

**GROWTH OF GLOBAL RELATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT IN INDIA DURING
INDIRA GANDHI'S TENURE**

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ABSTRACT:

Indira Gandhi was a great personality who born in 1919 and became prime minister in 1966. She was dedicated in making India a nuclear power country. She overcame all the hurdles facing in design, developments and testing for nuclear test and finally she conducted first nuclear test in 1974 in Pokhran with the help of great scientists which increased the reputation of India in the world. By and large fame and image of the Congress Party was enhanced and the Congress Party was well received in the Indian Parliament. The augmentation of nuclear power sector, military sector and strong position of India at global level were the major contributions of Smt. Indira Gandhi.

INTRODUCTION:

Indira Gandhi was born Indira Nehru into a Kashmiri Pandit family on 19 November 1917 in Allahabad. Her father, Jawaharlal Nehru, was a leading figure in India's political struggle for independence from British rule, and became the first Prime Minister of the Dominion (and later Republic) of India. She was the only child (a younger brother died young), and grew up with her mother, Kamala Nehru, at the Anand Bhavan, a large family estate in Allahabad. She had a lonely and unhappy childhood. Her father was often away, directing political activities or incarcerated, while her mother was frequently bedridden with illness, and later suffered an early death from tuberculosis. She had limited contact with her father, mostly through letters (1).

In the 1950s, Indira, now Mrs. Indira Gandhi after her marriage, served her father unofficially as a personal assistant during his tenure as the first prime minister of India. Towards the end of the 1950s, Gandhi served as the President of the Congress. In that capacity, she was instrumental in getting the Communist led Kerala State Government dismissed in 1959. That government had the distinction of being India's first-ever elected Communist Government. After her father's death in 1964 she was appointed a member of the Rajya Sabha (upper house) and served in Prime Minister LalBahadurShastri's cabinet as Minister of Information and Broadcasting. In January 1966, after Shastri's death, the Congress legislative party elected her over Morarji Desai as their leader. Congress party veteran K. Kamaraj was instrumental in Gandhi achieving victory. Because she was a woman, other political leaders in India saw Gandhi as weak and hoped to use her as a puppet once elected (2).

**RELATIONS OF INDIA WITH SOUTH ASIA, MIDDLE EAST AND AFRICA IN THE
TENURE OF SMT. INDIRA GANDHI:**

In early 1971, disputed elections in Pakistan led then East Pakistan to declare independence as Bangladesh. Repression and violence by the Pakistani army led to 10 million refugees crossing the border into India over the following months. Finally, in December 1971, Gandhi intervened directly in the conflict to liberate Bangladesh. India emerged victorious following the war with Pakistan to become the dominant power of South Asia. India had signed a treaty with the Soviet Union promising mutual assistance in the case of war, while Pakistan received active support from the United States during the conflict. U.S. President Richard Nixon disliked Gandhi personally,

referring to her as a "witch" and a "clever fox" in his private communication with Secretary of State Henry Kissinger. Nixon later wrote of the war: "[Gandhi] suckered [America]. Suckered us ... this woman suckered us." Relations with the U.S. became distant as Gandhi developed closer ties with the Soviet Union after the war. The latter grew to become India's largest trading partner and its biggest arms supplier for much of Gandhi's premiership. India's new hegemonic position, as articulated under the "Indira Doctrine", led to attempts to bring the Himalayan states under India's sphere of influence. Nepal and Bhutan remained aligned with India, while in 1975, after years of building up support, Gandhi incorporated Sikkim into India, after a referendum in which a majority of Sikkimese voted to join India. This was denounced as a "despicable act" by China (3).

India's pro-**Arab** policy had mixed success. Establishment of close ties with the socialist and secular Baathist regimes to some extent neutralised Pakistani propaganda against India. However, the Indo-Pakistani War of 1971 presented a dilemma for the Arab and Muslim states of the Middle East as the war was fought by two states both friendly to the Arabs. The progressive Arab regimes in Egypt, Syria, and Algeria chose to remain neutral, while the conservative pro-American Arab monarchies in Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and United Arab Emirates openly supported Pakistan. Egypt's stance was met with dismay by the Indians, who had come to expect close co-operation with the Baathist regimes. But, the death of Nasser in 1970 and Sadat's growing friendship with Riyadh, and his mounting differences with Moscow, constrained Egypt to a policy of neutrality. Gandhi's overtures to Muammar Gaddafi were rebuffed. Libya agreed with the Arab monarchies in believing that Gandhi's intervention in East Pakistan was an attack against Islam.

Although independent India was initially viewed as a champion of anti-colonialism, its cordial relationship with the Commonwealth of Nations and its liberal views of British colonial policies in East Africa had harmed its image as a staunch supporter of the anti-colonial movements. Indian condemnation of militant struggles in Kenya and Algeria was in sharp contrast to China, who had supported armed struggle to win African independence. After reaching a high diplomatic point in the aftermath of Nehru's role in the Suez Crisis, India's isolation from Africa was complete when only four nations—Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria and Libya—supported her during the Sino-Indian War in 1962. After Gandhi became prime minister, diplomatic and economic relations with the states which had sided with India during the Sino-Indian War were expanded. Gandhi began negotiations with the Kenyan government to establish the Africa-India Development Cooperation. The Indian government also started considering the possibility of bringing Indians settled in Africa within the framework of its policy goals to help recover its declining geo-strategic influence. Gandhi declared the people of Indian origin settled in Africa as "Ambassadors of India". Efforts to rope in the Asian community to join Indian diplomacy, however, came to naught, in part because of the unwillingness of Indians to remain in politically insecure surroundings, and because of the exodus of African Indians to Britain with the passing of the Commonwealth Immigrants Act in 1968. In Uganda, the African Indian community suffered persecution and eventually expulsion under the government of Idi Amin.

ORIGIN OF INDIA'S NUCLEAR GROWTH:

India's indigenous efforts in nuclear science and technology were established remarkably early. The first step was taken by Dr. Homi Jehangir Bhabha in March 1944 when he submitted a proposal to the Sir Dorab Tata Trust (established in honor of Bhabha's own uncle, Sir Dorab Tata) to found a nuclear research institute, over three years before independence and a year before the first nuclear weapon test. This led to the creation of the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR) on 19 December 1945 with Bhabha as its first Director. The new government of India passed the Atomic Energy Act, on 15 April 1948, leading to the establishment of the Indian Atomic Energy Commission (IAEC) not quite one year after independence.

This note of ambivalence in Nehru's speech foreshadowed his policies on nuclear research for the next decade. Nehru took a prominent role in international politics, founding the Non-Aligned Movement, and advocating nuclear disarmament. However, he refused to foreclose India's nuclear

option while other nations maintained nuclear arsenals and supported programs designed to bolster India's weapons potential (4).

In 1954 the Indian nuclear program began to move in a direction that would eventually lead to establishment of nuclear weapons capability. On 3 January 1954 the IAEC decided to set up a new facility - the Atomic Energy Establishment, Trombay (AEET), later to become the "Indian Los Alamos". On 3 August 1954 the Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) was created with Dr. Bhabha as Secretary. This department answered directly to the Prime Minister and has continued to do so down to the present day (5).

In 1955 construction began on India's first reactor, the 1 MW Apsara research reactors, with British assistance. And in September 1955, after more than a year of negotiation, Canada agreed to supply India with a powerful research reactor - the 40 MW Canada-India Reactor (CIR). Under the Eisenhower Administration's "Atoms for Peace" program the US agreed to supply 21 tons of heavy water for this reactor in February 1956, and the reactor was dubbed the Canada-India Reactor, U.S. or CIRUS (now commonly written as Cirus) (6).

The reactor was a design ideal for producing weapons-grade plutonium, and was also extraordinarily large for research purposes, being capable of manufacturing enough plutonium for one to two bombs a year. The acquisition of Cirus was specifically intended by India to provide herself with a weapons option and this reactor produced the plutonium used in India's first nuclear test in 1974; provided the design prototype for India's more powerful Dhruva plutonium production "research" reactor; and is directly responsible for producing nearly half of the weapons grade plutonium currently believed to be in India's stockpile. The sale further set a precedent for similar technology transfers which greatly assisted Israel in obtaining its own plutonium production reactor from France shortly thereafter (7).

The Atomic Energy Establishment, Trombay was formally inaugurated by PM Nehru on 20 January 1957. It acquired its present name -- Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC) -- on 12 January 1967 when PM Indira Gandhi renamed it in memory of Dr. Bhabha who died in an airplane crash on 24 January 1966.

Apsara, fueled by enriched uranium from the UK, went critical on 4 August 1957, becoming the first operating reactor in Asia outside of the Soviet Union (though only days ahead of Japan's first reactor). Cirus achieved criticality at BARC on 10 July 1960.

As a nation India has always placed a premium on self-sufficiency. It is, in fact, the most self-sufficient large economy in the world and does not import any nuclear fuel. [The traditionally closed nature of economy though accounts for the import/export based Chinese economy far outstripping its growth from the late seventies to the early nineties.] Due to its vast domestic resources of thorium (a potential fuel for breeder reactors) but limited supplies of uranium, from the start of its nuclear program India has always placed strong emphasis on the development of breeder reactor fuel cycles. Breeder reactors require highly concentrated fissionable material for reactor fuel: either highly enriched uranium or plutonium. This provided a peaceful rationale for developing a plutonium separation capability, but the principal impetus for the India's first fuel reprocessing plant was to obtain a nuclear option (8).

In July 1958 PM Nehru authorized project Phoenix to build a plant with a capacity of 20 tonnes of fuel a year - sized to match the production capacity of Cirus. The plant was based on the U.S. developed Purex process and an American firm, Vitro International prepared the plans for it. Construction of the plutonium plant began at Trombay on 27 March 1961 and was commissioned in mid-1964.

India's civilian nuclear program was also established during this period. Discussions with American firms to construct India's first nuclear power plants at Tarapur were held in 1960-61. An interesting incident sheds light on Nehru's and Bhabha's thinking at that time. In 1960 Kenneth Nichols, a former U.S. Army engineer who played significant roles in the Manhattan Project, represented Westinghouse in discussions on power plant construction. In a meeting with Nehru and Bhabha, Nichols relates that Nehru turned to Bhabha and asked: "Can you develop an atomic bomb?" Bhabha assured him that he could and in reply to Nehru's next question about time, he estimated that he would need about a year to do it. ... He concluded by saying to Bhabha "Well, don't do it until I tell you to."

WEAPONS DEVELOPMENT- ROLE OF INDIRA GANDHI, 1960–72:

Bhabha was now aggressively lobbying for nuclear weapons and made several speeches on Indian radio. In 1964, Bhabha told the Indian public via radio that "such nuclear weapons are remarkably cheap" and supported his arguments by referring to the economic cost of the American nuclear testing programme *Project Plowshare*. Bhabha stated to the politicians that a 10 kt device would cost around \$350,000, and \$600,000 for a 2 mt. From this, he estimated that "a stockpile" of around 50 atomic bombs would cost under \$21 million and a stockpile of 50 two-megaton hydrogen bombs would cost around \$31.5 million." Bhabha did not realise, however, that the U.S. *Plowshare* cost-figures were produced by a vast industrial complex costing tens of billions of dollars, which had already manufactured nuclear weapons numbering in the tens of thousands. The delivery systems for nuclear weapons typically cost several times as much as the weapons themselves.

The nuclear programme was partially slowed when Lal Bahadur Shastri became the prime minister. Shastri faced the Indo-Pakistani War of 1965. He appointed physicist Vikram Sarabhai as the head of the nuclear programme but, because of his non-violent Gandhian beliefs, Sarabhai directed it toward peaceful purposes rather than military development.

In 1967, Indira Gandhi became the prime minister and work on the nuclear programme resumed with renewed vigour. Homi Sethna, a chemical engineer, played a significant role in the development of weapon-grade plutonium, while Ramanna designed and manufactured the whole nuclear device. The first nuclear bomb project did not employ more than 75 scientists because of its sensitivity. The weapons programme was now directed towards the production of plutonium rather than uranium (9).

Indira Gandhi continued to harbour ambivalent feelings about nuclear weapons, and accorded low priority to their production until the Indo-Pakistani War of 1971. In December 1971, Richard Nixon sent a carrier battle group led by the USS *Enterprise* (CVN-65) into the Bay of Bengal in an attempt to intimidate India. The Soviet Union responded by sending a submarine armed with nuclear missiles from Vladivostok to trail the US task force (10).

On 7 September 1972, near the peak of her post-war popularity, Indira Gandhi authorised the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC) to manufacture a nuclear device and prepare it for a test. Although the Indian Army was not fully involved in the nuclear testing, the army's highest command was kept fully informed of the test preparations. The preparations were carried out under the watchful eyes of the Indian political leadership, with civilian scientists assisting the Indian Army (11).

The device was formally called the "Peaceful Nuclear Explosive", but it was usually referred to as the *Smiling Buddha*. The device was detonated on 18 May 1974, Buddha Jayanti (a festival day in India marking the birth of Gautama Buddha). Indira Gandhi maintained tight control of all aspects of the preparations of the *Smiling Buddha* test, which was conducted in extreme secrecy; besides Gandhi, only advisers Parmeshwar Haksar and Durga Dhar were kept informed. Scholar Raj Chengappa asserts the Indian Defence Minister Jagjivan Ram was not provided with any knowledge of this test and came to learn of it only after it was conducted. Swaran Singh, the Minister of External Affairs, was given 48 hours advance notice. The Indira Gandhi administration

employed no more than 75 civilian scientists while General G. G. Bewoor, Indian army chief, and the commander of Indian Western Command were the only military commanders kept informed.

CONCLUSION:

Indian Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi had already gained much popularity and publicity after her successful military campaign against Pakistan in the 1971 war. The test caused an immediate revival of Mrs. Gandhi's popularity, which had flagged considerably from its height after the 1971 war. The overall popularity and image of the Congress Party was enhanced and the Congress Party was well received in the Indian Parliament. The overall brawny position of India at global level was one of the major contributions of Smt. Indira Gandhi.

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