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India's Foreign Policy under Indira Gandhi: Strategies, Challenges and International Relations

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Abstract

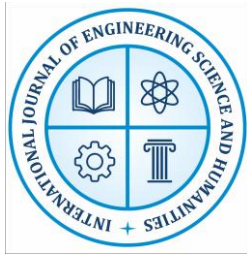
This paper analyzes the foreign policy of Nehru's successor, Prime Minister Smt. Indira Gandhi (1966-1977 and 1980-1984) who transformed Indian diplomacy from the Nehruvian idealism to assertive and security oriented realism. The study focuses on the Nehruvian principles of 'non-alignment' and examines how Indira Gandhi leveraged them for the service of the nation, using the qualitative and historical-analytical approach that is based on scholarly literature published during the period 2013-2017. It delves into her philosophy on self-reliance, non-alignment with rigid dogma, regional primacy and a centralised decision making process, and examines India's geopolitical ties with the Soviet Union, China, and the United States. In-depth discussions are provided on four major issues – India-Pakistan relations and the Simla Agreement, the Bangladesh Liberation War of 1971, the Indo-Soviet Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation of 1971 and the 1974 Pokhran nuclear test. The results reveal that Indira Gandhi had made India the most powerful nation in South Asia and had asserted its capability to make nuclear weapons and its presence in the developing countries. Her solution, however, did not resolve Kashmir, grown Kashmir's reliance on the Soviet Union, put under strain relations with the USA and neighbouring states, and led to a reduction in policymaking in the institutions. This paper attributes her combination of non-alignment and realism as being a precursor to India's future trajectory towards strategic autonomy.

Keywords: Indira Gandhi, Indian foreign policy, non-alignment, Bangladesh Liberation War, Indo-Soviet Treaty, Pokhran, Simla Agreement

1. Introduction

1.1 Background and Objectives

She became the first woman Prime Minister of India in January 1966 assuming office for a period of eleven years until March 1977 and again in January 1980 until she was assassinated in October 1984. These were 16 years of the most tumultuous times of independent India. The nation was beset with food scarcity and dependency on U.S. grain, two or near two wars with Pakistan, an unfriendly China, a highly polarising postwar atmosphere (Cold War) and a world-wide oil crisis. These pressures led to the creation of a more assertive, more security oriented,



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and more national-interest conscious foreign policy than Nehru's India had adopted/Ganguly (2016b); Pant (2016).

The fact of Indira Gandhi's impact on the style, though not necessarily on the principles of Indian diplomacy, is generally acknowledged. While officially India continue with its nonalignment stance, in practice, it signed a treaty with the Soviet Union, intervened militarily to help form Bangladesh, took over Sikkim, and tested a nuclear device at Pokhran (Malone, Mohan, & Raghavan, 2015; Raghavan, 2013). The decisions made made India the predominant power in South Asia, but it also brought tension with the USA, mistrust among neighbouring countries and isolation of India in the global nuclear order (Chaudhuri, 2014; Narang, 2014).

This paper has four objectives:

1. To trace how the Nehruvian foundations of Indian foreign policy were adapted under Indira Gandhi.
2. To identify the principles and strategies that guided her conduct of external relations.
3. To analyse the major foreign policy issues of her period: Pakistan, the Bangladesh liberation war, the Indo-Soviet partnership, and nuclear policy.
4. To assess the challenges she faced and the achievements and limitations of her approach.

1.2 Research Methodology

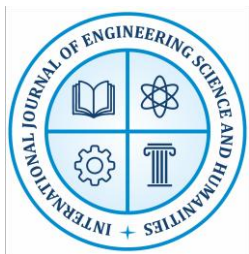
The study uses a qualitative, historical-analytical approach. It is based on secondary sources, mainly scholarship volumes, collected volumes of papers and memoirs from 2013 to 2017. Concurrently, during this era, a new wave of research based on newly declassified American, Indian, and other documents, particularly on the 1971 crisis emerged (Bass 2013; Raghavan 2013). To understand the reasoning behind the policymakers, memoirs and in-sider accounts are used, like the ones by Pranab Mukherjee (2014) and Shivshankar Menon (2016).

The analysis is descriptive, evaluative. It weaves together a history of events with a thematic analysis based on two theoretical lenses: a realist theory of international relations (Miller, 2013; Ogden, 2014). Comparative information on four tables and chronological information on four tables. The greatest constraint in the study was the use of secondary literature, as there was no time to undertake primary archival work.

2. Historical Background of Indian Foreign Policy

2.1 Nehru's Foreign Policy

The first Prime Minister of India and himself a Foreign Minister from 1947 to 1964, Mr. Jawaharlal Nehru established the intellectual framework of Indian foreign policy. He was influenced by ideas of the anti-colonial struggle, reason and international cooperation, and the realization that a poor, newly independent nation cannot afford to become involved in the battle between the two superpowers, the Soviet Union and the United States (Abraham, 2014; Miller, 2013). Nehru was a proponent of decolonisation in the Asian and African countries, was a



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staunch supporter of the United Nations, and stood with China in 1954 for peaceful co-existence, based on the principles established in the Panchsheel.

While material power was limited, Nehru's diplomacy earned India the status to rise beyond what it was in a purely physical sense. India was a mediator in the Korean War, led the commissions in Indo-China and was a paramount figure at the 1955 Bandung Conference (Ganguly, 2016b). But Nehru's strategy also had its drawbacks. He restricted defence expenditure and the idea of good neighbourliness with China was shattered with the border war of October to November 1962. India's defeat revealed political deficits in the moral influence and military might and made Nehru turn to emergency military assistance from the United States and Britain (Malone et al., 2015; Pant, 2016).

2.2 Non-Alignment and National Interest

The main tenet of Nehru's policy was non-alignment. It was not neutrality or isolation. Instead, it implied that each international issue would be decided by itself, not by what the Soviet-led bloc or the American-led bloc decided. (Ogden, 2014) By this means India would improve its chances of getting economic and technical assistance from both and it would be able to maintain its independence and also the room for the new states. India is a founder member of Non Aligned Movement (NAM) at Belgrade 1961.

Non-alignment is an issue of debate whether it was a statement of ideals or strategy. Some scholars hold a different view that it was always related to the national interest and was an opportunity for a weak state to acquire resources and autonomy without causing any significant cost (Bajpai, Basit, & Krishnappa, 2014; Menon, 2016). The war of 1962, however, proved that non-alignment is not enough without military strength. In 1964, Lal Bahadur Shastri, who had been the short-term Prime Minister of India between 1964 and 1966, started moving towards realism, particularly during the 1965 war with Pakistan. Indira Gandhi took over the principle of non-alignment and the lessons of 1962 and 1965. The approaches of the two Leaders are compared in Table 1.

Table 1: Comparison of Nehru's and Indira Gandhi's Foreign Policy Approaches

Dimension	Jawaharlal Nehru (1947–1964)	Indira Gandhi (1966–1977, 1980–1984)
Core philosophy	Idealism, internationalism, moral leadership	Realism, national interest, power-based diplomacy
Non-alignment	Equidistance from both blocs	Formally retained; tilted toward the USSR after 1971
Use of force	Reluctant; preference for negotiation	Willing to use force decisively (1971, Sikkim 1975, Siachen 1984)
Defence and security	Low defence spending until 1962	Military modernisation; creation of RAW (1968)



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Dimension	Jawaharlal Nehru (1947–1964)	Indira Gandhi (1966–1977, 1980–1984)
Nuclear policy	Advocacy of disarmament; civilian programme	Refused NPT (1968); Pokhran test (1974)
South Asia	Accommodation of neighbours	Regional primacy; bilateralism (Simla, 1972)
Relations with US	Cordial but cautious	Frequently tense, especially under Nixon
Decision-making	Personal, guided by the Prime Minister	Highly centralised in the Prime Minister's Secretariat

Source: Compiled from Ganguly (2016b), Malone et al. (2015), Ogden (2014) and Pant (2016).

3. Foreign Policy under Indira Gandhi

3.1 Major Principles and Strategies

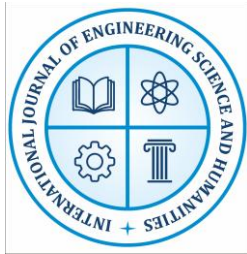
Indira Gandhi was not without access to the words of Nehru, but she infused them with a more stentorian spin. The five principles that govern her foreign policy are a summary of her foreign policy.

Primacy of national interest. Foreign policy for Indira Gandhi was a means to ensure India's territorial integrity, economic independence and regional leadership. This perspective was a result of her early experience. The American President Lyndon Johnson in 1966 had food aid provision under the PL-480 program on his short leash, and exerted pressure on the Indian Government to depreciate the Rupee, which it did in June 1966. This “ship-to-mouth” dependence humiliated her and she felt that the nation of India shouldn't be put in this position once again to external pressure (Chaudhuri 2014; Mukherjee 2014).

Self-reliance. Her government invested in agricultural self-sufficiency (Green Revolution), in an indigenous defence industry, and space and nuclear technology. From the perspective of self-reliance, the key strategic autonomy material is considered to be self-reliance (Ogden, 2014).

Flexible non-alignment. The result was that non-alignment, still the officially adopted posture, was continued to represent India, with the New Delhi Summit of March 1983 serving on behalf of India as chairperson. The outcome was that India retained its posture of non-alignment as official policy and it continues to represent it, as its leader, and chairing it at the New Delhi Summit of March 1983. But Indira Gandhi had readjusted non-alignment to suit India's security interests, aligning closely with the Soviet Union when it was needed (Ganguly, 2016b; Pant, 2016).

Regional primacy and bilateralism. She treated South Asia as India's natural sphere of influence and resisted the involvement of outside powers in the region. Disputes with neighbours were to be resolved bilaterally rather than through international forums, a principle written into the Simla Agreement of 1972 (Hall, 2014; Malone et al., 2015).



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Centralised decision-making. Foreign policy was focussed in the Prime Minister's Secretariat, where P. N. Haksar and D. P. Dhar among others had a profound influence. This enabled speed and secrecy, which came in handy in 1971, but sacrificed institutional debate (Menon, 2016; Raghavan, 2013).

Indira Gandhi too made India, the voice of the developing world. She also brought the struggle for environmental protection into the context of poverty alleviation at the 1972 UN Conference on the Human Environment held in Stockholm which influenced the South's negotiating position at the subsequent global forums (Ramesh, 2017). She backed the calls for a New International Economic Order and for the elimination of Apartheid in S. Africa.

3.2 Relations with Major Powers

United States. The most contentious of Indira Gandhi's years in office was with Washington. Political harmony with Johnson turned sour over food aid and Indian criticism of Vietnam war. During Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger's era the U.S. shifted its gaze drastically in favor of Pakistan, where it enjoyed a special avenue to its opening to China. Nixon deployed the USS Enterprise aircraft carrier into the Bay of Bengal in December 1971, as a measure of “gunboat diplomacy” which long remembered by Indians. (Bass, 2013; Chaudhuri, 2014). The American non-proliferation laws sparked conflicts over nuclear fuel purchases following 1974 for the Tarapur plant. During the 1980s, a brief improvement in relations is observed, with Indira Gandhi meeting with Ronald Reagan in Cancun in 1981 and a visit to Washington in 1982, where India was ready to sign a compromise agreement for the provision of fuel at Tarapur in exchange for France supplying some fuel to Trivandrum (Mistry, 2014).

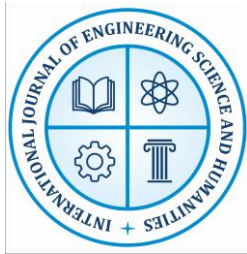
Soviet Union. Moscow emerged as the India's most steadfast partner. The Tashkent Declaration of January 1966 was mediated by the Soviets and they provided arms, technology and diplomatic support in the UN Security Council. The relationship eventually resulted in Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation (1971) (see Section 4.3).

China. Negotiations with Beijing were suspended since 1962. Confrontations at Nathu La and Cho La in 1967 revealed that the border remained sensitive, and China's support to Pakistan made India suspicious (Pant, 2016). In 1976, when diplomatic missions were exchanged again, a slow thaw started, and talks over the border resumed at the beginning of the 1980s.

Table 2 summarises India's relations with the major powers.

Table 2: India's Relations with Major Powers under Indira Gandhi

Power	Overall character	Key developments	Main points of friction or cooperation
United States	Tense, intermittently cordial	PL-480 pressure (1966); Enterprise episode (1971); Reagan meetings (1981–82)	US tilt to Pakistan; Vietnam; nuclear sanctions; Tarapur fuel



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Power	Overall character	Key developments	Main points of friction or cooperation
Soviet Union	Close strategic partnership	Tashkent (1966); Treaty of Friendship (1971); arms and space cooperation	Security guarantee; UN vetoes; India's muted stance on Afghanistan (1979)
China	Hostile, slowly thawing	Nathu La clashes (1967); ambassadors restored (1976); border talks (1981 onward)	Unsettled border; China–Pakistan axis; China's 1964 nuclear test
United Kingdom and Western Europe	Correct, mainly economic	Trade and aid ties; France supplies Tarapur fuel (1982)	Arms purchases; differences over South Africa

Source: Compiled from Bass (2013), Chaudhuri (2014), Mistry (2014) and Pant (2016).

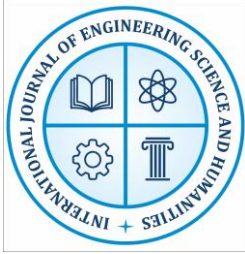
4. Major Foreign Policy Issues

4.1 India–Pakistan Relations

The most lingering security issue of the Indira Gandhi era was with Pakistan. She came to the throne shortly after the Tashkent Declaration of January, 1966, which restored the pre-war positions after the conflict of 1965, but did not solve any issue over Kashmir (Ganguly, 2016a). The military-dominated state of Pakistan perceived India as a threat to its very existence and looked for balancing with other alliances, such as with China or the USA (Fair, 2014; Paul, 2014).

The turning point which was important was in 1971. In a war fought in December 1971, India defeated Pakistan and thus divided it into two parts. In July 1972, Indira Gandhi and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto signed a treaty in Simla, India, wherein they both agreed to resolve the differences between them through bilateral and peaceful means and the ceasefire line in Kashmir was officially changed to the Line of Control (LoC). India released over 90,000 prisoners of war and recovered lost possessions in the West (Ganguly, 2016a; Raghavan, 2013).

There has been a lot of controversy surrounding the Simla Agreement. Its supporters believe it to be a statesman-like solution that spared the embarrassment of a vanquished enemy. The critics contend that India had the best of bargains available before it went down on the house without even having settled on Kashmir, noting that Bhutto's promises were only on the verbal level (Mukherjee, 2014; Paul, 2014). In the 80's the situation again became tense. Pakistan had sought to develop its own nuclear weapons, had a massive amount of aid from the United States after the invasion of Afghanistan by the Soviet troops, and had been blamed for actively taking part in Sikh militancy in Punjab. India waged a fresh battle to reclaim the Siachen Glacier in April 1984



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from an Operation Meghdoot launched by the country. India, which had initiated an Operation Meghdoot in April 1984 to force the Siachen, opened a new front in the rivalry.

4.2 Bangladesh Liberation

It is assumed that the induction of Bangladesh in 1971 was the highest achievement of Indira Gandhi in her foreign policy. After the Awami League won the December 1970 elections in Pakistan, the military government refused to transfer power. The Pakistani army unleashed its brutal campaign in East Pakistan on 25 March 1971. This led to mass killings, with a number of ten million refugees escaping to India and contributing significantly to the economic and social burden on states like West Bengal, Tripura and Assam (Bass, 2013; Raghavan, 2013).

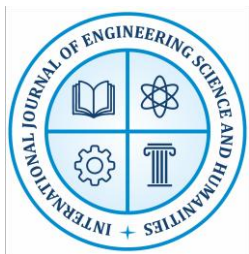
Indira Gandhi's reply was an elaborate plan. First she conducted a diplomatic campaign, visiting several of the capitals of the west in the autumn of 1971 to promote understanding of the situation in the name of the humanitarians. Second, she protected India on its flank by entering into an alliance with the Soviet Union in August, 1971. Third, India provided the Mukti Bahini resistance with training and supplies. Lastly, she postponed open military action until the monsoon season was over, when the factor would be in her favour to launch a swift campaign (Raghavan, 2013).

Pakistan conducted air raids on Indian airfields on 3 December 1971, India declared war. The Indian troops and Mukti Bahini marched rapidly and around 93,000 Pakistani soldiers surrendered in the city of Dhaka on 16 December 1971. The war has lasted for 13 days (Fair, 2014). Raghavan (2013) demonstrates that the crisis was truly global, with the US-China rapprochement, the Soviet strategy and humanitarian opinion playing their part. The atrocities are cited in Bass (2013), on Nixon and Kissinger's failure to listen to their own diplomats. Later, in March 1972, India signed a treaty of Friendship with Bangladesh, lasting for 25 years.

4.3 Indo-Soviet Relations

Indo-Soviet partnership was the foundation of Indira Gandhi's foreign policy. In 1971 on 9 August, two countries signed a peace, friendship and cooperation treaty for 20 years. Securing one of its most important clauses, both parties agreed to consult as soon as they were attacked or threatened to be attacked to eliminate the threat (Malone et al., 2015). The treaty prevented any possible Chinese or American intervention in 1971 and the Soviet Union was able to veto the resolutions of the Security Council which would have blocked the advance of India. (Raghavan, 2013)

The bond would not fade away after 1971. The main supplier of military equipment to India was the USSR which supplied them on liberal credit terms and issued licences for local manufacture. It also assisted heavy Industry, oil exploration and space science in India. India launched its first satellite, Aryabhata, in 1975 and an Indian cosmonaut Rakesh Sharma flew in a Soviet mission



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in April 1984 (Pant, 2016). Trade was mostly undertaken under the fiat of currency exchange, rupee-rouble, which spared the Indians foreign exchange.

There were some expenses to the collaboration. Critics had said that it undermined non-alignment. They reached their zenith when India failed to openly condemn Moscow at the United Nations in January 1980 after Soviet troops invaded Afghanistan in December 1979, which hurt its reputation in the group of non-aligned states (Ganguly 2016b, Ogden 2014). They counter with the argument that the alliance was a pragmatic option as India remained non-committal to any bloc, did not allow any Soviet bases and maintained ties with the West (Bajpai et al., 2014).

4.4 Nuclear Policy and Pokhran

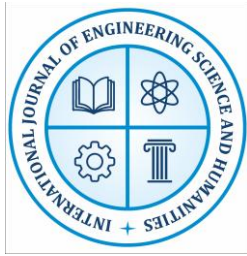
Indira Gandhi's nuclear policy in India had been a restrained statement with a continued process of capability building. The war on the border in 1962 was followed by an October 1964 nuclear test by the Chinese that placed significant pressure on the Indian Government to build a deterrent (Narang, 2014). In 1968, India refused to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Its government said that the treaty was discriminatory because it was an unbalanced world, with no commitment to disarmament, with the nuclear haves and the have-nots (Mistry, 2014).

The Indian nuclear test titled “Smiling Buddha” was an underground test that took place in Pokhran, Rajasthan on 18 May 1974. The government termed it a “peaceful nuclear explosion” and stated that it was making no plans to build weapons (Narang, 2014). The test was a proof of India's scientific prowess and a proof of India's stand against the pressure from the big powers.

International response was very harsh. Canada severed nuclear ties, alleging the reactor was used to make the plutonium. The test directly resulted in the creation of the Nuclear Suppliers Group in 1975 and the United States passed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Act of 1978 that eventually starved Tarapur for fuel (Mistry, 2014). Notably, Indira Gandhi refrained from developing a nuclear weapons programme after Pokhran and a planned second test in the early 1980s was said to have been scrapped. This ‘option’ posture meant India retained the flexibility of options but did not bear the brunt of its costs of nuclearisation, which continued until it performed the tests in May 1998 (Narang, 2014).

Table 3: Chronology of Key Foreign Policy Events under Indira Gandhi

Year	Event	Significance
1966	Tashkent Declaration; rupee devaluation under US pressure	Soviet mediation; lesson of economic dependence
1967	Nathu La and Cho La clashes with China	India holds ground; border remains tense
1968	India refuses to sign the NPT; RAW established	Nuclear option preserved; intelligence capacity built
1971	Indo-Soviet Treaty (9 Aug); war with Pakistan	Creation of Bangladesh; India's



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Year	Event	Significance
	(3–16 Dec)	regional primacy
1972	Simla Agreement; Indo-Bangladesh Treaty; Stockholm speech	Bilateralism and LoC; voice of the developing world
1974	Pokhran nuclear test (18 May); Kachchativu agreement with Sri Lanka	Nuclear capability shown; maritime boundary settled
1975	Sikkim becomes an Indian state; Aryabhata launched by USSR	Himalayan security; space cooperation
1976	Ambassadors exchanged with China	Beginning of a thaw
1980	Muted stance on Soviet invasion of Afghanistan	Strain on non-aligned credentials
1983	New Delhi NAM Summit; anti-Tamil riots in Sri Lanka	NAM chairmanship; deeper involvement in Sri Lanka
1984	Operation Meghdoot in Siachen (April)	New theatre of India–Pakistan rivalry

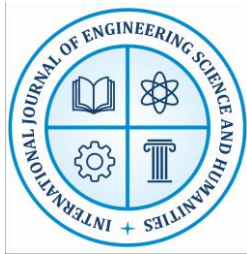
Source: Compiled from Ganguly (2016a), Malone et al. (2015), Narang (2014) and Raghavan (2013).

5. Challenges and Achievements

5.1 Regional Security

Indira Gandhi's doctrine of 'local security' was based on the belief that the security of India was inextricably tied with the absence of undue external threats in its neighbourhood. This is said to be India's Monroe Doctrine (Hall, 2014; Mohan, 2015). It had a clear impact. When Bangladesh was formed, there was no fear of a 2-front war with a united Pakistan. In 1975, Sikkim, once an Indian protectorate, was incorporated into India as a full state of the Union as a result of referendum and a constitutional amendment, thus bolstering India's position on the sensitive Himalayan frontier (Malone et al., 2015).

Resentment was also generated because of the regional primacy. Neighbours were not small and looked on India as being overbearing. After having experienced good rapport with Bangladesh, relations grew cold following the assassination of Sheikh Mujib in 1975, and problems were spotted regarding sharing of Ganga water at Farakka (Pant, 2016). India, however, suspected this, and Nepal still resented Indian pressure; it was proposed that it be declared a "zone of peace" in 1975. In Sri Lanka, Indira Gandhi has been politically flexible enough to hand over the islet of Kachchativu in 1974. The July 1983 anti-Tamil riots, however, led to a shift in Indian state policy which reportedly trained and armed Tamil militant groups, and ultimately resulted in an expensive intervention by the Rajiv Gandhi government (Hall, 2014; Menon, 2016).



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5.2 Global and Cold War Politics

Indira Gandhi had to deal with a Cold war, which became more complex during her time in power at the global level. India saw a Beijing–Washington–Islamabad axis as a result of the US–China "rapprochement" of 1971–72. In response, she sought to revitalize her relationship with Moscow but abstain from strictly aligning herself with it (Chaudhuri, 2014; Raghavan, 2013). While this balancing provided India with security, it also undermined its perception of a "non-aligned" sovereign state in the eyes of Western countries.

But the second Cold War following 1979 brought about new dilemmas. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan ushered the super power confrontation to the door step of India and made Pakistan as a front line American ally and received advanced F-16 aircraft. But Indira Gandhi wanted to get it right in the middle: she had asked for the Soviet withdrawal behind the scenes but not blamed the U.S. in public, and she resumed her talks with Washington (Chaudhuri, 2014; Ganguly, 2016b). Instead, she employed her chairmanship of the NAM following 1983 to promote disarmament, fight the arms race and push for a more equitable world economy (Ogden, 2014). Popularly, the image of democracy in India was also badly damaged during the domestic Emergency (1975-77) as it created a temporary dent in the country's moral position (Mukherjee, 2014).

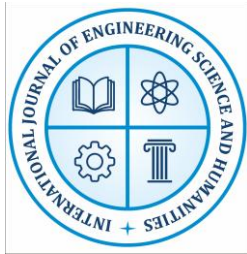
5.3 Major Achievements and Limitations

Indira Gandhi's foreign policy was a success. After the 1971, India became the prime power in South Asia. It was proof of its nuclear power capabilities, development of a strong alliance with a superpower without joining a bloc and becoming one of the developing world's leading voices. Most importantly, she infused Indian diplomacy with a realism that was passed on by the following governments (Bajpai et al., 2014; Pant, 2016).

The restrictions were similarly impressive. The outcome of the Simla Agreement was not to resolve the Kashmir issue. Indian reliance on the Soviet arms and diplomatic assistance would restrict its options and would make it vulnerable in the wake of collapse of the USSR in 1991 (Mohan, 2015). Pokhran was not accompanied by the provision of an adequate deterrent and did not lift sanctions or technology denial. Personalisation of decision making reduced the strength of institutions and reliance on one leader's decision making (Menon, 2016). This balance is summarised in table 4.

Table 4: Major Achievements and Limitations of Indira Gandhi's Foreign Policy

Area	Achievements	Limitations
Pakistan	Decisive victory in 1971; Simla Agreement and bilateralism	Kashmir unresolved; renewed rivalry in the 1980s (Siachen, Punjab)
Bangladesh	Liberation achieved in 13 days; refugee burden ended	Post-1975 coolness; Farakka water dispute



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Area	Achievements	Limitations
Major powers	Strong Soviet partnership; survived US hostility	Strained US ties; over-dependence on Moscow
Nuclear policy	Pokhran (1974) showed capability; NPT rejected on principle	Sanctions, NSG formation, Tarapur fuel crisis
South Asia	Regional primacy; Sikkim integrated (1975)	Neighbours' mistrust; Sri Lanka entanglement
Global role	NAM leadership; voice of the developing world (Stockholm 1972)	Non-aligned credibility hurt over Afghanistan (1980)
Institutions	Swift, secret decisions in crises	Centralised, personalised policymaking

Source: Compiled from Ganguly (2016a, 2016b), Menon (2016), Mistry (2014) and Pant (2016).

6. Conclusion

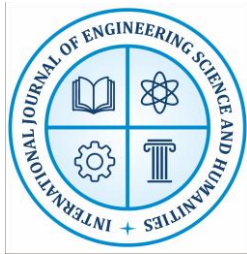
6.1 Major Findings

This study yields five main findings.

1. **Continuity in principle, change in practice.** In Indira Gandhi, Nehru's vision of non-alignment and strategic autonomy was maintained but his vision was replaced with realism which laid emphasis on power, security and national interest (Ganguly, 2016b; Ogden, 2014).
2. **The 1971 crisis was the defining moment.** Skillfully negotiating a treaty, and quickly establishing military dominance over a bare-knuckled South Asia, India played a crucial role in the birth of Bangladesh (Raghavan, 2013).
3. **The Soviet partnership was pragmatic but costly.** It offered them arms, technology, and even diplomatic protection but it undermined India's role as a non-aligned nation, particularly after Afghanistan (Bajpai et al., 2014).
4. **Nuclear policy kept options open.** The rejection of the NPT and testing at Pokhran was a show of India's independence, but this was done without a corresponding arms programme, for which there was a high price entirely in the diplomatic arena (Mistry, 2014; Narang, 2014).
5. **Regional primacy had mixed results.** The concept of regional primacy had mixed faces. It defended India's borders but created animosity among neighbours and entangled India in wars like its civil war in Sri Lanka (Hall, 2014).

6.2 Overall Assessment

In the overall scheme of things, Indira Gandhi was the most important practitioner of Indian foreign policy since Nehru. She had inherited a country that was shamed in 1962 and was reliant on foreign food aid, unsure of its world position. When she died, it was a war which she had won and a state that had demonstrated its capability to produce nuclear arms and become the top



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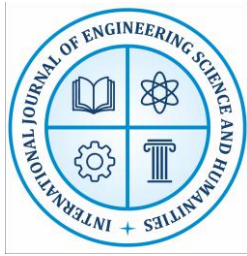
power in its region (Malone et al., 2015; Pant, 2016). Her emphasis on national sovereignty and her determination against great power pressures were what provided Indian diplomacy with a permanent confidence.

But her successes have to be balanced by her failures and past performance. The absence of any durable peace negotiated with Pakistan, the continuing dependence upon a single super power, and the excessive centralisation of decision-making left legacies for the later governments to deal with (Menon 2016; Mohan 2015). Her policies were as much determined as by the restrictions of the Cold War as by her own decisions.

In the end, Indira Gandhi's foreign policy provides an example of how a developing country can exercise principles and embrace logic of power in foreign policy. Her non-alignment and realism also paved the way for India to develop into a nation with strategic autonomy that began to claim a prominent seat in the international arena.

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