Chapter V

WOMEN LEADERS AND DOMESTIC POLICY

“Politics is the art of the possible...that the politician does, quite literally, what he can.”¹

Politics, as described by Kautilya, the great Indian political philosopher, in his masterpiece, *Arthashashtra*, is the means for the proliferation and sustenance of power. It is an art by which one mind can control another. For this, an able leadership with an authoritative and domineering influence over the masses is required. Political leaders are persons who are clairvoyant enough to comprehend the unseen state of affairs, have clear visions of what they want to achieve, and how they can accomplish their tasks and reach their destinations.

At the same time, to some analysts, leaders also perceive and interpret domestic and international constraints, based on which they build their expectations, plan and formulate strategies and take necessary actions to meet these constraints.² They are even instrumental in influencing the general public, either through persuasion or by coercion, to accept and abide by their decisions.³ Critics have argued that leaders like Margaret Thatcher are interested in persuading others to conform to their ideas, rather than

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³ Ibid., p. 131.
being persuaded by others. This is evident from Mrs. Thatcher’s perception of the Irish problem which she viewed from the security perspective and which she felt could easily be tackled by resorting to coercive means.

National leadership also necessitates a tough mindset, a clear vision of the line of action to be resorted to, and how and by what means the desired objectives can be accomplished. These facets, however, become particularly significant when leaders have the latent or overt intention of fulfilling their cherished aspirations. During national or international crisis situations, the strategy of dealing with the crises also becomes significant. Analysts have pointed out that whether leaders impose their personal wills, or act as impartial arbitrators or consensus-builders among the parties to the conflicts, take necessary actions and initiatives for solving problems or do not involve themselves in those situations, also mark significant elements of leadership patterns.

In his study on political leadership, political analyst Dennis Kavanagh has distinguished between ‘mobilising’ and ‘expressive’ leaders in the manner that the former always take the lead in the decision-making and accomplishing their goals even at the risk of alienating their colleagues. On the other hand, the second categories of leaders, according to him, are more cooperative in attitude and strive to uphold party unity and cohesion for the preservation and maintenance of the status quo.

If this description on the behavioural attributes of national leaders, is followed for analysing the cases of Golda Meir, Indira Gandhi and Margaret

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4 Ibid., p. 132.
Thatcher, it would be found that these three international leaders would come into the category of the first type of leaders. Throughout their political careers, these leaders have been found to be mobilising their personal desires and wishes, without paying due regard to the opinions of their party colleagues. In fact, they preferred to work in nexus with their close confidants and associates, whereby, the rest of their Cabinet colleagues were often alienated and sidelined. Hence these woman Prime Ministers were assertive leaders, who were dexterous in mobilising their associates and followers in their own directions.

Political scientists have also observed that the nature of Prime Ministerial leadership also depend upon the structure and resources within political systems and political parties. In most of the cases leaders stay in power so long they continue to have support and confidence from their respective parties. In 1990, Margaret Thatcher had to resign from her Premiership not because she had lost an election, but she had lost the confidence of her party peers. Golda Meir, too, resigned from her office, after winning the eighth Knesset election of 1973, because her countrymen had lost faith in her. Indira Gandhi, on the other hand, suffered defeat in the general electoral mandate in 1977, because of the excesses she had committed in the name of Emergency between 1975 and 1977.

An intriguing part of the study of leadership is the relationship between gender and leadership. According to one commentator, “Studies of political leadership have been remarkably non-gender specific. This is due primarily to a tacit assumption…that leaders are men! Historically, there is of course a good deal of validity to this assumption--most all political leaders

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9 Ibid., p. 43.
have been men. To refer to a generic head of state as “him” may thus be understandable, if inaccurate.\textsuperscript{10} Likewise, another commentator Thomas Carlyle introduced the ‘Great Man’ school of political leadership in 1840, in which he argued that great leaders are great men who were able to change the course of history, socially and politically.\textsuperscript{11} However, he excluded ‘Great Women’, who have also occasionally accomplished the same task.

According to political scientist John W. Burton, “Conflict within states exists to the extent that the values of administrators and groups take precedence over the communities”.\textsuperscript{12} This statement therefore, signifies that the preservation, maintenance and consolidation of power of the national leaders become of primary importance than solving the concerned problem of their states. This would be evident from the modes of response of the three Prime Ministers to internal crises.

The three woman Prime Ministers, Indira Gandhi, Margaret Thatcher and Golda Meir, who are the subjects of study of the present thesis, as revealed from the three previous chapters, are unanimously and universally recognised as path-breakers. Their fame as political leaders had spread not only in their respective countries but also in the international theatre. They were fearless and risked their lives for the cause of their respective countries. After her military action against the Sikhs in Punjab, Indira Gandhi was warned and requested by her associates and friends for not to keep her Sikh bodyguards. Mrs. Gandhi’s ‘secular’ mindset, however, brushed that idea

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\textsuperscript{11} Analysis of Thomas Carlyle’s theory has been discussed in Elgie, n. 8, pp. 5-6.
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She was assassinated by her own Sikh bodyguards on her way to her office in October 1984.

In the same month and year, Mrs. Thatcher survived twin bomb attacks (placed in her washroom) masterminded by the Irish Republican Army inside her hotel room in Brighton, in which she and her Cabinet members had a narrow escape. Mrs. Meir, on the other hand, risked her life to persuade King Abdulla of Transjordan for not to join hands with the rest of the Arabs in latter’s hostility against Israel. It is interesting to note that, these three statesmen had experienced the same fate- they were hated and revered, received applause and severe criticisms for their respective policies.

The three lady Prime Ministers were power-seekers and stood for the sustenance and consolidation of power. It is because of their authoritative styles of functioning and unchallenged supremacy that they faced severe internal problems and widespread public dissent in their political careers.

Margaret Thatcher had to respond effectively to the Coal Miners’ Strike, urban riots, public discontents relating to her transformation of welfare economy to market oriented approach that resulted in the replacement of state with private bodies as agencies for delivering goods and services. As a result, the closing of unprofitable and sick coal-pits laid off thousands of miners from their jobs overnight.

However, the issue of Northern Ireland, a crisis that Mrs. Thatcher inherited from her predecessors, deserves special mention, for its intensity and importance to the British nation. Although the primary question of

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sovereignty and independence seemed to be so non-negotiable to the Premier, the case, however, paved the way to the conclusion of the Anglo-Irish Accord during Thatcher’s term.

Mrs. Gandhi’s re-election in 1980 was different from her previous years assumed the Prime Ministerial position of India at a time when India was still carrying the burden of a newly independent state with linguistic, religious, ethnic, intra-state land adjustments and territorial reorganization issues, along with secessionist tendencies, and a host of other myriad problems plagued the country. There are also other kind of problems and civil strife in other states, especially in Jammu and Kashmir, Andhra Pradesh, etc. some of these issues became even more manifest when she took office in 1980.

This chapter, however, will concentrate only on the two states of Assam and Punjab that had lasting and significant effect in the political scenario of India. For the first time in her leadership as well as political careers, Mrs. Gandhi used the ingenious ‘communal card’ in her dealings with regional political parties and her underlying desire to reinstate her position at the regional and local level.

Following the Indo-Pak War of 1971 and subsequent emergence of Bangladesh resulted in the huge influx of Bengali refugees into India’s eastern and north-eastern states, upsetting the demographic balance in these regions. The influx of refugees became one of the causes behind the fueling of communal tension in Assam that was cropped up after her re-election in 1980.

The state of Punjab, on the other hand, was besieged by communal violence between the Hindus and the Sikhs, which forced the central government to orchestrate a military action, which killed several thousand
Sikhs. The eventual outcome of the military action in the Golden Temple was the assassination of Mrs. Gandhi and Hindu-Sikh riots in Delhi.

Israel under the Premiership of Golda Meir experienced ethnic problems, which had already cropped up since the formation of the Jewish state. Built on the underlying premise as the homeland for the Jews, Israel was flooded with Jews from all parts of the world, creating ethnic strife and discrimination between the ‘advanced’ European Jews with that of the Jews of non-European origin. The case of Golda Meir will be discussed first.

The three previous chapters have discussed about elections and domestic policies of the three Premiers, their sources of influences and their functioning style, the present chapter seeks to analyse domestic threats internal hostile situations, which the three Prime Ministers had to face and the way they responded to the internal challenges. Since politics is said to be gender neutral, this chapter seeks to analyse whether gender had any role to play while formulating strategies. It will also look into the matter of whether these leaders acted according to their own views or were influenced by their male colleagues in policy formulations. It will also try to draw comparisons and identify common behavioural traits. It may be noted that selective cases have been taken for the purpose of analysis in this chapter.

1. GOLDA MEIR

1.1 Discriminatory government policies and ethnic strife

Golda Meir’s Premiership was often disturbed by civilian unrest and protests from various social groups which was a reflector of Israel’s failure to establish an egalitarian society. Unlike Mrs. Gandhi and Mrs. Thatcher however, the tenure of Golda Meir was more endangered by frequent external challenges (Arab belligerency). The consequent foreign policy issues also left little time to ponder over Israel’s domestic problems. In a way, this reflects the typicality of the Israeli political system where external issues are internalised. Every national head of Israel was bound to succumb to external challenges and place these over domestic problems and Mrs. Meir was no exception in prioritising foreign over domestic policies. As a consequence, Mrs. Meir’s tenure was more important in the context of the War of 1973 than her dealings with domestic issues.

Nevertheless, Mrs. Meir did face challenges in the domestic front. This internal turbulence was not a recent phenomenon, instead it flared even long before the establishment of the Jewish state. Although Israel’s GNP was high with a positive rate of industrialisation and urbanisation with sound agricultural inputs, marked by a high rate of immigration, something that Meir wanted, the country was disrupted by anti-government demonstrations through intra-Jewish problems from the ‘Black Panther’ group or the *Panterim Sh’horim*17 (borrowing the term from the Black American protestors), and from the ‘Young Couples’.18

As mentioned in Chapter IV, since the creation of the state, Israel had been suffering from ethnic issues because of the differences between the advanced Ashkenazi Jews, having European and American origin and impoverished Mizrachi-Sephardic Jews of North African and Asian origin. The creation of the Jewish state was engineered by the European born western educated Jews, one of whose principal goals was to ‘install’ a western socio-economic-political structure, so as to remain dissociated from the typical third world backward Arab nations and maintain her distinct identity as a western democracy.19 Starting from Theodore Herzl, down to the revisionist Jew, Vladimir Zabotinsky, to the socialist Ben-Gurion, all preferred Jewish immigration from the western world to from other parts. All of them wanted the preservation of the Ashkenazi majority in order to sustain Israel’s ‘western’ character.20

At the same time, it was also evident that none of these immigrants stood for the establishment of political parties based on their ethnic affiliations,21 unlike the Indian scenario, where there is a growth of political parties on the basis of religious, ethnic and linguistic relationships. The rationale behind this, as pointed out by some political analysts, was that these early immigrants were obsessed with their inter-ethnic cooperative spirits since their *Galuth* days, which would continue in future as well, and immigrants from different backgrounds would soon be absorbed into the Israeli society.22

20 Ibid., p. 463.
21 Ibid., p. 453.
22 Ibid., p. 453.
The situation, however, began to change when the Zionist leadership decided to take in Afro-Asian Jews in order to fill the vacuum created due to the massacre of million European Jews under Hitler’s regime.23 This large scale influx of eastern Jews created an open stratification in the society between the ‘advanced’ western and the ‘backward’ eastern Jews.24 This distinctive trait between the European and non-European Jews was noticeable in the form of latter’s low economic and educational standards than the former groups.25

Commentators have also observed about the relative lack of attention of the Israeli government towards these social groups in addressing their issues and implementing proper decisions to redress their grievances.26 In fact the innate bias of the Ashkenazim against the non-European Jews was so evident that the latter was often pejoratively dubbed as “Schwarze Chayis”27 or black animals by the former and were relocated in remote and inaccessible newly developed towns, called the Ayarot Pituah, the localities that have been built and expanded after the flight of the resident Palestinian through territorial conquest and incorporation.28

Thus, Israel, which was created as a Jewish homeland, appeared to have established a kind of class system between Ashkenazim and Sephardic Jews with racial, inegalitarian, hierarchical, structure. Moreover, the relative

23 Massad, n. 17, p. 55.
24 Ibid, p. 53.
25 Dutter, n. 19, p. 454.
27 Massad, n. 17, p. 58.
lack of sensitivity on the part of the government and the absence of ethnic based political groupings further jeopardised the condition of the Afro-Asian Jews. Above all, since the Ashkenazim were the elites, while, the Oriental-Sephardim had largely remained unrepresented in every sphere of governmental administration.\textsuperscript{29}

All these discriminatory measures, however, resulted in serious ethnic strife between the Ashkenazis and the Mizrachi-Sephardi Jews regarding proper allocation of resources and houses.\textsuperscript{30} The early record of the Orientals’ anti-government actions may be traced back to the Wadi Salib movement in the summer of 1959 which had led to riots and police intervention. The underlying reason behind this movement was the sanctioning of comfortable houses to the newly arrived Polish Jews in Wadi Salib locality, bypassing the Moroccan Jews, who had arrived long before their Polish brothers, forcing them to live in slums.

Ethnic tensions reached its peak during the early 1970s, when the ‘Black Panther’ group\textsuperscript{31}, comprising of destitute and dissatisfied Oriental Jews, started protest movement against the government, for the demand of better living standards equivalent to Ashkenazi Jews, which they felt they were being deprived of and alienated from enjoying the fruit of development.

\textbf{1.2 Golda Meir’s Response}

The ethnic strife and anti-government protests took place when Mrs. Meir was heading the two important portfolios of Labour and Housing initially, and also later when she was the Prime Minister. During the Wadi Salib

\textsuperscript{29} Etzioni-Halevy, n. 26, p. 291.

\textsuperscript{30} Massad, n. 17, p. 62.

\textsuperscript{31} Etzioni-Halevy, n. 18, p. 500.
uprising, her government was responsible for allocating resources
discriminately, when she was the Labour and Housing Minister. As a part of
the government, she also reflected her lack of sympathy towards the
protestors by openly declaring that, “…only a confirmed enemy of the
Jewish People have invented this treacherous and corrupting deed of
inflaming group against group.”

This statement of Mrs. Meir may reflect her biased attitude towards
her own Jewish kinfolks, for whom, she had dedicated her whole life. When
she became the Prime Minister in 1969, she welcomed the Soviet Jews with
her warm expression, “You are the real Jews…You speak Yiddish!...for he
who does not know Yiddish is not a Jew. You are a superior breed- you will
provide us with heroes.” On the other hand, she also introduced
multifarious developmental activities during her tenure as the Labour and
Housing Minister under Ben-Gurion’s Premiership, by sanctioning more
houses for the immigrants, irrespective of their countries of origin.

So far, Israel, unlike other states, had experienced limited civilian
unrest so far (barring the Arab uprisings). These sporadic disturbances did
not last long because the government ultimately satisfied their basic
demands of livelihood. According to sociologist Eva Etzioni-Halevy of Tel
Aviv University, the central government adopted a policy of “conflict
absorption”, which included inter alia suppression of protest activities, even
by force if necessary, on the one hand, promising additional funds to means
of solving their problems, setting up investigating committees to probe into

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32 Massad, n. 17, p. 60.
33 Ibid., pp. 61-62.
the matter, and above all, cooptation of the leaders of protestors as useful means to terminate the crisis.  

When Mrs. Meir became the Prime Minister, she initiated a number of programmes to cater to the protestor’s wishes and to find a viable solution to end this persistent crisis. Accordingly, various “personal assistance and benefits were offered to leaders and active members of these groups” which included their appointment as members of the Knesset, in Foreign Affairs and Security Committees, and in other top ranking government posts.  

A close study of all these schemes, however, reveals that only the ‘creamy layers’ of these impoverished sections were coopted by the government to dislodge latter’s anti-government protests and had meticulously left out the masses at large. Furthermore, these protest groups could not even receive support from the Ashkenazim, on the account of latter’s relative socio-economic superiority and were quite well-off from the rest. As a consequence, they tried to coerce the government in altering the discriminatory structure of the society, but as soon as the regime started its appeasement policies, these movements soon disappeared from the society. In that case it could be argued, therefore, that Mrs. Meir was quite successful in solving people’s problems.  

Mrs. Meir also experienced public protest and demonstrations under her leadership following the Yom Kippur War of October 1973. Despite evidences on Arab military build-up at the Israeli fronts, the nation’s intelligence and security agencies had neglected or overlooked any probability of belligerency from the Arab side on the account that Israel had

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the desired military preponderance over her Arab adversaries that was
evident from the Six Day War of 1967. This gross unpreparedness,
however, shook the Israeli Defence Force (IDF) when it faced massive frontal
attacks from Syria and Egypt. Golda Meir’s office was filled up with letters
from parents and wives, whose sons and husbands had paid for their lives in
defence of their country.

No matter how intense was the public anger against the Meir
Government, these demonstrations were not, in real terms, threats to Israel’s
security but did perturb Golda Meir’s position as the leader of the nation.
Since she was running an administration that was continuously threatened
by Arab bellicosity and without having any mutually agreed boundaries
between them, she was always looked up to by her colleagues and
countrymen as the saviour and guardian of the nation, these issues had
serious repercussions in her political journey as the leader of Israel that she
was forced her to renounce her position as the Prime Minister of Israel.

2. INDIRA GANDHI

Indira Gandhi became India’s Prime Minister at a period when the country
was heading towards a new horizon, moving away from the bleed of
Partition and the euphoria of Independence. It was no longer under the grip
of Nehruvian ideals, instead, plagued by intra-Congress rivalry, regional and
sectarian groupism, rise of regional parties, coupled with their internal
factionalism with an increased political defection. In this tense situation, the
nation required a strong hand to restrain and control the situation and Mrs.
Gandhi provided that.

39 Meir, n. 34, p. 435.
After her spectacular comeback in the seventh Lok Sabha election of January 1980 with once again a landslide victory (351 out of 528 seats),\textsuperscript{40} Indira Gandhi’s term had virtually become impregnable from the opposition and rival elements. There was an unprecedented concentration of unchallenged power in her hands that facilitated her to cultivate and use, once again, extra-constitutional measures- the grey areas of religion and communal politics, to satisfy her hunger for power. She encouraged the resentment of the Assamese Muslims against the Hindus to gain party’s support, supported Sikh extremism led by Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale and other opposing groups to split the Akali Dal in Punjab and eventually sent army to the Golden Temple to forestall them, an action that took her life by her own Sikh bodyguards.

2.1 Communal violence in Assam

I. Background

The Partition of India in 1947 and the birth of sovereign Bangladesh which broke away from the dissociation of East Pakistan from its Western Half in 1971 triggered a huge influx of Bengali immigrants (both Hindus and Muslim) into the adjoining states of West Bengal and Assam\textsuperscript{41} of India. There


\textsuperscript{41} The state of Assam represents cultural, linguistic and religious multiplicity having 57% speaking Assamese and was confined around the Brahmaputra Valley, while Bengali was spoken by 78% of the total population around the Surma Valley, according to 1961 Census. Its four hills, namely, the Khasi-Jaintia Hill, Garo Hill, Mizo Hill and the United Mikir and North Cachar (UNMC) Hills comprised of tribal people having diverse languages. The situation was precarious with the creation of Assamese as the official language of the state in 1960, which made the learning of Assamese as the prerequisite for getting job opportunities. In this background, the hill people organised themselves to form the All Party Hill Leaders’
was also incursion of Muslims from Bihar who were working as labourers in tea plantations. The socio-political arrangement of the state was such that the Bengali Hindus were dominated the skilled and entreprenial services, while the Muslims were left in the unskilled sectors. After the passage of the Immigration Expulsion (from Assam) Act by the Indian Parliament in 1950, by which non-Assamese could be expelled from the state, the Muslims turned towards the state government for protection and even supported government-sponsored programmes for making Assamese as the official language and as medium of instruction in educational institutions, and preference in service sector.

So far the Assamese dominated Congress Party had enjoyed the support of both the religious and linguistic communities from the post-Partition period, till the Bangladesh War when millions of Bengali Muslims poured into the state, thus, upsetting the demographic configuration. According to the 1951 Census, 275,000 refugees, mostly Bengali Hindus had entered into the state after 1947. The figure jumped to 820,000, mostly Bengali Muslims after 1971, and 19.9 millions in 1981. This unexpected rise in the Bengali population posed a severe threat to the Assamese, who were

Conference (APHLC) as the platform to demand separate states for them. Accordingly, the state of Nagaland was created by seceding the Naga Hill district from Assam. Thus was the beginning of the formation of Mizoram, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, etc. from Assam in the subsequent years. For more details, see Dilip Mukerjee, “Assam Reorganisation”, *Asian Survey* (California) Vol. 9, No. 4 April, 1969, pp. 297-311.


Ibid., p.285.

Ibid., p.286.
now on the brink of getting outnumbered. The Assamese were fearful of becoming a demographic and ethnic minority in their own homeland. The scenario was worsened when these illegal refugees started appropriating land for their livelihood, thereby, dispossessing the Assamese from their roots. To the agitators, thus, it was a severe threat to both their economy and polity.

Following the penetration of the non-Assamese, riots broke out in the Brahmaputra valley in 1972, where Bengalis were major targets of Assamese animosity. The Indira Government at the centre failed to take necessary and immediate action on account of the fact that the state Congress had taken a neutral stand following the Congress split of 1969. She displayed her authority by shifting her support base to the leaders of the rival groups within her state Congress outfit led by the Bengali-Muslim Moinul Haq Chowdhury, so as to put pressure on the Chief Minister Mahendra Mohan Choudhury. This action illustrated the concentration of power in the hands of the Prime Minister, which she used at the expense of regional groupism, a policy that she used to sustain her predominance. It also demonstrated her non-cooperative and non-accommodative posture against those who dared to challenge her leadership. Moreover, the intra-Congress rivalry gave her the desired opportunity to cultivate the party members for garnering their loyalty towards her in a way of shifting her support base over the Bengali

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49 Ibid., p. 1324.
Muslim dominated Congress faction by pulling away her backing from the Assamese dominated Congress group.\textsuperscript{50}

The situation became tense as the ‘anti-foreigner’ agitation divided the Assamese and Bengalis. The term ‘foreigner’ included, “non-Muslim displaced people from East Pakistan who came over in 1951-1971, and treated as bonafide refugees under the Immigration (Expulsion from Assam) Act of 1950”.\textsuperscript{51} With the arrival of millions of Bengali Muslims following the 1971 War into the state, this legislative device, by default, became applicable to them, when the anti-foreign agitation reached its peak in 1979. On its basis, both the Bengali speaking Hindus and Muslims became prime targets of the Assamese, who were fearful of losing their own identity in their own state.

\textbf{II. Mrs. Gandhi’s Response}

After winning back New Delhi in the Lok Sabha election of 1980, Mrs. Gandhi imposed Presidential rule in Assam in 1982, in order to contain mass killings and communal riots following the above mentioned legislations that fuelled Hindu-Muslim communal tensions across the state, and announced fresh legislative assembly elections in the following year. The politics of dissention started picking up when the Election Commission was asked by the Central government to prepare electoral rolls for the state citizens.\textsuperscript{52} In spite of tumultuous protests, strikes, communal riots, the electoral list that was prepared with the incorporation of Bangladeshi immigrants and Indira

\textsuperscript{50} Ibid., p. 1324.


\textsuperscript{52} Weiner, n. 43, p. 280.
Gandhi’s Congress won by a large margin (90 out of 108 declared seats),\textsuperscript{53} as many political outfits had boycotted the election, and the rest could not align themselves against the overpowering Indira group.\textsuperscript{54}

With hind side, it may be seen that Mrs. Gandhi, in order to gather strength against the rival Congress group, incorporated the immigrants into the voters’ list against the wishes of the Assamese, who knew that in so doing they would become minority and second class citizens against these illegal immigrants. This action posed a threat not only to Assam but to the entire nation. By enlisting illegal migrants within the voters’ list, the Central Government, in turn, granting them citizenship for the sole purpose of winning election and sustaining and maximising its powerbase in the state.

The Indira Congress, therefore, virtually bought votes from the refugees to orchestrate an electoral victory. Moreover, by shifting its support base from the Hindu dominated Assam Congress to its Muslim majority counterpart, it had played with the communal sentiments of the people of the state and manoeuvered its communal card to protect the interest of illegal immigrants rather than the citizens. This pro-religious act of Mrs. \textsuperscript{55}

\textsuperscript{53} Ibid, p. 281.

\textsuperscript{54} The two dominant Assamese organisations, the All Assam Students’ Union (AASU) and the All Assam Gana Sanghram Parishad (AAGSP) jointly submitted a memorandum to the Chief Election Commission of the state to revise the state’s electoral list and put forward their proposal to make the year 1971 as the cut off mark to avoid the incorporation of the refugees into the electoral list, who had migrated after that. The Chief Election Commissioner also accepted their proposal. The Central government, however, refused to accept, as it would lose nearly 2.3 million people who had entered into the state after 1971 and imposed the Assam Special Power (Press) Act of 1960 to prevent the publication of any anti-Congress comments, immediately after its announcement of the election date of February 14-20, 1983. For more information see The Times of India (New Delhi), January 16, 1983, The Statesman, January 12, 1983, Hindustan Times (New Delhi), January 8, 1983.
Gandhi, in a way, therefore, destroyed the core of the Indian Constitution, as well as overturned the foundation that been laid by her father, Pandit Nehru, the architect of post-Independence India.

Another point to note was Mrs. Gandhi’s call for an election amidst that turbulent background, and without solving the state crisis. Knowing fully well that by combining the number of Bengali speaking Hindus and Muslims of the state, the Assamese would become minority, which would reverse the demographic balance of Assam, she paid a lip-service to the Assamese sentiments and went ahead to pursue her own policy of reinstating her position in the state administration by devious means.

2.2 The Punjab debacle

I. Background

Considered to be an affluent Indian state, especially after the economic boom following the green revolution of the late 1960s, Punjab bears a testimony to both communal violence and political extremism, coupled with the ruthlessness of the central government in addressing these issues. The Akali

55 The state of Punjab represents a curious amalgamation between the Hindus and the Sikhs. Torn between Pakistan and India since the time of Independence and Partition, all the Sikhs of the Indian part of Punjab preferred to live within India in the Hindu majority state of the Punjab Suba. Further territorial adjustments of the state through the Punjab State Reorganisation Act of 1966 led to the formation of three different states- Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab and Chandigarh becoming a Union Territory apart from serving as the capital of Punjab, the Sikhs held a commanding majority in the Sikh dominated state of Punjab. The Green Revolution along with technological advancement in the agricultural sector pursued by Mrs. Gandhi, made the Sikhs economically affluent than the Hindu farmers and Punjab as one of the richest states of India. For more details, see Cynthia K. Mahmood, “Sikh Rebellion and the Hindu Concept of Order”, Asian Survey, Vol. 29, No. 3, March 1989, pp. 326-340; Paul Wallace, “The Sikhs as “Minority” in the Sikh Majority State in India”, Asian Survey, Vol. 26, No. 3, March 1986, pp. 363-377.
Dal\textsuperscript{56} played a pivotal role in the religious and political mobilisation of the Sikh community, and with the control of the Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee (SGPC), the principal Sikh Gurudwara management body, it is the chief mouthpiece, promoter and guardian of the Sikh community.\textsuperscript{57} Here also Mrs. Gandhi used religion and politics to maximise her position and strength.

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\textsuperscript{56} Formed in 1920s, the Akali Dal, the Sikh political organisation wanted to establish an autonomous Sikh homeland in the immediate aftermath of Independence along with their demand for a separate communal representation in the Legislative Assembly and in government jobs, which was turned down by Nehru as it vitiate the secular atmosphere of the newly emerged Indian nation. However, the party was also not satisfied with the territorial readjustment of the state following the Act of 1966 and intensified their demand for a separate territory as the Sikhs were still the second largest majority in Punjab with 44\% against the Hindus, who comprised 54\% of the total population of the newly demarcated state. There was also a division within the Akali Dal, one preferring to cooperate with the Congress, while the other half wanted autonomy. At the same time, there was awareness on the part of the Sikhs about their distinct attribute in terms of religion, culture, linguistics, ethnicity and distinct national identity different from that of the Indian state through the passage of the Sikh Gurudwaras Act of 1925, which distinguished the Sikh community from the Hindus as a separate entity. Prior to this Act, the Sikhs used to consider themselves as an integral part of the larger Hindu framework. For more detail, see Sathyamurthy, n. 46, pp. 46-50; Gurharpal Singh, “Understanding the “Punjab Problem””, \textit{Asian Survey}, Vol. 27, No. 12, December 1987, pp. 1268-1277; Harish K. Puri, “The Akali Agitation: An Analysis of Socio-Economic Bases of Protest”, \textit{Economic and Political Weekly}, Vol. 18, No. 4, January 22, 1983, pp. 113-118; Rajiv A. Kapur, “‘Khalistan’: India’s Punjab Problem”, \textit{Third World Quarterly} (London),Vol. 9, No. 4, October 1987, pp. 1206-1224.

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II. Mrs. Gandhi’s Role

The role of Mrs. Gandhi in the Punjab problem has been differently interpreted by different political commentators and observers. To one group, she deliberately ‘created’ the Punjab problem, which was her calculative strategy of playing one Akali group against the other. To others, she acted as the vanguard of the Hindu community and instigated communal sentiments among the Sikhs, while supporting the Sikh extremist Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale at the same time. Others refer to the great economic prosperity following the Green Revolution that brought concentration of wealth among the rich farmers, and the concomitant lack of economic advancements among the poor farmers, which in a way, fomented radical tendencies under the aegis of Bhindranwale who received support from the central leadership at New Delhi.

Following her reentry into Indian politics in 1980, Mrs. Gandhi orchestrated her action against the Akalis, who were non-cooperative with the Indira Congress since 1967. Despite her attempt at rewarding Sikhs valuable posts to the Sikhs, she did not have the support of the entire Sikh community because of the presence of the Akalis. Being a secular person, Mrs. Gandhi was able to attract people from nearly all sections of the Indian society. As a consequence, her party had enough Sikh leaders in order to

61 After the rearrangement of the state in 1966, Punjab since the general election of 1967, the Akali Dal formed coalition governments with Jana Sangh, the Hindu political organisation to form a viable government in the state Legislative Assembly under a Sikh Chief Minister.
gain the Sikh electoral support. Accordingly, except in the interregnum period of 1977, when the Akalis came to power for the first time, between 1967 and 1980 the Congress (I) was able to command majority of the state Assembly elections. In the general elections of 1980, it captured twelve out of thirteen seats from Punjab.

Here lies the root of the Punjab. Being the representative of the Sikhs, the Akalis were unable to form a majority government since the electorate owed divided allegiance to two principal centres of power - the rich, upper and middle class Sikhs were Akali loyalists, while the lower peasant class still owed their allegiance to the Congress (I).

The situation took a serious turn when the Akali Dal adopted the Anandpur-Sahib Resolution of October 1973 that revived the Sikh demand for a separate territorial entity to fulfill of their nationalist aspiration. They wanted a transfer of power from the central government to the state in matters related to defence, railways, foreign policy, post and telegraph and currency and demanded the right to frame their own Constitution; they also sought the redistribution of river water between Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan; and redemarcation of the state border (that was created from the Punjab State Reorganisation Act of 1966) by including Punjabi speaking areas, which included Chandigarh, Sindh, Kangra and other regions from the neighbouring states within its fold. Meanwhile the Akali Dal lost its cohesion and had split into two distinct political entities - the moderates led by its President Harchand Singh Longowal, and the extremist faction led by

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62 Kapur, n. 56, pp. 1211-1212.
63 Ibid., p. 1212.
65 Ibid., pp. 352-353.
his rival and former Party President Jagdev Singh Talwandi, where each side sought to assert its dominance over the other.\textsuperscript{66}

By declaring the Anandpur Sahib Resolution as secessionist, Mrs. Gandhi had repeatedly rejected any discussions with the Akalis and instead imposed President’s rule on Punjab because of the rising communal tension between the Hindus and the Sikhs who supported a Sikh irredentist policy.\textsuperscript{67} The rising discontent of the Sikhs against Mrs. Gandhi became more pronounced when the Akalis defeated the Indira Congress, which had been ruling the state so far, and formed the government in partnership with the Janata Party in 1977 in Punjab. Although she was out of power, her younger son, Sanjay Gandhi, together with Zail Singh, who later became the President of India at the commencement of her second innings in 1980, supported Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, known for his extremist activities, with the purpose of widening the intra-Sikh and subsequent intra-Akali differences and also to amplify the expanding gulf between the Sikhs and the Hindus of the state.\textsuperscript{68}

After her reelection, Mrs. Gandhi imposed President’s rule in the state in order to overthrow the Akali-Janata government and install a puppet regime which would be under her control.\textsuperscript{69} Meanwhile the Bhindranwale

\textsuperscript{66} Kapur, n. 56, p. 1212.


\textsuperscript{69} In February 1980, Mrs. Gandhi imposed President’s rule in Punjab, along with eight other Indian states, which were still dominated by non-Congress governments. Thus it overthrew the Janata-Akali coalition with the central power resting under the Chief Ministership of Prakash Singh Badal. With the imposition of President’s rule, the Badal administration was deposed and a new government under Darbara Singh was formed with Mrs. Gandhi’s support. For more information see ibid, pp. 484-486.
team was in full operation in dividing the state along linguistic, religious and ethnical lines between Hindus and Sikhs, exploiting the intra-Akali factions, and attacking the Nirankari sect, who was antagonistic to Akali domination. This resulted in frequent Akali-Nirankari clashes, Nirankari-Bhindranwale clash, and Sikh-Hindu animosity, upsetting the socio-political harmony of the state. Above all, Bhindranwale’s ‘Dal Khalsa’ forwarded the ideology of establishing a sovereign independent Sikh state, to be called ‘Khalistan’, by seceding from India. This attracted many young Sikh fanatics who wished to get rid of the Hindu domination as well as the Akali leadership.

In response to these events, the actions of the Indira Gandhi administration at the centre proved to be fatal because of Mrs. Gandhi’s unwillingness to reverse her antipathy from the Akalis. New Delhi was unable to stop communal violence and indiscriminate killings of common people in the state. In the meantime, there was a convergence of interest between Mrs. Gandhi and Bhindranwale, as both were poised to suppress the Akali influence and strengthen their respective bases in the state.

70 With the murder of the head of the Nirankari sect, Mrs. Gandhi was found to have attended the funeral, an action that hurt the religious sentiment of the Akalis. Although Bhindranwale was arrested due to his involvement with the murder, he was released.

71 Singh, n. 56, p. 1269.

72 Puri, n. 56, p. 115.

73 The situation was further exacerbated when the Indira Gandhi turned down two other significant demands raised by the Akalis along with the Anandpur Sahib Resolution, namely, their urge to make Chandigarh as the capital of Punjab by revoking its previous status of serving as the joint capital for both Punjab and Haryana following the 1966 Reorganisation Act and secondly, the demand for the sharing of river water among Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan to be adjudicated by the Supreme Court, instead of the Central government.

74 Malik, n. 56, p. 355.
the other hand, Bhindranwale converted the Golden Temple as his place of action for executing communal tensions within the state.75

Mrs. Gandhi responded to such situation by sending the Indian army to the Golden Temple, the holy bastion of Sikhism and also the current sanctuary of Bhindranwale and his followers. The army action was code named ‘Operation Blue Star’ and took place in June 3-4, 1984. Instead of a surgical raid, the army went for an all-out attack, which included death of thousands of common unarmed Sikh worshippers at the Temple, including the extremists and arrest of the Akali followers throughout the state.76

The Punjab problem posed to be one of the most brutal facets of the Indian democracy. It demonstrated the extent of the power that could be projected by the Central Government to address a socio-political crisis in a state. Moreover, it also confirmed Indira Gandhi’s inflexible and unbending behaviour towards her fellow counterparts, the Akali Dal in granting them concessions in accordance with their demands stated in the Anandpur Sahib Resolution. Instead, she branded them as anti-nationals and secessionists and supporters of terrorist and subversive activities against the Indian State.77 In fact, she had entwined religion and politics to make herself supreme and her party throughout the nation. With her charisma and leadership skills she could have quelled the Punjab unrest, but she chose to utilise communal factionalism to expand her political power base. When the situation went out of her control, she sent in the army, which to Sikhs, meant a desecration of the shrine. What followed was a bloodbath, the repercussion of which was

75 Ibid., p. 355.
77 Singh, n. 56, p. 1270.
her assassination by her own Sikh bodyguards as an act of reprisal she had committed against the Sikhs, four months later.\textsuperscript{78}

3. MARGARET THATCHER AND TENSION WITH NORTHERN IRELAND

I. Background

The conflict in Northern Ireland\textsuperscript{79} was considered to be one of the most protracted and intractable in advanced western democracies, accounting for

\textsuperscript{78} Ibid., p. 355.
\textsuperscript{79} Situated in the north-eastern part with six counties of Ireland (comprising of thirty-two counties), Northern Ireland was inhabited by Protestants, who emigrated from Europe and Scotland to Ireland in 16\textsuperscript{th} and 17\textsuperscript{th} centuries, having unbroken relationship with Britain. The Catholics were natives of Ireland, who wanted to preserve their independence, and owed divided allegiance to the Nationalist Party and the Sinn Féin. The crux of the problem lies on the British initiative of replacing the native Catholics with Protestants from England and Scotland, who would remain loyal to the British Crown and the Union Jack. However, both the communities used to live as separate entities, although economically, the Catholics were in a disadvantaged position with less job opportunities and mass unemployment, because of the predominance of the Protestants. With the materialisation of nationalist aspirations in Europe, emerged the corresponding national sentiments in the region. Protestantism (synonymously Unionism) was established to manifest their allegiance to the Union of Britain and to counter the Catholic sponsored national demands for Home Rule in the form of the Easter Uprising of 1916. It guaranteed the continuation of British rule in these six counties with two-third majority of Protestants and the Catholics as the remaining one-third of the total population of the region. The situation deteriorated further with the imposition of the majority Unionist’s rule that denied identity and socio-economic support for the Catholics. For more information, see Eamonn Mallie and David McKittrick, \textit{Endgame in Ireland} (London, Hodder and Stroughton, 2001); Neil Collins and Terry Cradden, \textit{Irish Politics Today} (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2001, 4\textsuperscript{th} Edition).
most of the terrorist activities committed in Europe.\footnote{Ian MacAllister, “‘The Armalite and Ballot Box’: Sinn Fein’s Electoral Strategy in the Northern Ireland”, \textit{Electoral Studies} (Philadelphia), Vol. 23, 2004, p. 123.} It is also perhaps the only conflict in the world that had fostered intra-Christian rivalry: between the Irish Protestants and Catholics of the region. Although Northern Ireland was established as a separate entity from the Irish mainland through the Government of Ireland Act of 1921, which stipulated a separate Parliament and administration in Northern Ireland, however, final authority still rested with London.\footnote{The document of the Act is available in www.nationalarchives.ie, access date March 19, 2013.} This policy was acceptable to the majority Protestants led by the Ulster Unionist Party, which wanted to retain British suzerainty, while the minority Catholics under the aegis of Sinn Féin\footnote{Established in 1905, Sinn Féin is an Irish Republican political organisation that aimed at establishing an Irish Republic with complete autonomy from the British suzerainty} and its extremist wing, the Irish Republican Army (IRA) wanted to establish self-rule in the province by seceding from the dominance of Westminster.\footnote{McAllister, n. 80, p. 124.}

Since the majority of Protestants wanted association with England, London was dexterously exercising its sovereignty over the land in such a manner that the Protestants or the Unionists enjoyed full autonomy, leaving the minority secessionist Catholics behind. Thus the situation of Northern Ireland was a continuation of the British policy of divide and rule,
guaranteeing “exclusive power to one side, the Unionists, and a guarantee of permanent exclusion from power to the other, the Catholic minority”.  

The result was a sectarian conflagration between the two Christian communities, coupled with repeated intransigence from the British government to accept the secession of Northern Ireland from Ireland proper, attacks and counter-attacks from all parties involved in the conflict, and above all, terrorist activities against the British in Northern Ireland as well as the mainland.

The issue got a boost from the American Civil Rights movements led by Martin Luther King (Jr.) during the 1960s when the nationalists identified their plight with that of Black Americans. This led the US to put pressure on the British government to reconsider latter’s relationship with the Catholic nationalists.  

Moreover there was a strong Irish lobby in the US. Attacks and counterattacks between the two antagonistic communities, which instigated both the Sinn Féin and the IRA to resort to a strategy of the simultaneous use of armed struggle and electoral politics in the form of ‘Armalite (rifle) and Ballot Box’ in 1981. This was engineered by the IRA activist, Danny Morrison, after the Sinn Féin won the general election in the Northern Island Assembly elections, through which it became the official representatives of the Catholics of the region.

This was the genesis of a political impasse between the nationalists, who strove for self-determination and the unionists, who envisioned

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84 Brian Feeney, Sinn Féin- A Hundred Turbulent Years, (Wisconsin, Wisconsin University Press, 2003), p. 293.
territorial integrity with the British and opposed to any devolution of power to the Catholics. Nevertheless, the Thatcher government made for the first time, an attempt to resolve the conflict and in search for a durable peaceful settlement through the signing of the Anglo-Irish Accord.

II. Margaret Thatcher’s response

Following her predecessor Jim Callaghan, who preferred repressive measures to address the issue and sent troops to control the situation, Mrs. Thatcher also resorted to force as the suitable option. However, she perhaps, invoked a toughest stance, more than any of her counterparts.87

From the very outset, Mrs. Thatcher and her team were antagonistic towards any kind of political concession to the Northern Ireland, which was reflected in the opinion of her Cabinet Secretary, Charles Powell that “Mrs. Thatcher had little understanding of Irish nationalist aspiration. She tended to identify them immediately with terrorism”.88 Thus during her initial days as the Prime Minister, Mrs. Thatcher and her first Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and close associate Airey Neave89 advocated full integrationist strategy for the region, that is advocating a unitary and

87 Ibid., p. 7.
88 Ibid., p. 56.
89 In tune with Mrs. Thatcher’s policy of reshuffling and rearrangement of the Cabinet and Ministries, Northern Ireland had several Secretaries one of the other, namely, Airey Neave (killed by the IRA at the House of Commons car parking area in 1979), Humphrey Atkins (1979-1981), James Prior (1981-1984), Douglas Hurd (1984-1985), Tom King (1985-1989) and Peter Brooke (1989-1992). Each of them, however, repudiated integrationist approach and believed in the idea of power-sharing and devolution of power as the meaningful alternative to solve the problem.
centralised ways in governing mechanisms to tie its closeness to Britain. In fact, they were heavily influenced by the dogmatism of Enoch Powell, her mentor, a hardcore Unionist and Member of Parliament from the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP), who believed in the integration of the problem within the British Unitary system, in which the cases of minority nationalism could be relegated, marginalised and criminalised.

Mrs. Thatcher’s intransigence was evident in refusal to cooperate with the IRA prisoners, who resorted to hunger strike in the Maze prison in 1981, demanding political status and special privileges. Her inflexible attitude refused to make any concessions even after the death of Bobby Sands, one of the staunch Republicans, and ten other hunger strikers.

Similarly, the attitude of the Thatcher government was also, perhaps, best expressed by her next Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, James Prior in 1983, who expressed the view that the region might turn out to be Cuba if Sinn Féin’s coming to power. To the consternation of the Conservative mantle, a united and independent Ireland (with Catholic majority) might pose a defence threat to the British government (a Protestant one). Mrs. Thatcher’s reluctance may also be explained after Northern Ireland refused to support Britain’s war efforts in the Falklands case.

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91 Ibid., p. 664.
92 Mallie and McKittrick, n. 79, p. 32.
93 Ibid., p. 45.
95 Ibid., p. 43.
96 The declassified Cabinet Minute No. CC(82) on Northern Ireland and Falklands held on April 1, 1982, released on 2012, available at
The British intransigence towards the region also made a matter of grave concern for the US, which is reflected from Mrs. Thatcher’s letter to the US President Jimmy Carter, who wanted to know about London’s stance towards the issue. The letter, which is now declassified, shows that the British Premier was equally concerned about the issue of human rights and the matter of security of the region. She wrote:

> Our present view is that we can best make progress by patient and persistent negotiation with the parties, rather than by more precipitate action. We have already taken an initiative, in the sense of starting discussions with all those with a concern in the matter; but this does not mean that we expect an early solution. There is a wide gap between the outlook and aspirations of the two communities in Northern Ireland, and it will not easily be bridged. ⁵⁷

After surviving twin bomb attacks in 1984 and recurrent IRA activities that disrupted normal British life, Mrs. Thatcher intensified her use of force towards the nationalists and deployed the British army to crush the extremists. As a statist, she had never wanted Northern Ireland’s independence and maintained an inflexible attitude in this regard. Having little faith in power-sharing deal with parties endorsing conflicting national aspirations, she was more interested in crushing the nationalists rather than granting any kind of territorial concessions. ⁵⁸ In fact, her pro-British stand

http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/122267, accessed on March 19, 2013. Here the Premier agreed with the Secretary of State on Northern Ireland James Prior that unless decentralisation of power was initiated, the problem would not be solved.


may be reflected from her famous statement regarding the future of the Catholics in Northern Ireland and the status of the region after having discussion with Garrett FitzGerald, the Prime Minister of Ireland, “I have made it quite clear that a unified Ireland that is out. A confederation of two states, that is out. Joint authority, that is out”. By ruling out all possible alternatives advanced by the Irish Premier, she embraced therefore, a policy of ‘out, out, out’. Nevertheless, given the intensification of Irish discontent, she finally initiated the Accord, for the first time in the British history, with FitzGerald, in November 1985 at the Hillsborough Castle in Northern Ireland.

The Act “allowed the Irish Government to put forward views and proposals on matters relating to Northern Ireland in a wide range of areas, including security. But it was made clear that there was no derogation from the sovereignty of the United Kingdom”. It also established an Inter-Governmental Council to be jointly chaired by the Secretary of State of Northern Ireland and the Irish Minister for Foreign Affairs, and the British government pledged to resolve any difference that arose within the Council.

Hence, by rejecting their plea for an eventual right to self-determination by maintaining the status quo, Mrs. Thatcher had made London the final decision-maker on the future of the province. The Act was chiefly an extension of Britain’s overarching supremacy over the province. It

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99 Ibid., p. 258.
101 Thatcher, n. 14, p. 402.
102 Patterson, n. 98, pp. 259-260.
can be noted that when the Republic of Ireland requested the Security Council in 1969 to discuss the matter on the disturbances from the Northern Ireland, and send the United Nations’ peacekeeping forces, Britain had immediately rejected the plan on the ground that the issue was purely an internal problem where, the UN could not interfere by virtue of article 2(7) of the UN Charter.103

Both the Unionists and the Republicans were enraged by the outcomes of the Accord.104 To the Protestants or the Unionists, Britain was not sympathetic to their interest since they believed that any kind of devolutionary measure would lead to independence of Northern Ireland. To the Catholics, whose allegiance had now got divided between the moderate Nationalist Social Democratic Labour Party (SDLP under the leadership of John Hume, who prepared to cooperate with the Unionists in the matter of power-sharing) and the extremist Sinn Fein (under the leadership of Gerry Adams, who stood for violent measures), which was the political mouthpiece of the IRA. Both the wings were contesting between themselves for the support of the Catholics within their folds, had denounced the Act on the ground that it was merely, an extension of Britain’s counter-insurgency strategy.105 Their consternation was that a unified Ireland would force them to function under the majority Protestants without any hope of prosperity for the minority Catholics.

Simultaneously, the expansion of extremist activities of the IRA with its overseas connection and support base, (Gaddafi of Libya invited it to set

103 Guelke, n. 94, p. 42.
104 McAllister, n. 83, p. 127
105 Ibid., p. 128.
up an office in his country),\textsuperscript{106} had further aggravated the tension between London and Dublin.

To the Thatcher Government, the issue of Northern Ireland seemed to be an inseparable part of British sovereignty. The Agreement was concluded between the two governments in order to achieve more Irish cooperation in security, policing and extradition matters. However, with the fall of the FitzGerald administration in the immediate aftermath of the Agreement followed by the succession of Charles Haughey who was more antagonistic to such Accord, to the office in January 1987, had further worsened the situation.\textsuperscript{107} To Mrs. Thatcher, on the other hand, Britain had given much more concessions to Ireland and now it was the latter’s turn to fulfill the British expectations, which is evident from her comment to her newly appointed Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Peter Brooke, who had replaced Jim Prior “Our concessions had alienated the Unionists without gaining the level of security cooperation we had a right to expect.”\textsuperscript{108}

Meanwhile, with the continuation of IRA extremism, Thatcher had no other alternative but to tighten her grip over the province by deploying the British army to undertake anti-terrorist operations and patrol the border areas, thereby, leaving the matter of Northern Ireland unresolved. However, unlike Indira Gandhi, her action was purely based on her spirit of nationalism and was driven by the cause of maintaining British sovereignty and territorial integrity, and not for the aggrandisement of personal power.

\textsuperscript{106} Guelkes, n. 92, p. 46.
\textsuperscript{107} Thatcher, n. 14, p. 405.
\textsuperscript{108} Patterson, n. 94, p. 318.
IV. CONCLUSION

It can be seen from the above account that all the three woman leaders faced serious internal crises during their tenure as Prime Ministers, unlike any of their counterparts in most other countries. The intensity of each of these crises was so severe that they had to risk their lives. However, these did not dissuade them adopting their respective modus operandi to deal with these tense situations. For Mrs. Meir, however, the internal crisis was not as severe as that of her two other compatriots, but it did have a special significance since it necessitated stern and prompt actions from the government to address the issues. Mrs. Meir, although displayed her partisan attitude in favour of the Western Jews, she did sanction more projects for their accommodation of the Oriental Jews, in spite of criticism from her peer groups.

The case of Indira Gandhi was quite different from the rest on account of the fact that she demonstrated a complete ‘u turn’ from her initial days as a Congress leader and Prime Minister before the commencement of the national Emergency. In fact, her secular credentials was put to test and she was questioned regcriticised for her role in the incidents and events of Assam and Punjab. Her actions demonstrated her shrewdness as a politician for playing one religious group against another and granted citizenship to illegal Bangladeshi migrants in order to increase her vote bank and sideline her opposition camps.

Similarly, Mrs. Gandhi’s attitude towards the Akalis of Punjab once again, depicted her desire for power. She took a novel stance of incorporating the Sikhs into important Ministries and in the Cabinet on the one hand, and rejecting the latter’s political demands one after the other. It was certain that if was successful, the ‘Khalistani movement’ might pose a
profound challenge to the security of the Indian State, and Mrs. Gandhi was quite justified in suppressing this secessionist demand. However, the ruthlessness with which Bhindranwale was suffered was unprecedented, since no religious shrine had been attacked by the Indian army so far, although it has been and is still used in various operations to face internal challenges.

In an interview to Andrew Neil, editor of the British daily, *Sunday Times*, Mrs. Gandhi justified the army operation that her government did everything possible to stop armed intervention in Punjab, but considered it as the only means to “save the state from extremism”.\textsuperscript{109} This justification of the Prime Minister was also evident from the White Paper that was issued by the Central government on July 10, 1984, which also highlighted the inevitability of the army action in the state, as “the tactics employed by the secessionists and terrorist groups were systematic campaign to create indoctrination in the ideology of separatism in military term.”\textsuperscript{110}

For Margaret Thatcher, however, the case of Northern Ireland was an internal issue where the suppression of the republican terrorists was necessary to end a secessionist demand as well as to stop terrorist activities. In fact, she was unsympathetic to the Catholic national sentiments, which may be substantiated from her statement, “Why could the minority in the north not be satisfied with effective policing, the rule of law? Why did they have to have their own signs and symbols? They had after all seats on local authorities, they had votes; if they wished to put their view, there were democratically elected bodies in which to put it.”\textsuperscript{111}

\textsuperscript{109} *The Hindu*, June 8, 1984.


\textsuperscript{111} Mallie and McKrittick, n. 79, p. 55.
It seems that Mrs. Thatcher’s statist mindset could not comprehend the essence of granting autonomy to the region, since she believed it to be an integral part of the United Kingdom.\textsuperscript{112} This attitude of the Premier was manifested during her support for the Falklands Islands crisis, which it will be discussed in the next chapter.

It could be argued, therefore, that none of the woman leaders, who are the subjects of this dissertation stood for conciliatory arrangements and pacific means to solve both the domestic and international crises. These Prime Minister reversed Fukuyama’s contention that aggression, violence, war are “more closely associated with men than women”.\textsuperscript{113} Although he concedes that among heads of government, Margaret Thatcher, Indira Gandhi and Golda Meir are exceptions to his gender thesis.\textsuperscript{114} These leaders also defied his another contention that women leaders advance peace. In fact, all three leaders discussed here, advanced force to achieve their domestic and foreign policy goals.\textsuperscript{115} At the same time, they also refused to cooperate with the protestors in order to arrive at a mutually agreed conciliatory arrangement, instead, they upheld their dogmatic beliefs.

As identified by the liberal feminist theorists such as Wollstonecraft that once women assume power, they left with no difference in their modes of action and implementation of their goals and desires with their male counterparts. The woman leaders, according to this theory, also renounce their sentiments, emotions and compassion in their path to power and

\textsuperscript{112} Guelke, n. 94, p. 37.
\textsuperscript{113} Francis Fukuyama, “Women and the Evolution of World Politics”, \textit{Foreign Affairs}, Vol. 77, No. 5, 1998, pp. 27, 32
\textsuperscript{114} Ibid., p. 27.
\textsuperscript{115} Ibid., p. 34
advancement of their policies. The three woman heads of government, accordingly, proved themselves as powerful leaders of the twenty-first century. The manner Mrs. Gandhi deployed her troops against the Sikhs and Mrs. Thatcher’s refusal to cooperate with the hunger-strikers that caused death of eleven prisoners, demonstrate their overwhelming strength and self-dependence in their policy objectives. There assertive behavioural traits would further be revealed in their response to international situations in the next chapter.