Chapter – 4

IMPACT OF RAJIV GANDHI ON INDIA’S FOREIGN POLICY
Rajiv Gandhi's foreign policy rested on amity and good will amongst mankind, a better world economic order and nuclear, disarmament. Racial harmony, according to him, went hand in hand with a healthy, peaceful coexistence. He was keen on a more objective International Information Order. Rajiv Gandhi continued to pursue an activist foreign policy and to assert India's place in the world community.

On the principles of India's foreign policy Rajiv Gandhi said that "there is a broad national consensus on the principles and objectives and in the way we conduct our foreign policy. Despite differences that occur in detail, the main constituents of our foreign policy have been reaffirmed and reiterated a number of times. The main constituents have a continuing relevance in today's world."

Rajiv Gandhi keenly observed that the world is changing very rapidly, especially in the realm of international relations. New attitudes are developing and new ways of thinking are springing up. All this will pose new challenges to all countries in the world, especially countries like India who play a significant role in international affairs. In such a situation one cannot remain mired in the past. One must remain flexible. At the same time one's basic principles and fundamental ethical perceptions, the postulates, on which India based its foreign policy, must be rock steady.
At one time India regarded impractical when it based its independent foreign policy on an ethical approach. Today this has changed. The world is accepting the indispensability of non-violence, of freedom from nuclear weapons and of disarmament. Rajiv Gandhi said that "today the world accepts that there can be no real and complete development if truth is burdened by a weight of bloc interest and spheres of influence. The world is coming around more and more to our way of thinking in seeing humanity as one without segmented interest, celebrating and accepting the diversity of different peoples of this earth. Countries which were highly suspicious of peaceful coexistence are today talking of peaceful coexistence and not of deterrence. Since India's foreign policy was given a firm grounding by Jawaharlal Nehru, the world is coming around to our world-view."²

Soon after winning the general elections of December 1984, Rajiv Gandhi, in his broadcast to the nation on January 5th 1985, referred to India's heritage to a well tested and consistent foreign policy which serves the national interest. In January 1985, he pledged himself to pursue:³

1. World Peace;

2. friendship with all nations on the basis of reciprocity and mutual benefit;

3. non-alignment;
4. new world economic order based on Justice, mutual cooperation, peace and development;
5. respect for the Independence of other states and for the principles of sovereign equality of nations, non-interference and non intervention in their internal affairs;
6. strengthening the deep historical and cultural links with our immediate neighbor in south Asia;
7. peaceful coexistence; and
8. adherence to the twin principles of continuity and change, stability and dynamism, in the changing context of world politics.

Rajiv Gandhi attempted faithfully to pursue these objectives and not only improved relations with the United States of America (USA) and other neighbouring countries but also made frantic efforts to promote international peace, nuclear disarmament and greater economic cooperation between North and South. From time to time, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi has been referred to the old, well tried and dependable friendship of India with the Soviet Union as the central pillar of India's foreign policy and has also stressed the need for expanding economic and technological relations with the USA.

Stand On Major World Issues

On major world issues, his position has been repeatedly spelt out in clear terms:
• Total support to complete disarmament;

• Insistence on a political solution of the Tamil problem in Sri Lanka, promising complete non-intervention by India in the island;

• Withdrawal of all foreign intervention, interference and troops from Afghanistan;

• Full support to the South Asia Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC).

• Dismantling of bases on foreign soil;

• Settlement of issues with Pakistan on the basis of bilateralism, elimination of nuclear proliferation and mutual economic cooperation.

• Solution of Indo-China border problems, sector by sector, and on the basis of available and tangible evidence and Panchasheela;

• Termination of unending war between Iran and Iraq;

• Uncompromising fight against racism of South Africa and full support to the Independence of Namibia;

• Earnest effort to wipe out terrorism which has assumed alarming proportions in recent years;

• Full support to the United Nations Organization.

Most of the initiatives taken by Rajiv Gandhi since November 1st 1984, to the end of his tenure can be understood in the context of these principles.
Rajiv’s Disarmament Efforts

India has evinced keen interest in disarmament since her Independence. India has also been a consistent opponent of the Nuclear weapons ever since Independence. In fact even before India gained Independence the Indian leaders expressed shock over the dropping of the bomb at Hiroshima and Nagasaki which resulted in enormous loss of life and property. After Independence Indian leaders decided to keep India free from atomic weapons and carried out a crusade against nuclear weapons from every possible platform. The disarmament initiatives launched by India go back to Jawaharlal Nehru. These initiatives were continued by successive governments at New Delhi.

Mr. Rajiv Gandhi has given wide popularity to the movement against nuclear disarmament. He used various fora to spread the message particularly during the years 1985–86. Mr. Rajiv Gandhi functioned practically as a pilgrim in quest of world peace and disarmament. Where ever he went - France, Algeria, Japan, Maldives, Egypt, Britain, Bhutan the United States (US), Switzerland, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), the Bahamas, Netherlands, Cuba and the UN—he emphasized the supreme and paramount need for disarmament.⁶
Rajiv Gandhi categorically declared India’s stand on disarmament in an interview to press. He declared that “India has been fighting for nuclear disarmament for long before it became fashionable. The INF Treaty is a historic step in this process, but it must be remembered that it is only a first step. A lot more needs to be done to build upon this process. To make further progress, we must work towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons within a time-bound programme. We must include all nuclear weapon powers in the process. We must see that nuclear weapon powers do not extend into new dimensions. We must see that there is no development of other weapons of mass destruction or surgical weapons. We must replace doctrines of deterrence by the doctrine of peaceful coexistence.”

Six Nation Summit

On May 22nd 1984 the then Indian Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi, as Chairperson of the Non-aligned nations, had appealed to the nuclear powers—the USSR, USA, China Briton and France for disarmament and an end to arms-race in the interest of peace. As her successor Mr. Rajiv Gandhi followed up this appeal while presiding over Summit Conference of six countries on disarmament as the Chairperson of Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). This summit held on January 28th 1985 was attended by the Presidents of Argentina, Mexico and Tanzania, and also by the Prime Ministers of Sweden and Greece. The conference was called on the basis of the appeal of 22nd May
1984. The Summit appealed to the nuclear weapon powers to halt and reverse the nuclear arms race. It urged them to immediately halt the testing of all kinds of nuclear weapons and to conclude a treaty on a nuclear weapon test ban at an early date. It called for prohibition of the development, testing, production, development and use of all space weapons.

The underlying idea of Mr. Rajiv Gandhi was to arouse the conscious voice of humanity against the danger of the earth being reduced into a darkened, frozen planet by a nuclear catastrophe, even in one occurred on a limited scale. At the end of the Summit, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi singed the Delhi Declaration which ended with the stirring call: “For Centuries men and women have fought for their rights and freedom. We now face the greatest struggle of all for the right to live, for ourselves and for future generations.” It was the first major appearance of the Prime Minister Mr. Rajiv Gandhi on the international scène, and it bore the hallmark of his policy regarding nuclear disarmament.

While the USA contemptuously rejected the appeal, the USSR welcomed it. But during his visit to the USA in June 1988, and his talks with the then US President Mr. Ronald Reagan, his address to the Joint session of the US Congress, and his press conference at the National Press Club, Prime Minister Mr. Rajiv Gandhi appealed on behalf of humanity, held as a bonded hostage, as it were, for disarmament.
Throughout the period of Rajiv Gandhi’s Prime Ministership the war on disarmament went on relentlessly.

In his address to the UN General Assembly (40th anniversary session) Prime Minister Mr. Rajiv Gandhi pointed out that ‘the biggest threat to mankind was posed by the division of the world into military blocks’⁹. He criticized the US and the United Kingdom (UK) for the steps they had taken to weaken the UN system, when withdrawal from the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) and United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). These had effected the smooth functioning of the peace-keeping forces, stationed in erstwhile theaters of war, under the UN auspices and direction. Mr. Rajiv Gandhi was willing to help the super powers halt nuclear tests by placing at their disposal neutral detecting devices.

Delhi Declaration

Rajiv Gandhi continued his disarmament efforts even while discussing bilateral relations with friendly countries and repeatedly requested those countries to stand for the disarmament. In November 1986, the then USSR President Mr. Mikhail Gorbachev visited India. During this visit the two countries besides discussing bilateral issues, expressed their concern over the ongoing nuclear weaponization of the world accordingly in a special document called the ‘Delhi
Declaration' (November 1986) the USSR and India proposed that an international convention banning the use of or threat to use nuclear weapons altogether. The two leaders said "the expansion of nuclear aspects and development of space weapons undermine the universally accepted conviction that a nuclear war should never be fought and can never be won". Then they set-forth ten principles to achieve the objective of a nuclear weapons free world.

Mr. Rajiv Gandhi's approach to disarmament therefore, was that despite resistance by those who were not willing to give up the race for arms, the initiative must regularly be exercised by countries like India, which have a solid vested interest in peace. He emphasized that a relentless war must continue to be waged, by earnest peace seeker, on war itself. He reiterated that the non-nuclear weapon states, was to exert unremitting pressure on the nuclear weapon powers to negotiate and disarm.

Rajiv Gandhi is quite eloquent about disarmament in his speech in Rajya Sabha in November 1988. He expressed that "this is the time for us to look ahead to a world where there may not be nuclear weapons, where disarmament will have taken place and we have to safeguard ourselves against new developments which could pull us back into the same competitive arms race. Beyond nuclear weapons, we must see that no other means of mass destruction are developed.
We must see that new dimensions are not added to the arms race and, equally important, we must see that no highly accurate conventional weapons are developed, what we have termed 'surgical weapons' in the Five-Continent Initiative, weapons which, used effectively, could remove the entire leadership of a nation without causing widespread damage but cause complete chaos. So this is the time to start thinking of how we can begin to control these things and put things on to a new track. We need new structures of international co-operation. We need a really effective United Nations system, restructured to reflect international democracy and sovereign equality. We need international co-operation based on the recognition that our one common family of human beings requires inter-dependence of interests and the symbiosis of growth in the South with stability in the North. We need a world order based on the insights and values of Mahatma Gandhi and Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru.11

Rajiv Gandhi's Commitment to NAM

The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) had its origin in the initial phase of the Post-colonial era of the Third World countries. Its formal inception went back to the Belgrade NAM summit held in 1961. India's first Prime Minister and the architect of modern India, Mr. Jawarharlal Nehru, and described non-alignment as the policy of friendship towards all nations, irrespective of their economic, political and social systems. Following the tradition of continuity, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, during her
tenure as Prime Minister, enhanced the status of NAM to a world movement. At the time of her assassination Mrs. Indira Gandhi was the Chairperson of the NAM.

Mr. Rajiv Gandhi reaffirmed India's commitment to the NAM on January 1st 1985 Rajiv Gandhi recollected his mothers services to NAM. In the words of Rajiv Gandhi. “She (Mrs. Indira Gandhi) raised her voice not just for India her voice was for the backward, the deprived and the depressed all over the world. The NAM was a logical development of the Indian freedom movement that showed the way to the rest of the colonized world, half a century ago. It set a trend. The movement has striven for a positive assertion on the part of the newly, Independent countries to remain, Independent in the phase of neo-colonialism and neo-imperialism”.

Mr. Rajiv Gandhi directed his efforts towards achieving more cohesion in the NAM and turned its attention towards meeting new challenges in a changing world, particularly towards the increasingly important economic issues. Mr. Rajiv Gandhi spent considerable human and time capital to maintain the coherence of the Non-Aligned Movement and to turn its attention to the creation of a new economic order, besides meeting the onslaughts of racialism and colonialism. Mr. Rajiv Gandhi was conscious of the fact that the NAM, despite the seemingly unwieldy size of its membership, had an important role to
play in world affairs. India was a Non-Aligned country and the crux of its Non-Alignment was that it was Non-Aligned even to the Non-Aligned.

The Harare NAM Summit held in September 1986 was the proving ground for Mr. Rajiv Gandhi in the leadership of world politics. Here his statesmanship, flashes of intelligence, and vision lent to NAM a pointed edge which made it a more credible world movement. Again at the ninth NAM Summit held at Belgrade in September 1989, India under Mr. Rajiv Gandhi had made its mark in international affairs. Leading the largest delegation to the Belgrade Conference, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi had risen above narrow, regional perspectives, and had left an imprint on the conference whose membership comprises two-thirds of the world nation states. And, he was conscious of the fact that the NAM, despite its inherently amorphous character, had stood the test of time. And, internally with all political parties supporting its policies, the NAM had added to its credibility after the ninth summit. The NAM, unifying the developing world, had, increasingly, an enduring infrastructure of South-South cooperation presenting a solid phalanx which the rich countries would not be able to break.

At the Belgrade Summit, the Africa Fund was highly praised by the Zimbabwe President Robert Mugabe, and the Zambian President, Kenneth Kaunda. There was concerning consensus over Prime
Minister Rajiv Gandhi's eminent suitability for the task and he was requested to continue as Chairman.\textsuperscript{14}

On April 19\textsuperscript{th} 1986, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi had exhorted the NAM Foreign Ministers meeting at New Delhi to work incessantly for disarmament. Their political declarations called for a moratorium on deployment of nuclear weapons and ultimately for a nuclear weapons test ban treaty. It also called for a conference to be held on the Indian Ocean not later than 1988.

Mr. Rajiv Gandhi had urged Non–Aligned Nations at the Summit meeting in Belgrade not to be daunted by an unjust world economic order but to stand up and fright the economic domination of the North. This theme of economic dominance of the world by a few nations ran through a major part of his speech and it made its due impact on the participants. Leaders at Belgrade re–affirmed the NAMs plea endorsed by Mr. Rajiv Gandhi in the Action Plan he had presented to the UN in 1988 for a time bound programme for the total elimination of nuclear weapons.\textsuperscript{15}

Addressing the large gathering on September 5\textsuperscript{th} 1989, Rajiv Gandhi mooted the creation of a unique multi-billion dollar Planet Protection Fund (under UN auspices) to conserve energy and combat atmospheric pollution. The fund envisaged membership for all developed and developing countries; all of them contributing at lease
0.1 per cent of their Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to raise a total of
eighteen billion dollars a year. The idea was to use the fund to develop
technologies for setting up pollution free industries and to preserve
forests and increase agricultural produce in order to enhance the
availability of food. The most striking feature of the proposed fund was
that it would be used both by the developed and developing nations. Mr.
Rajiv Gandhi had aptly put it “environmental protection and the general
issues of development were inexorably intertwined”.16 This was his
statesman like accent on global effort to meet developmental
challenges.

Crusade against Apartheid

In the wake of Mrs. Indira Gandhi and Mr. Jawaharlal Nehru,
continuing their well considered policy, Prime Minister Mr. Rajiv Gandhi
had to take up cudgels on behalf of the victims of apartheid. In all his
policy statements addressed—those of November 12th 1984; January 5th
1985, August 15th 1985, and September 5th 1989—he had consistently
condemned apartheid as a policy conceived in obscene and anomalous
forms of thinking.

At the instance of Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, the Indian
Parliament condemned the Apartheid policy of South Africa, in a
resolution on August 19th 1985. He appealed to all the countries to
apply mandatory sanctions against Pretoria. Intervening in a discussion
on the racial riots and Apartheid in South Africa, Rajiv Gandhi said that there was no other answer to the continuing struggle in that country except freedom of the blacks.

On May 14th 1986, the Prime Minister began his tour of some of the frontline states of Africa, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Angola and Tanzania so as to boost their morale in their grim fight against South Africa's Apartheid, colonialism and state terrorism, and to strengthen the struggle for Namibian Independence.

Mr. Rajiv Gandhi was eloquent in his tirade against apartheid in South Africa and in his efforts for Independence of Namibia. He undertook a hurricane tour of four frontline African states. In Africa, he promised a new initiative to fight the racist regime in South Africa and for assisting the frontier states who were victims of Pretoria's systematic campaign of destabilization and intimidation. The high level diplomacy as pursued by Mr. Rajiv Gandhi pushed the cause of the nuclear disarmament and the need to end racial suppression in South Africa further into the consciousness of the people enhancing there by India's international stature. To strengthen the nationalist and freedom movement of the people of Africa, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi took an extraordinary initiatives at the ministerial meeting of the NAM countries in New Delhi in April 1985 to grant diplomatic status to the (South West African People's Organization (SWAPO). Mr. Rajiv Gandhi emphatically
declared that world peace could never be finally achieved so long all people of the world are not free to set their houses in their own way.

Rajiv Gandhi is quite unhappy over the reluctance of big countries on soft attitude towards racial problem of Namibia and South Africa when he said in Indian Parliament "......that what is happening in South Africa, in Namibia is much worse than anything that is happening anywhere else on the globe. It is a shame for all of humanity that such treatment to our brother humans still exists, still goes on towards the end of the twentieth century. We must raise our voice and fight for the freedom of these brave people. We must given them all the help we can to fight their battle. It is not enough just to talk. There have been resolutions; there has been much talk. But, unfortunately, when it comes to hard action the bigger and richer countries find it difficult to take the action. We must raise our voices till such action is taken. We find today that the US has put an embargo on Nicaragua. If it really wanted to strike out for humanity, they should have put an embargo on trade to Namibia. That would have made a difference and would have meant something to the people of the world."

The NAM Bureau Meeting was held in New Delhi on Namibia Independence. The whole of the non-aligned countries stood united for the cause of Namibia's Independence. The Resolution that was passed by the NAM Bureau Meeting has gone to the corners of the world and it
is believed that it will make a difference in Namibia's fight for freedom. Rajiv Gandhi in solidarity for Namibia's cause gave full diplomatic status to the SWAPO representatives in New Delhi. Rajiv Gandhi also invited SWAPO President Sam Nujoma to pay an official visit to India at a time that is convenient for him. The same was accepted by the SWAPO President. Rajiv Gandhi expressed hope that Namibia will be able to realise its cherished objective of freedom sooner rather than later and all the countries will give their full support and co-operation to the United Nations in bringing this about.

On May 24th 1986, the SWAPO Embassy in New Delhi was opened by its leader Mr. Sam Nujomo. On May 25th 1986 on the occasion of Africa day in New Delhi, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi addressed a distinguished gathering which included the President of the SWAPO, Mr. Sam Nujomo. In his address on the occasion, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi blamed Britain, West Germany and the USA for delaying the Independence of Namibia. The issue was raised by him again and effectively at the Commonwealth Heads Of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Kaula Lumpur in October 1989, but by then the free and fair elections, implementing the Security Council resolution of August 29th 1989 and heralding an Independence process, in Namibia were on the cards. This was another vindication of the struggle against apartheid launched by India and like minded NAM powers.
Rajiv Gandhi and Indian Ocean

Since early 1940s the Indian Ocean is one of the major international problems. The security it has enjoyed for over 150 years (from 1784 to 1941) has been completely shattered by the handing over of Diego Garcia, an Indian Ocean island, by Britain to the United States of America for building up a naval base. This has brought the entire Indian Ocean into the vortex of world politics. The secession of Pakistan in 1947, and that of Bangladesh from Pakistan in 1971, affected India's vital interests in the Indian Ocean. The peninsular character of the country, with its extensive and open coastline and with a littoral, which is extremely fertile and rich in resource, makes India largely dependent on the Indian Ocean.

In his message to an International Seminar on the Indian Ocean held in New Delhi on February 20th 1985, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi called for immediate steps to "transform the Indian Ocean area into an area of peace, stability and cooperation and to insulate it from the inclemencies of bloc politics". Viewed strictly from the point of India's defense, the stark fact is that whoever controls the Indian Ocean has Indian at its mercy. In his meeting with the Prime Minister of Mauritius, Mr. Anerood Jagannauth, at Port Louis on July 4th 1986, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi asserted that the Indian Ocean must be a Zone of peace, free from great power rivalries. Two months later, at the Harare NAM Summit Mr. Rajiv Gandhi reminded the NAM members that the United Nations had
declared the Indian Ocean as a zone of peace. Outside powers were “Polluting the Indian Ocean with warships and the nuclear submarines and establishing naval bases”. The concept meant a lot to the propagator of peace that Mr. Rajiv Gandhi had become. He had broadened it, he was seeing not only the Indian Ocean but the whole world as a zone of peace. In September 1989, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi had stated categorically that India did not aspire to be a regional power, and we do not want to be described as one. A month later, at CHOGM meeting at Kaula Lumpur, the 27th Commonwealth Summit adopted a resolution that an international conference should be held to declare the Indian Ocean a zone of peace.

While discussing the Presidential address in Parliament, Rajiv Gandhi expressed grief over “the Indian Ocean has become a playground for world navies. It has become infested with nuclear weapons. We are strongly committed to a zone of peace in the Indian Ocean and we will work towards this end. The big powers presence in the Indian Ocean poses a threat to all the littoral States. The continued militarisation of Diego Garcia is a matter of deep concern to us. We would like the Indian Ocean to be free from super power rivalry and tensions. Our delegation takes active part in the United Nations Committee on the Indian Ocean. We are in close touch with other countries about the action that can be taken to give reality to the decisions of the United Nations General Assembly. We need co-
operation of major maritime powers and we hope that this will be forthcoming."

Rajiv Gandhi's Efforts to Strengthen South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation (SAARC)

The idea to establish a regional grouping in South Asia can be traced back to the year 1977. The idea of South Asian cooperation was proposed by the Bangladesh President Late Zia-Ur-Rahman in course of his good will visits to several South Asian countries. The issue was broached with the Indian leaders when he (Zia-Ur-Rahman) visited India in December 1977 and his visit was returned by Prime Minister Morarji Desai on April 15-17, 1979. It however could not be anticipated that the Janata rule in India was on its way out. Subsequently when Mrs. Indira Gandhi came back to power in January 1980, Bangladesh leader approached her on the subject. The formal launching of SAARC through the first Summit of the seven Heads of States or Government of the region in 1985 was the culmination of a long and strenuous process. The path to the summit was smoothened by five years of meeting of officials and Foreign Ministers.

India considered launching of SAARC as an historic opportunity to overcome the contentious bilateral, political disputes with her neighbours through regional cooperation in economic and cultural fields. The first SAARC Summit generated high hopes and expectations. The
launching of SAARC was seen as not only a logical outcome of a global process of regionalism but also holding promise of a wider Asian grouping in future. Rajiv Gandhi shown keen interest to build up SAARC and make it a useful forum for discussions at technical levels among experts of the seven countries.

Mr. Rajiv Gandhi made it a point to improve relations with all neighbours through regional cooperation. He attended and actively participated in four SAARC Summits. Mr. Rajiv Gandhi in his speech in the first SAARC Summit held at Dhaka 1985 asserted that the South Asian cooperation was an important step towards realising the larger Asian consciousness. Mr. Rajiv Gandhi expounded Indian policy towards regional cooperation in South Asia when he said: "Certainly we have problems and difficulties and these do impose constraints on us. Enduring cooperation is cooperation adapted to the realities of our condition. The model we have evolved for ourselves is a model which is in accord with our realities, our compulsions and our genius. We have not sought to melt our bilateral relationships into a common regional identity, but rather to fit South Asian cooperation into our respective foreign policies as an additional dimension".23

Rajiv Gandhi clarified the doubt that SAARC is not a forum to discuss bilateral issues. He said that "in South Asia, SAARC has been moving very well and it is moving rapidly. We are very satisfied with
the progress. SAARC is reaching new potentials and establishing a good framework for relationships in South Asia. SAARC is not a bilateral forum and we will not use it to sort out our bilateral issue. We have direct contacts and we deal directly on bilateral issues.²⁴

Mr. Rajiv Gandhi also emphasised involvement of the people in regional cooperation efforts when he said: "Above all, let us involve our people in every facet of our activity, South Asian Regional Cooperation, must be a peoples movement, involving the hearts and minds of our people".²⁵ It was in this context that he explained that the objective of South Asian cooperation was towards the attainment of collective self-reliance and to strengthen the forces of multilateralism and world-wide cooperation.

The second SAARC Summit held at Bangalore in November 1986 provided an opportunity to Mr. Rajiv Gandhi to reiterate the Indian policy objectives in SAARC when in his speech he said: "Ours is not a political association. We have much to gain from peace, progress and stability in our neighbourhood. This is the logic of our working together".²⁶ Mr. Rajiv Gandhi while talking of non-political nature of SAARC also mentioned the logic of South Asian nations working together as the gains to be achieved through peace, progress and stability. There seemed to be an apparent contradiction in these assertions since peace
and stability could not be achieved without political harmony and shared strategic perceptions.  

In the third Summit held at Kathmandu in November 1987 Mr. Rajiv Gandhi wanted to expand the scope of cultural cooperation and bring on SAARC agenda, on the issue of cooperation in trade. Mr. Rajiv Gandhi in his address to the third Summit expressed that “There is also much more we can do in the area of culture, especially forms of culture which draw in large number of people as participative spectators. We might consider a South Asia Festival which brings together from all parts of our region a diversity of arts and crafts, poetry and songs, dance and drama, and traditional sports”.  

India wanted to underline the political dimension of the regionalism in South Asia when Mr. Rajiv Gandhi explained India’s viewpoint on the implications of regional cooperation beyond the stipulated areas. He said, “foremost it fosters a sense of regional identity, a sense of shared density. This adds a second common dimension to our respective foreign policies. The first, of course, is the membership of each of our countries in the non-aligned movement. SAARC is thus taking shape as a factor in determining our place in the world, collectively as a region and individually as independent countries. In a broad perspective, such regional understanding is a positive political development”.  

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Mr. Rajiv Gandhi in his address at the fourth SAARC in December 1988 expressed his frustration at the slow pace of growth of cooperation among SAARC nations. One of the basic reasons for Mr. Rajiv Gandhi's frustration probably was lack of cooperation in the core economic areas, particularly trade. This was reflected in his statement; "We also need to strengthen linkages between ourselves to give us strength, individually and as a region. This calls for increased economic exchanges within our region, covering the gamut of economic activities from agriculture to industry–infrastructure, technology and human resource development. Economic cooperation must lie at the heart of a regional cooperation".30

Mr. Rajiv Gandhi tried to measure and assuages the apprehensions of the smaller SAARC Member Countries, regarding India's undue advantage on account of size and economic potential. He also said that India has no hesitation in declaring at the outset that it is fully conscious of its special obligations and special responsibilities. He further clarified that India will not seek to secure any unfair advantage at the expense of any of our partners. Indeed, the interests of none of us can be secured by damaging the interests of any one else.

Rajiv Gandhi Peace Mission to Maldives

Maldives is a democratically elected Republic. It is an Independent member of the Common Wealth. India has very warm relations with Maldives. In 1980s Mr. Rajiv Gandhi followed a dynamic
foreign policy in case of Maldives. A notable event in November 1988 was the successful Indian military intervention in Maldives, one of this country's closest neighbour and friend.

Sudden coup on November 3rd 1988 at dawn struck the island with awe and horror. The ring leaders of the coup have been identified. Abdullah Lutufee, the coup leader and his collaborators Sagar Nasir and Ibrahim Manik—all three Maldivian exiles living in Colombo, had long dealings with Sri Lankan Tamil militants in gun-running and drug smuggling. The hired Tamil mercenaries came in ships, entered the capital city Male unnoticed, took over the radio and television center, cut off the supply of electricity and water. At this juncture the then President of Maldives Mr. Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, made frantic appeals to India, Sri Lanka, Britain and Oman for help. But India responded within 17 hours. The first Indian plane, load of Indian troops landed in the morning of November 3rd 1988.\[31\]

The dispatch of Indian para troopers saved the small republic from the coup. India kept the big powers and her neighbors in close touch with the action she was taking at the Maldives President's specific request. The Indian troops successfully completed their mission of driving out foreign mercenaries and restoring the control of Maldives republic to the President Mr. Maumoon Abdul Gayoom. Some armed rebels were captured in the neat operation which was carried out in an
extremely tight time frame without a single Indian causality. The Indian paratroopers withdrew soon after restoring peace, though about 500 were asked to stay on, for peace keeping duties, at the Maldives Governments request.32

The troopers that stayed on helped the Maldives Government in mapping up and search operations in other islands at the instance of Mr. Maumoon Abdul Gayoom. The Indian action had the support of both Super Powers-the USA and the USSR. The Ambassadors and High Commissioners of the SAARC countries were informed about it. The Indian Prime Minister Mr. Rajiv Gandhi stated that the decision to send troops was not taken on the suggestions of any other country. It was India’s own decision based on the request received from the Maldives President. He further stated that “we informed the friendly countries about it so that they did not have to take similar action”.33

After the successful completion of the India’s military intervention, Maldives President Mr. Gayoom paid a good will visit to India in September 1989, to discuss issues before the coming SAARC Summit, as well as bilateral relations. At the conclusion of his talks in New Delhi with India’s Prime Minister Mr. Rajiv Gandhi, the Maldives President Mr. Abdul Gayoom was assured of India’s full cooperation in providing safeguards against repetition of any coup attempt against his government. The issue figured high on the agenda during the wide
ranging talks between Mr. Gayoom and Mr. Rajiv Gandhi was all praise for India's timely help in warding off the threat of the mercenaries. An important decision taken at the talks flowed from India's positive response to the Maldivian request to impart training to its National Security personnel in Command Operations and in the handling of the latest sophisticated weapons. Mr. Abdul Gayoom also made it clear that the Indian troops would stay in Maldives as long as Maldives Government would need them.

Rajiv Gandhi's Peace Mission to Sri Lanka

Rajiv Gandhi’s Sri Lanka policy was sound and correct even thought it can be argued that the diplomatic and army leadership had perhaps underestimated the real nature and the fighting capacity of Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). It was on July 29th 1987, that Mr. Rajiv Gandhi and Mr. J.R. Jayewardene signed at Colombo, the famous Indo-Sri Lanka Accord under which India agreed to send its peace keeping force to Sri Lanka to help her fight the menace of LTTE. The agreement was signed after Sri Lanka's attempts to find a military solution to the ethnic problem had failed. The Sri Lanka Government had imposed a controversial fuel ban on Jaffna peninsula and many other parts of the Northern Province and cut off telecommunications with the peninsula at the dawn of 1987, ostensibly to hamper militant activities. But it was the ordinary people rather than the militants who suffered as a result of the Government actions. The
Government followed up the fuel and communication ban with large scale military operation which culminated in a major security offensive in the Vadamarachi area of peninsula, considered the string hold of the militants. An estimated 700 people, mostly civilians, were killed in Vadamarachi in the operations which left towns in the area flattened by Arial bombardment. With the people of the peninsula reeling under the combined economic embargo and the security offensive of the Government, India unilaterally air–dropped food over Jaffna in early June 1987, to alleviate the sufferings of the people. India’s action followed refusal by the Sri Lanka Government to allow a flotilla of Indian boats carrying relief supplies for the people of Jaffna to enter the island’s territorial waters. The Indian air drop was also intended as a message to Colombo that it would not allow a military offensive on the thickly–populated Jaffna town. The two countries signed the accord less than two months after these developments.

Two days after the agreement was signed, on July 31st a determined attempt for Mr. Rajiv Gandhi’s assassination was made at Colombo by a Sri Lankan naval rating who hit him with the buff of his gun during the farewell inspection of a guard of honour. Mr. Rajiv Gandhi suffered bruises on his head and shoulder and could have been killed had he not ducked in a quick reflex action.
In a discussion on Sri Lanka Tamil problems in Rajya Sabha, Rajiv Gandhi firmly expressed his views. In his words he said that "Sri Lanka in the south is having tremendous internal problems. They are spilling over into India. We have now almost one lakh refugees on our soils. Our concern is for the Tamils in Sri Lanka. The concern is not only of people in the south, but it is the concern of everyone in India. We have to see that the refugees go back, go back in honour, go back in safety, go back with the security of expecting and getting full freedom to express themselves, to work, to live within the integrity of Sri Lanka. We have made our position clear many times on this. We are in contact at various levels with the Sri Lankan Government, and some progress has been made. Recently, an all-party delegation from Tamil Nadu came to see me, and on their advice I have set up a special advisory group to see how we can handle the situation in its aspects, the foreign policy aspect and the aspect of how it affects us at home with the refugees in Tamil Nadu and other parts of India."35

He further said that "the Tamils of Sri Lanka will have an opportunity to test the claims of different groups of Tamils to represent the Tamils. This should be determined through the ballot box. This will give an opportunity for the Tamils in Sri Lanka to see who really represents the Tamils and represents them through the ballot box, not through barrel of a gun. An encouraging indication or index of the return to normalcy is the return of the refugees. A steady stream of refugees
has been going back to their homeland. I must take this opportunity to pay the highest tribute to the gallantry of our soldiers in the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) for the discipline and courage with which they have carried out this delicate task. We are always in danger of getting too engrossed in the minutiae of development. Yes, statistics and indices are important but we must look to the larger vision of India. India has mattered in the world. We have led in the world of ideas. Our major contribution has been to enduring values and standards, to the soul and the spirit of humankind. Our national task is to take India again to its rightful place of the front rank of human civilisation. Development is an essential tool in this endeavour, but the real challenge is the response to what lies beyond mere development and mere growth. To that great task the nation is summoned in this fortieth year of our Independence."36

Throughout the period 1987-89, the agreement was attacked by the Sri Lanka authorities as well as the opposition leaders in India who had their own selfish interest in the politics of South India. The IPKF did a marvelous job in Sri Lanka in the midst of gravest difficulties. They were being attacked not only by the LTTE but also by the Sinhalese politicians and the opposition leaders in India. Their problem was compounded by the duplicity of LTTE and the political compulsions of Sri Lankan President Mr. Premadasa to get the IPKF out, no matter what the consequences. On the other hand Mr. Rajiv Gandhi position
was that the IPKF could be pulled out only when the Accord was fully implemented by Sri Lanka.37 After all, India was responsible for the security of Tamils in the Island. At any rate, the withdrawal must be phased. The Government of Mr. V.P. Singh pulled out the IPKF on March 24th 1990; nearly three months after Rajiv Gandhi lost the election.
Inference

After his thumping victory in December 1984 election Rajiv Gandhi declared his foreign policy principles, which include like ensuring world peace, strengthening NAM and SAARC, New World Economic Order, peaceful coexistence etc. these principles, guided his stand on major world issues. He made relentless efforts to call the attention of world community for disarmament. He made special appeals to nuclear fives to put an end to arms race. Mr. Rajiv Gandhi turned the attention of NAM towards the increasingly important economic issues. At the instance of Mr. Rajiv Gandhi a unique multi-billion dollar Planet Protection Fund was created to conserve energy and combat atmospheric pollution in third world countries. He out-rightly condemned the apartheid, which was in existence in some of the African countries. He extended his support to the Independence of Namibia. Keeping in view of the Indian interests and security, he made several efforts, at several international fora, for the declaration of Indian Ocean as a zone of peace Mr. Rajiv Gandhi made it a point to improve relations with all neighbours through regional cooperation. So, he extended whole hearted support to SAARC. To ensure peace and stability in the region, Rajiv Gandhi sent Indian troops to neighbouring countries like Maldives and Sri Lanka. His peace mission in incase of former proved fruitful but in case of later it proved costly. He lost his life for the cause of peace on Sri Lanka.
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