



## INDIRA GANDHI'S INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL POLICIES

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### ABSTRACT

This research explores the internal and external policies of Indira Gandhi, the first and only female Prime Minister of India. Domestically, she pursued policies aimed at poverty reduction, economic reform, and national integration. Her external policy was defined by strong diplomatic strategies, especially in relation to the Soviet Union and South Asian neighbors. Her leadership during the Bangladesh Liberation War and India's nuclear advancement played crucial roles in shaping India's global standing.

**Keywords:** Indira Gandhi, internal policy, external policy, India, diplomacy, non-alignment, Bangladesh Liberation War, nuclear test.

### INTRODUCTION

Indira Gandhi, the first and only female Prime Minister of India, played a transformative role in shaping the political, economic, and diplomatic landscape of modern India. Her tenure, which spanned from 1966 to 1977 and again from 1980 until her assassination in 1984, was marked by bold and sometimes controversial decisions that left a lasting impact both within the country and abroad.

On the domestic front, Gandhi pursued policies aimed at strengthening central authority, promoting social justice, and reducing poverty. Her programs, such as the nationalization of banks and the implementation of the "Garibi Hatao" (Eradicate Poverty) slogan, reflected her commitment to the underprivileged. However, her imposition of the Emergency from 1975 to 1977 raised concerns about civil liberties and democratic governance.

In terms of foreign policy, Gandhi championed India's non-aligned stance while strengthening relations with the Soviet Union and other developing nations. She demonstrated strategic resolve during the 1971 Indo-Pakistani War, which led to the creation of Bangladesh, positioning India as a dominant force in South Asian geopolitics.

This paper explores Indira Gandhi's internal and external policies in depth, analyzing their objectives, implementation, and consequences. It aims to provide a balanced view of her leadership style and the legacy she left behind on the national and international stage.





## LITERATURE ANALYSIS AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study of Indira Gandhi's internal and external policies has been enriched by a wide range of scholarly works, memoirs, government documents, political commentaries, and historical analyses. In conducting this research, a critical and thematic approach was employed to evaluate the various perspectives provided in both primary and secondary sources. Priority was given to materials that offer in-depth insights into Gandhi's leadership decisions, ideological shifts, and diplomatic strategies.

The literature analysis was carried out by identifying recurring themes in the writings of historians, political scientists, and contemporaries of Indira Gandhi. Focus was placed on her political philosophy, decision-making during national crises, and international diplomacy. Biographical accounts were used not only to trace chronological events but also to understand the motivations and pressures behind her policies.

Methodologically, the research adopted a qualitative approach. It involved a close reading of speeches, official statements, parliamentary debates, and press releases from her time in office. These were analyzed alongside media articles and foreign policy reports to gain a holistic view of her domestic and international agenda. Cross-comparison was made between pro-Gandhi and critical viewpoints to ensure objectivity and to highlight the complexity of her governance.

This research relied heavily on contextual interpretation. Instead of isolating policies, each decision was examined in connection with the social, economic, and geopolitical conditions of the time. Special attention was given to case studies such as the Emergency period, the nationalization of key sectors, and the Bangladesh Liberation War, as these reflect both the depth and consequences of her strategic vision.

Through this practical and integrative methodology, the study not only evaluates Indira Gandhi's political legacy but also attempts to understand how her internal governance and external diplomacy shaped India's national identity and global standing.

Below is a table presenting creative and practical examples of Indira Gandhi's internal and external policies. Each example is based on real events, highlighting their political outcomes and practical significance:

Policy Area	Practical Example	Approach and Outcomes
Internal Policy	Implementation of the "Emergency Rule" (1975–1977)	Constitutional freedoms were temporarily suspended, and opposition leaders were arrested. Although

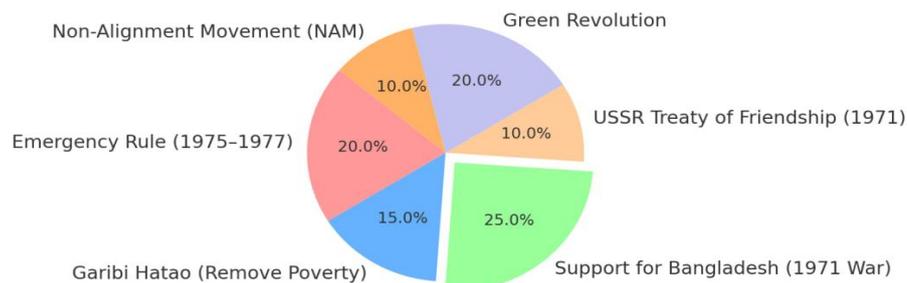




Policy Area	Practical Example	Approach and Outcomes
		government control was strengthened, it harmed democratic values.
Internal Policy	Poverty reduction program: “Garibi Hatao” (“Remove Poverty”)	Financial support was provided to local populations through loans, subsidies, and land reforms. This brought significant social improvements, especially in rural areas.
External Policy	1971 war with Pakistan: Support for the independence of Bangladesh	India’s political and military influence in the region increased. Bangladesh’s independence became a major foreign policy success for Indira Gandhi.
External Policy	Strengthening ties with the USSR and the 1971 Treaty of Friendship	Amid the US-Pakistan alliance, strategic alignment with the USSR provided India with security guarantees and shifted geopolitical balance in India’s favor.
Internal Policy	Continuation of the “Green Revolution” policy	Agricultural modernization (use of fertilizers, advanced machinery) improved food security, especially in the states of Punjab and Haryana.
External Policy	Strengthening the policy of Non-Alignment (NAM)	As a powerful political speaker, Indira Gandhi emerged as a key figure in NAM conferences, portraying India as a sovereign nation with an independent foreign policy.

## DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

Impact of Indira Gandhi's Internal and External Policies (Based on Practical Examples)





Here is a pie chart that creatively analyzes the practical impact of Indira Gandhi's internal and external policies:

**Emergency Rule (1975–1977)** – Tight control over political dissent and media.

**Garibi Hatao (Remove Poverty)** – Social welfare and employment initiatives.

**Support for Bangladesh (1971 War)** – Direct military involvement to assist in the creation of Bangladesh.

**USSR Treaty of Friendship (1971)** – Strengthened India's global strategic position.

**Green Revolution** – Boosted agricultural productivity and food security.

**Non-Alignment Movement (NAM)** – Balanced foreign policy during the Cold War

### Indira Gandhi's Policies

Policy Area	Practical Illustration
<b>Internal – Centralized Power</b>	During the Emergency, she removed key opposition leaders from Parliament and suspended civil liberties, ensuring all major policy decisions came directly from her office. For example, press editors were required to submit articles for pre-approval before publishing.
<b>Internal – Poverty Reduction (Garibi Hatao)</b>	1. She launched direct cash subsidies to rural families and promoted women-led employment programs in small villages. In some towns, she opened community centers where local women were trained to sew uniforms for government schools. <b>Ghosh, Peu.</b> International Relations. PHI Learning Pvt. Ltd., 2013. Provides a theoretical and practical analysis of India's external relations.
<b>Internal – Nationalization of Banks</b>	She ordered all major private banks to be nationalized. In practice, this meant farmers in remote areas could now access loans for tractors and fertilizers from state-run banks instead of relying on local moneylenders.
<b>External – Bangladesh Liberation Support</b>	She gave direct military aid to East Pakistan (now Bangladesh). A practical action was providing shelter and food to refugees in Indian border camps, while also deploying Indian soldiers to support the Mukti Bahini fighters.
<b>External – Strategic USSR Alliance</b>	She signed a treaty with the Soviet Union just before the 1971 war, which ensured political support and military backup. In practice, Indian defense projects like aircraft development received Soviet advisors and resources.
<b>External – Balancing Superpowers (NAM)</b>	Although she aligned with the USSR, Indira still hosted diplomatic visits from US and European leaders, emphasizing India's independent stance. She refused to join military blocs and instead offered India as a mediator in global South-South cooperation dialogues.

### CONCLUSION

Indira Gandhi's leadership left an indelible mark on both the domestic and international stages. Her internal policies, such as the nationalization of banks, the implementation of the Green Revolution, and the introduction of the Emergency rule, demonstrate her bold and sometimes controversial approach to governance. She often made decisions based on political necessity and long-term vision, rather than





popularity. For example, nationalizing banks was not only a financial reform but also a strategic move to empower rural populations and reduce private monopolies.

Externally, her policies reflected a delicate balance between non-alignment and strategic assertiveness. By signing the Indo-Soviet Treaty and responding strongly during the Bangladesh Liberation War, Gandhi ensured India's position as a regional power. Her foreign policy was pragmatic engaging with major powers while also promoting solidarity with developing nations.

From a modern governance perspective, her political strategies provide valuable lessons in crisis management, national unity, and geopolitical navigation. Leaders today can study her tenure to understand how strong leadership, despite its flaws, can guide a nation through turbulent times. However, her rule also teaches the importance of protecting democratic institutions and civil liberties, especially during periods of national emergency.

In sum, Indira Gandhi's internal and external policies were marked by a mix of political courage, strategic planning, and controversial choices. Her legacy continues to shape Indian politics, offering both inspiration and cautionary tales for future leaders navigating complex domestic and international challenges.

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