EVENTS in the past few weeks have moved at a faster pace than one could imagine. The fall of Khrushchev and the explosion of the atomic bomb by China together have posed baffling problems. These developments have taken place at a time when India's foreign policy makers were yet to complete their assessment of their gains or losses in the Cairo conference. The nuclear explosion by China or the Labour Party Victory in British polls were not completely unexpected, and it was a significant coincidence that the change in Moscow should be followed by the nuclear blast by China the next day. The world power structure has once again been shaken up. The element of uncertainty introduced in international relations by these events is going to be the prime concern for the coming years for those who control the destiny of mankind.

India is most intimately affected by these events. But we have not been able to face them squarely. What has been the bane of our foreign policy is its Lntidimensional approach to issues concerning our interests. We had been, for more than a decade, used to this kind of behaviour in our external relations. But in a mixed world, as it exists, what is urgently needed is a multi-dimensional approach. We should not merely be reacting to events that overtake us. We should be in a position to anticipate events. And this can be possible only when we work on a set of policy alternatives, instead of on one policy, for a given situation. Before any event can overawe us we should be in a position to confront it with various alternatives. If the pronouncements of the authorities in New Delhi are any indication, there is a complete absence of a multidimensional approach in our foreign policy. The foreign policy of a country cannot be formulated on firm fixations and rigid postures. As in individual relations, so also in international relations, it is erroneous to function with one single psychic framework. Our foreign policy should be not merely an effect-reacting function but also a cause-creating process.

Viewed from this point, one is amazed at the reactions of our policymakers to the recent events. None of these reactions has touched the basic problem. What it betrays, however, is our preference for simple explanations of complex situations. In respect to the developments in the Soviet Union, our policy seems to have been based on the assumption of permanency and supremacy of the leadership that existed till the exit of Khrushchev. We could not have been oblivious of the fact that, however weak, there did exist a section in the Soviet leadership which did not reconcile itself completely to the change sought to be brought about by the developments following the 20th Congress of the C P S U. The Sino-Soviet rift provided this group an external projection in the international communist movement. The Cuban crisis and the Soviet capitulation, as they would like to describe it, gave them a sense of meaningfulness. Therefore, Juelo-Soviet relations could not be shaped in the image of one personality or of one section of leadership in Moscow. Neither should the promotion of our interest be dependent on a one dimensional approach.

Policy alternatives should not exclude the possibilities of
(a) rapproachment between the Soviet Union and China; consequently, resumption of military and economic aid to China at the cost of India;
(b) indifference to India, as a result of a policy of isolationism getting precedence in Moscow;
(c) pre-occupation with Fast European affairs;
(d) growth of nco-Stalinism;
(e) maintenance of the status quo.
New Delhi should, therefore, always work on more than one alternative to face developments in Indo-Soviet relations. One thing is certain, and that is that any shift towards normalisation of relations between China and Russia would be at the expense of India. And there is little doubt, as the events are unfolding themselves, that the shake-up in Kremlin is motivated by the desire to make up with China. China's membership of the nuclear club would help make this more imminent. Whether the truce would be a short-lived one or not would depend not only on indigenous factors in the respective countries but also on the attitude that the United States and other western powers take towards China. China's rapprochement with the Soviet Union would be the beginning of the end of China's isolation so far as the councils of the world are concerned.

One major mistake of our policy in Europe has been that India has viewed the Eastern European countries from Moscow and the Western European one from London. And this has, in most cases, made a big difference in our attitude towards these countries. The fermentation through which the Eastern European countries are passing has been either overlooked while formulating our policies or has been taken note of in a manner that would accommodate Soviet sensitiveness in reference to these areas. This may or may not have been in conformity with our interests. What would be advisable, therefore, is to strive for an independent assessment based on intimate bilateral contacts. This is as much true of Western Europe. Our past links with the United Kingdom and the mental alliance of the policy framers with London obscure many factors from consideration, when Western Europe is looked at from London. Convulsions in East Europe are likely to increase in intensity following the fall of Khrushchev and this would initiate the process of loosening of the West European community. For, a more independent, self-asserting Eastern Europe would enlarge the scope for new alignments in the European scene.

So far as China is concerned, a reappraisal of the whole policy is urgently required. It is no use oscillating between two extremes. Rational estimation is seldom possible in a climate of extremity. One can't help repeating that there is no permanent enemy or permanent friend in international relations, it is only the national interest which is permanent. Promotion of national interest is not possible with one single psychic frame of reference. China's character as a friend or enemy might change with the passage of time, but the fact remains that she is a formidable neighbour. And after the elimination of Tibet as a buffer state, China is our next door neighbour. One
cannot wish the facts of geography away.

Relations between India and China cannot be any worse than they have become after the Chinese aggression in 1962. But should Indian foreign policy acquire only one posture in respect to China, namely that China is India’s enemy and she should be treated as such? That China has been hostile to India cannot be disputed. But the policy confrontation with China is not feasible with a uni-dimensional approach. China’s acquisition of nuclear power adds a new dimension to the Sino-Indian problem. Our policy with respect to China lacks both in peace offensive and war offensive. In both respects India has taken no initiative. As usual, we only react to Chinese or other countries’ overtures for peace.

Either it is the Colombo Powers or China that could initiate fresh negotiations. New Delhi seems to have no other alternative to break the stalemate. That was left to Jayaprakash Narayan who had the boldness and imagination to launch a peace offensive. Whatever might be the merits of his suggestion to lease Aksai Chin to China in return for the recognition of our interest by her in the Chumbi Valley, there is no gainsaying the fact that it was a unique attempt to seize the initiative, which otherwise lies with the Chinese. Despite military preparations our posture for some time to come will have to be defensive so far as the undertaking of a military offensive is concerned.

Therefore, we can will some expectations of securing an advantage launch peace offensives from time to time. A long stalemate in a dynamic and changing world would, not be in India’s interest. India would have to seek a breakthrough somewhere. A peace offensive launched with the idea of advancing our national interest is not synonymous with surrender, as is mistakenly held in some quarters.

Having accepted the oft-repeated descriptions of Chinese motivations with respect to India and South-East Asia it would be advisable to probe into the utility of the atom-bomb for the promotion of Chinese designs. China can attempt to achieve its objectives, in some cases successfully, with or without the A-bomb. The A-bomb only gives her a power status and prestige. Militarily it has little significance. In Mao’s own words, the atom bomb, even the Chinese one, is a ‘paper tiger’. Therefore, employment of nuclear weapons to achieve Chinese objectives can be ruled out. From a military point of view, what India should prepare against is a conventional and guerrilla attack from China.

Yet to cancel out the Chinese advantage in terms of the global power structure, India must strive to attain nuclear power status.

In this respect, it should be borne in mind that the majority of the new possible entrants to the nuclear club will be from the coloured world. Potential nuclear powers, besides the present five, are India, Japan, United Arab Republic, Israel, Germany and Canada. This prospect, allied with the numerical majority of the coloured people, who form the main part of the developing and resurgent world, lend the world panorama a form quite different from the existing one. A horizontal reference to the areas of tension as East and West seems to be giving way to a vertical reference as North and South.

India’s membership of the nuclear club should be looked at in this context. It would be worthwhile, therefore, to suggest a plan for an ASIATOM with India, Japan and China as the chief partners. Apparently, the inclusion of China might look absurd. If India wants the A-bomb to gain a political advantage, and not for military significance, such a move would be useful to launch a peace offensive to embarrass the Chinese. The suggestion would increase in its value when rejected by China. Chinese rejection would also remove any stigma of the ASIATOM being an anti-Chinese combination. Chinese acceptance of the proposal, on the other hand, would give a common Asian control over the nuclear apparatus. Our old commitments against manufacturing the A-bomb (apart from the financial considerations) necessitate a collective effort in this direction.