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Soviet Policy Towards India And Pakistan: 1965-71

Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
of the Australian National University

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This thesis is my own original work

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Synopsis

The thesis is a study of Soviet policy towards India and Pakistan from 1965-71. Its principal focus is to describe and to explain the changing balance in the Soviet approach towards these two countries.

As a prelude to the main thrust of the thesis, an attempt is made to set out the context within which Soviet policy was to operate in 1965: the most important developments in the history of Soviet relations with India and Pakistan since the time of independence are analysed; the relevance of the broader Soviet approach towards the Third World is emphasised; and the adoption of a new Soviet policy towards Pakistan is described.

The analysis of the diplomatic record begins with the eruption of hostilities between India and Pakistan in 1965, firstly over the Rann of Kutch and then over Kashmir. It is shown that the Soviet response to this subcontinental war marked a subtle departure from the previous Soviet attitude towards these two countries. The war, and the subsequent meeting at Tashkent, signified the emergence of a 'dualistic' Soviet policy in which efforts were made to maintain cordial relations with both subcontinental states simultaneously.

In the course of the next few years, the logic of this dualistic policy was worked out in practice. The USSR, as a result of its hosting of the Tashkent Conference, was projected into the very midst of Indo-Pakistani relations. The cumulative strains which this imposed on Soviet policy surfaced conspicuously in 1969 when it became clear that the Soviet Government was less enthusiastic about persisting with its ostensibly 'even-handed' course.

The implications of this reversal in Soviet strategy were to be demonstrated during the crisis which developed between India and Pakistan in 1971 as a result of the course of events in East Pakistan.

Hence, the Soviet reaction to the Indo-Pakistan war in December of 1971 can be understood partially in terms of the ongoing course of its diplomacy on the subcontinent since 1965 and as a response to the burdens entailed by the Tashkent approach. It can, however, also be understood in terms of the contrasting international environments in which the two Indo-Pakistani wars of the period occurred. It is this second dimension of the question which the thesis explores in the form of a comparative analysis of the international contexts surrounding the wars of 1965 and 1971. The time period of the thesis is thereby justified because it not only concentrates on an interesting period of Soviet diplomacy but it also permits the execution of such a comparative analysis and thus provides us with a greater understanding of the nature of Soviet policy in the area.

CONTENTS

	Page
Introduction	1
Chapter 1 The Background: The USSR, India and Pakistan 1947-64	23
Chapter 2 Soviet Reappraisal of the Third World 1964-5	59
Chapter 3 Soviet Assessments of India and Pakistan 1964-71	78
Chapter 4 The Rapprochement with Pakistan	106
Chapter 5 The Indo-Pakistani War 1965 and the Policy of Tashkent	119
Chapter 6 Tertius Non Gaudens - The Tashkent Burden 1966-69	139
Chapter 7 Dualism Falters - Soviet Disillusionment with Pakistan 1969-70	165
Chapter 8 Bangladesh: The Crisis of 1971	192
Chapter 9 Comparative Analysis of Soviet Policy During Two Indo-Pakistani Wars	230
Conclusion	271
Bibliography	289