnight. The next day special troops, armed with attack dogs and sharpened spades, were sent

to disperse the crowd. After two days of skirmishes, the protests came to an end. Gorbachev and Kazakhstan's prime minister, Nursultan Nazarbayev, condemned the disturbances as "nationalist"—inspired violence. According to official reports, one demonstrator and one policeman died, but unofficial sources say these figures are far too low.

The Alma-Ata riots strikingly demonstrated the cost of ignoring the "national" factor. The Moscow-based Russian reformers regarded Kunayev as an aging despot who had benefited those in his immediate circle at the expense of the masses. However, as protests of his removal showed, he was a hero to many Kazakhs.

Gorbachev learned his lesson. In the aftermath of the Alma-Ata riots, republic party leaders won greater discretionary authority to control their territories. The long dead Josef Stalin now became Moscow's principal target. Gorbachev planned to dismantle the Stalinist system, although no one knew quite what this meant. Glasnost, or openness, was encouraged. The people were told to speak their minds and even to join new, unofficial political groups to push for sweeping reforms.

Stalin's victims included millions of non-Russians, among them the Balts, the Crimean Tatars, and other north Caucasian peoples whose populations were forcibly deported during World War II.[2] In spring and summer 1987, first the Crimean Tatars and then the Balts organized protests locally and in Moscow. The Crimean Tatars demanded the return of their homeland; the Balts, official recognition that their lands had been illegally annexed to the Soviet Union. Moscow's relatively benign treatment of the protesters led other nationalities to demand real rather than symbolic political reforms.

The situation became particularly serious in the Caucasus, where tensions between the Armenian and Azerbaijani populations spiraled out of control in early 1988. In February the Politburo voted to allow the republic of Azerbaijan to retain control of Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast, an Armenian enclave within Azerbaijan.[3] The Armenians believed they had been cheated by the Politburo decision, and more than 1 million Armenians in Yerevan protested Moscow's decision; a general strike was also organized in Nagorno-Karabakh. Tensions ran high, and in a town near the capital of the oblast, Stepanakert, two young Azerbaijanis were killed by local Armenians. In retaliation, more than 30 unarmed Armenians were killed during an Azerbaijani rampage in Sumgait, an industrial center near Baku. The central government sent troops to Nagorno-Karabakh in early 1988 to quell the disturbances. The situation has remained more or less out of

control; the troops are still in the oblast, and armed Armenians and Azerbaijanis continue to fight.

The violence in the Caucasus helped bring home the message that further political reforms were necessary to transform the stagnating Soviet political system. Gorbachev still thought in terms of revitalizing old institutions. But his efforts to reinvigorate the Communist party—marked by the July 1988 nineteenth party conference, the first extraordinary session of the party since the 1930s—proved to be little more than sloganeering.[4]

POLITICAL REFORM

By this point Gorbachev had recognized that for perestroika to succeed, the rules of the political game had to change. He called for the popular election of a Congress of People's Deputies, which would convene in May 1989. The Communist Party, however, organized the elections to predetermine the winners and losers.

The party's electoral plans backfired in the three Baltic republics, where party candidates won only a handful of seats, and these mostly in Russian enclaves. In dozens of other elections throughout the country, officially orchestrated campaigns went awry—including those in which Russian republic politician Boris Yeltsin and the dissident Andrei Sakharov competed. But less than 10 per cent of the seats in the Congress were won by the regime's critics.

About the time of the elections, Moscow encountered unexpected problems in Georgia when a pro-independence movement staged demonstrations in the capital of Tbilisi. On April 9, 1989, Soviet special forces using sharpened spades and, allegedly, poisoned tear gas broke up a crowd of nationalist demonstrators, resulting in the death of 20 civilians.

The chain of command in the decision to deploy the troops has never been firmly established. Gumbar Pastiashvili, Georgia's Communist party leader, was found responsible but he claimed that he had acted with Moscow's approval. Evading responsibility for this and other attacks became a hallmark of the central government. Gorbachev was out of the country at the time, but Yegor Ligachev, the ranking Politburo member, later claimed that there was full Politburo approval for the decision.[5]

The use of troops in Georgia was intended to warm nationalists throughout the Soviet Union that the Communist party would not tolerate

Ethnic Composition of the Soviet Republics (1990)

Republic	*Nationality*	*Per cent*	*Republic*	*Nationality*	*Per cent*
Armenia	Armenian	89.7		Ukrainian	2.7
	Azerbaijani	5.5		Polish	2.5
	Russian	2.3	Lithuania	Lithuanian	80.1
	Kurd	1.7		Russian	8.6
Azerbaijan	Azerbaijani	78.1		Polish	7.7
	Russian	7.9		Byelorussian	1.5
	Armenian	7.9	Moldavia	Moldavian	63.9
Byelorussia	Byelorussian	79.4		Ukrainian	14.2
	Russian	11.9		Russian	12.8
	Polish	4.2		Gagauzi	3.5
	Ukrainian	2.4		Jewish	2.0
	Jewish	1.4		Bulgarian	2.0
Estonia	Estonian	64.7	Russia*	Russian	82.6
	Russian	27.9		Tatar	3.6
	Ukrainian	2.5		Ukrainian	2.7
	Byelorussian	1.6		Chuvash	1.2
	Finnish	1.2	Tajikistan	Tajik	58.8
Georgia	Georgian	68.8		Uzbek	22.9
	Armenion	9.0		Russian	10.4
	Russian	7.4		Tatar	2.1
	Azerbaijani	5.1	Turkmenistan	Turkmen	68.4
	Ossetian	3.3		Russian	12.6
	Abkhazian	1.7		Uzbek	8.5
Kazakhstan	Russian	40.8		Kazakh	2.9
	Kazakh	36.0	Ukraine	Ukrainian	73.6
	Ukrainian	6.1		Russian	21.1
	Tatar	2.1		Jewish	1.3
Kirghizia	Kirghiz	40.7		Byelorussian	0.8
	Russian	22.0		Moldavian	0.6
	Uzbek	10.3		Polish	0.5
	Ukrainian	2.6	Uzbekistan	Uzbek	68.7
	Tatar	1.7		Russian	10.8
Latvia	Lativan	53.7		Tatar	4.2
	Russian	32.8		Kazakh	4.0
	Byelorussian	4.5		Tajik	3.9
				Karakalpak	1.9

Source : Michael Mandelbaum, ed., *The Rise of Nations in the Soviet Union* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1991), p. 103.

• Plus more than 100 other nationalities.

Figures do not add up to 100 per cent because of rounding and because some small ethnic populations are not included.

actions that threatened its rule. For reformers nationwide, April 9 became a symbol of the repressive underside of glasnost and perestroika. For Georgians the events of that date became a catalyst for declaring independence two years later, on April 9, 1991.

One month after the breakup of the Georgian demonstrations, the newly elected Congress of People's Deputies held its first session. The new Congress and the Supreme Soviet did not provide miraculous solutions for the Soviet Union's economic problems or shore up Gorbachev's seriously eroding political power base. The Congress proved to be neither an effective legislative body nor a popularly elected rubber stamp for the Kremlin leadership.

In June 1989, as the first Congress session drew to a close, fighting broke out between Uzbeks and Meshketians in Uzbekistan's densely populated Fergana Valley. The fighting stemmed from rumors, which had begun to circulate in the spring, that the Meshketians, who had been deported to the area as a "suspect" people during World War II, would be awarded homesteads and sent back to the north Caucasus. These rumors infuriated local Uzbeks, many of whom were unemployed and living in overcrowded conditions.

Official accounts said the fighting broke out over the cost of a basket of strawberries. Whatever the cause, Uzbek youths turned on the Meshketians. Within days whole Meshketian settlements had been razed and nearly 100 people had been killed. Official reports maintained that local authorities who tried to suppress the rioters became the next target. Police stations and local party headquarters were severely damaged. Uzbekistan's party organization—already racked by the dismissals of officials implicated in a scandal involving the annual theft of much of the republic's cotton crop—was left to restore order in the republic.

The ugly side of political spontaneity manifested itself repeatedly during the summer of 1989. While cleanup operations were still proceeding in the Fergana Valley, fighting erupted between Kazakhs and migrant north Caucasian workers in the Kazakh republic town of Novy Uzen. Less than a month later there were riots in Sukhumi between Georgians and local Abkhazians who wanted to sever their ties with Georgia.

These outbursts helped strengthen the position of law-and-order proponents in the Communist party who claimed that they, not the new "democrats," could best protect the public. While party diehards tried

to limit the influence of their critics; popular front groups formally opposed to Communist party rule began to attract memberships.

In September 1989 the Communist party finally convened a long-awaited special meeting on nationality problems at which the party seemed united in its impotence. Gorbachev offered the increasingly rebellious republics only vague promises of an unspecified form of political sovereignty and warned that these new powers would have to be exercised to fully protect the rights of national minorities.

THE SIEGE OF BAKU

Near the end of 1989, it was obvious that the political *status quo* could not survive much longer. Along with the nationalities problem and independence movements, Gorbachev now faced a nearly nationwide miners strike. To end the strike, Gorbachev promised that popular elections for local and republic legislatures would be held by the spring of 1990.

On January 19, 1990, in the midst of the election campaign, Baku was placed under martial law. The decision followed several months demonstrations after the Azerbaijani, government had again received control of Nagorno-Karabakh from the Gorbachev-appointed "special commission" that had administered the region since early 1988.

When the transfer occurred, there were immediate protests by Armenians that grew in intensity. Encouraged by the Popular Front, Azerbaijais, countered with their own demonstrations, filling Baku's main square and demanding the resignation of the local party bureau and the appointment of a sovereign Azerbaijani regime. The party-led government of the republic, headed by an unpopular and ineffective political reformer, lacked public support; the Popular Front thus appeared likely to win control of parliament in upcoming republic elections.

However, in mid-January, alongside the peaceful demonstrations, Azerbaijanis in Baku began attacks on the city's by now small Armenian population. Determined to keep Soviet troops out of Baku, the Popular Front managed to restore an uneasy peace. The front maintains that the city was relatively tranquil when martial law was declared. But within hours of the declaration, tanks rolled into Baku to drive demonstrators from the city's main square. More than 90 civilians—most of them unarmed—were killed during the recapture of the city. Despite countless eyewitness reports to the contrary, official