CHAPTER 6
CONCLUSION
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India's policy towards Israel is somewhat unique. It has at times generated controversy, whipped up heated debates, eluded unanimity and was shrouded in secrecy. Above all it evoked attention disproportionate to the importance of Israel to India. Based on this study certain broad conclusions can be arrived at.

India's basic understanding or lack of it of the Jewish problem and its history largely conditioned its policy towards Israel. Indian nationalists did not view the Zionist struggle in Palestine as the Jewish nationalist struggle. While India felt concerned about the Arab character of Palestine, and the injustice done to the Palestinians, it remained unconcerned about the Jewish dimension of the problem. The imperialist connections of the Zionists were sufficient to negate their nationalist credentials.

This latter aspect finds expression in India's advocacy of the Federal Plan for Palestine. It was not a compromise between the extreme demands of the Arabs and Jews. It was more a compromise between a partitioned or unitary Palestine.

India's recognition of Israel marked a new trend. The establishment of Israel, its acceptance by both the rival blocs, the inter-Arab rivalry and the fragility of the Palestinian leadership convinced India to take
this step. However, recognition did not come easily. It was a long-drawn-out affair. Series of requests, meetings, lobbying and mild pressure from Americans preceded the Indian action.

Even though India and Israel shared identical views on a number of political issues, sans West Asia, in the early days, each could afford to live without the other. Because of the asymmetric nature of the relations, Israel needed India more. For India, Israel formed a relatively small part of the predominantly Arab West Asia. Unlike the West, India did not have any special links with or concern for Israel.

Ordinarily, the establishment of full diplomatic relations is a logical corollary to recognition. This was assured when Walter Eytan, Director General in Israel's Foreign Office, paid an official visit to India in early 1952. Jawaharlal Nehru rejected the Israeli proposal that the Indian mission in Ankara be concurrently accredited to Israel. On the other hand, he assured a resident mission in Israel on reciprocal basis. This never materialized.

The question of establishing diplomatic relations was reportedly referred to the Indian Cabinet for final approval. Only Maulana Azad could have stood up to Nehru to oppose normalization. As Nehru's advisor on Arab affairs, Azad's views prevailed.
India never formally renounced normalization of relations with Israel. Hence, it would be safe to infer that the cabinet had decided to postpone the establishment of diplomatic relations.

In the absence of archival evidence one can only speculate about the reasons underlying this decision. Pakistan had been India's major concern since 1947. It had almost become an obsession for India in West Asia. Countering Pakistan influence had been the primary, if not the sole, object of the Indian missions in the region. Pakistani moves to forge an Islamic bloc and India's internationalization of the Kashmir dispute accentuated this concern.

India also had to take the anti-Israel Arab League into account. Its Israel policy is probably the only occasion in which a third party maintained an overwhelming influence upon India's bi-lateral relations. For instance, its decision to recognize Israel was delayed partly due to the Arab opposition.

India's decision may also have been influenced by the Muslim factor in the body politic of the country. Nehru's selection of Asaf Ali, Abdur Rahman and Maulana Azad for crucial roles concerning Palestine underlined their calibre and competence. At the same time, their selection cannot be accidental. Nehru apparently felt
that Muslim leaders would understand the issue rather well and hence could represent India better than non-Muslims.

The influence of the Muslim factor upon India's Israel policy was never formally acknowledged. However, in their talks with Israelis, a number of Indian leaders including Jawaharlal Nehru, Maulana Azad, Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, K.M.Panikkar, K.P.S.Menon (Sr), C.S.Jha etc., had repeatedly underlined the importance of the Muslim sentiments on this issues. Even while justifying its recognition of Israel, examples like Iran and Turkey were cited as precedents.

Often the Jewish character of Israel was highlighted to assert the 'secular' credentials of India's policy. Closer examination reveals that India's Israel policy was not determined by the Jewish character of the latter. Notwithstanding its pronouncements, secularism was not a criterion in India's Israel policy and its unsuccessful attempt to attend the Rabat Conference testified this. Besides, none of the Arab states could be termed secular as all of them formally endorsed the supremacy of religion.

Support for Israel in India came from the anti-Muslim fundamentalist Hindus and Sikhs on the Right and the Socialists on the Left. Yet all this did not add up to a powerful lobby to make a dent in India's policy.
Individual leaders did show sympathy for Israel but they saw no compelling reason to transform it into political support. The Israel policy only served as a handy instrument for the Opposition to embarrass the Congress Governments.

The possibility of India playing a mediatary role was given as an official explanation for India's recognition of Israel. But it is not convincing. India's favourable disposition towards the Arabs coupled with the absence of diplomatic relations with Israel, virtually eliminated the possibility of any such role.

Having avoided formal diplomatic relations, India was not averse to seeking assistance from Israel. Even before its recognition, it sought agricultural aid from Israel. In times of national crises like the 1962 and 1965 wars, India sought and obtained military supplies from Israel. For obvious reasons such acts of cooperation were not formally acknowledged.

One also notices a high degree of secrecy and clandestineness about India's Israel policy. The handling of the in cognito visit of Moshe Dayan is just one example. Memoirs and autobiographies of a number of personalities maintained a discrete silence on their interaction with Israelis.