CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION
INTRODUCTION

This study on *India's Policy Towards Israel* is intended to examine India's Israel policy rather than to build a model or theory on India's overall foreign policy. Both India and Israel are regional Powers in their own right. At the same time they are not equal Powers. In terms of size, population and resources, India is much larger. The relations between the two can thus be described as between a medium Power and a small Power. As a result of this unequal situation, their relative importance and influence vary.

For India, the Jewish state has been rather unique. India's interest and involvement in the events leading to the formation of Israel, pre-dates India's own independence. Establishment of formal diplomatic relations or normalization is the logical corollary to recognition of a newly born state. While formally subscribing to this principle, India made an exception in the case of Israel. India does not maintain diplomatic relations with or have resident missions in a number of far off and small states due to the absence of vital cultural, economic or political interests. And such absence does not draw any serious attention or controversy. Even in the more well-known cases of

1. In the absence of a better expression, this term is used in this study to denote 'the establishment of formal diplomatic relations'.
South Africa and Taiwan, there has been a national consensus and near unanimity. The same is not true of Israel. From the very beginning, there has been more than one opinion on the normalization of ties with Israel. While the rationale and compulsions varied over the years, the basic controversy remains. This does not have a parallel in India's foreign policy. Hence this study on the non-relation does not attempt to develop a model for India's foreign policy.

Foreign Policy

Every nation-state is rooted in a certain set of social and political values. Its wish to maintain them brings it into conflict with another set of values, if the latter is not harmonious. In such a situation, nations with diverse political systems, stages of economic development and cultural values interact either through cooperation, confrontation or some combination of the two. A nation's attempt towards realization of its goals in the international arena becomes its foreign policy. In its broadest sense, foreign policy can be defined as that part of the state policy which aims to enhance its influence beyond its geographical frontiers for the welfare of its citizens.

2. The term is used in this study to denote 'the absence of formal diplomatic relations' or the 'absence of normalization'. 
As Cecil V. Crabb puts it:

Reduced to its most fundamental ingredients, foreign policy consists of two elements: national objectives to be achieved and the means for achieving them. The interaction between the national goals and the resources for attaining them is the perennial subject of statecraft. In its ingredients the foreign policy of all nations, great and small, is the same... (3)

In other words, a study of foreign policy is concerned with inter-state relations in terms of decisions and actions. It is the "sum total of the principles, interests and objectives which a state formulates in conducting its relations with other states". In short, it is a nation's reaction to the international environment.

INDIA'S FOREIGN POLICY

Ever since its formation in 1885, the Indian National Congress (INC) had been prominent on the Indian political scene. Being the vanguard of the freedom struggle, it had governed the nature, composition and direction of free India. Most of the political forces in India were either born out of the INC or influenced by it. Therefore, the attitude of the INC towards external affairs laid the foundation

5. A. Appadorai and M.S. Rajan, India's Foreign Policy and Relations (New Delhi, 1985), p.2.
of the Indian foreign policy. An independent and assertive Congress position on foreign affairs can be traced to 1920s. This period also coincided with the emergence of Mahatma Gandhi on the political scene. Till then the external interest of the INC was confined to the question of welfare of overseas Indians. At its New Delhi meeting in November 1921, for the first time, it spelt out the essential aspects of its foreign policy as follows:

1. The British Government in India did not represent the Indian opinion.

2. When freed India would have "nothing to fear from the neighbouring states or any state as her people have no designs upon any of them."

3. As most of the treaties were designed to perpetuate the imperial exploitation of India, the INC urged "the states having no ill-will against the people of India and having no desire to injure her interests, to refrain from entering into any treaties with the Imperial Power."

Coming amidst the Khilafat struggle, it went on to

6. For details on the historical aspects of India's foreign policy see, among others, D.N.Mallik, The Development of Non-Aligned in India's Foreign Policy (Allahabad, 1967), pp. 1-34; Bimla Prasad, The Origins of Indian Foreign Policy (Calcutta, 1960), N.V.Raj Kumar ed., The Background of India's Foreign Policy (New Delhi, 1952), and Bimla Prasad "Foreign Policy in the Making" in A Centenary History of Indian National Congress (1885-1985) vol III (New Delhi, 1985), pp. 805-43.

7. For example, in 1885 INC registered its protest against the "disabilities... imposed on Indian settlers in South Africa". For the text of the resolution adopted at the Poona session of the INC see A.M.Zaidi and S.G.Zaidi (ed) The Encyclopaedia of the Indian National Congress (New Delhi) vol II p. 679. Hereafter Encyclopaedia INC.
assure "the foreign states that when India has attained self-government, her foreign policy will naturally be always guided so as to respect their religious obligations".

Only a few years earlier, the INC had pledged its "deep loyalty and profound devotion to the Throne (and its) unswerving allegiance to the British connection". The 1921 position marked a clear shift and was the result of the overall change in the perception of the INC and the growing demand for self-rule. Highlighting this, Gandhi wrote in Young India: "Indeed while we are maturing our plans for Swaraj we are bound to consider and define our foreign policy. Surely we are bound authoritatively to tell the world what relations we wish to cultivate with it". In December 1925 the INC called for the formation of a Foreign Department to

8. For the text of the resolution adopted AICC see Ibid vol VIII pp.389-90. A month earlier at its Bombay session, the CWC assured "the Mussalman states, that when India has attained self-government, her foreign policy will naturally be always guided so as to respect the religious obligations imposed upon Mussalmans by Islam" p. 438.


look after the interests of Indians living abroad.

As a representative of the INC, Jawaharlal Nehru attended the Congress of Oppressed Nationalities in Brussels in 1927. Speaking on the occasion, he declared that India's struggle for freedom was only a part of the international struggle against the imperial designs of the British. Since then anti-imperialism became an important ingredient of Nehru's pronouncements and those of the INC.

The Tripuri session of the INC which met on the eve of the World War II, unequivocally opposed imperialism and fascism and declared that "world peace and progress required the ending of both". In October 1939, it registered its "disapproval of the ideology and practice of Fascism and Nazism and their glorification of war and violence and the suppression of the human spirit". At the same time its response to


British war efforts was based upon its demand for freedom and equality. Under the guise of freedom and democracy, the INC argued, Britain was only perpetuating its imperial rule and hence the INC declined to cooperate with the war efforts. The INC linked the preservation of freedom and democracy to decolonization and this has been the Congress position since then.

These historical developments largely oriented India's foreign policy since 1947. Its colonial experience naturally made India the forerunner of the anti-imperialist struggle. It had always perceived its freedom as part of the larger struggle for decolonization. From this follows the principle of self-determination and national liberation. The convening of the 18-nation conference on Indonesia, in January 1949, was, for example, a major step in that direction. Secondly, their common suffering under imperialism brought the Asians together and paved the way for Asian solidarity as manifested in the Asian Relations Conference (ARC) in New Delhi in 1947. This gradually bloomed into an Afro-Asian movement when Indonesia hosted the Bandung Conference in 1955. It assumed a global proportion when Belgrade hosted the first summit of the Non-aligned Movement (NAM) in 1961. This laid the foundation for a non-bloc political force in international relations. India played a crucial
role in all these developments. The third aspect of India's foreign policy has been its formal commitment to the principle of peaceful settlement of disputes. This tendency was largely an outcome of the traditional Indian concepts of tolerance and *ahimsa*. The notion of non-violence was brought into prominence by Mahatma Gandhi during the nationalist struggle, which, by and large, maintained a non-violent character. As a result, India has in principle opposed the use of force as an instrument for settling disputes. Its decision to refer the Kashmir dispute to the UN, is an example of this idealism. Its efforts to mediate in various crises like Korea, Vietnam, Suez, Congo etc. portray this trend.

In order to achieve these broad interests, India has evolved a number of arrangements, with the NAM playing a conspicuous role. There is idealism as well as pragmatism in India's commitment to the NAM. The post-war military blocs generated a kind of belligerency in international relations. Any allegiance to one bloc was bound to provoke the other. Being a newly independent state with numerous economic, political and social problems, India could ill afford to align with either of the blocs. It needed the economic and political support of the West. At the same time its geographic proximity with the USSR, reminded India of the dangers of an unfriendly or hostile
Soviet Union. India needed a peaceful international atmosphere to tide over its domestic problems. The NAM also reflected India's vision of a cooperative world which would permit the coexistence of diverse political ideologies, cultures and traditions. As it perceived a significant role among the decolonized nations, India felt the need to take the initiative. It also provided an ideal path for infant states of Asia and Africa. In trying to evolve a cooperative international order, India assumed a significant position in international affairs, especially in situations involving inter-block rivalry. Its cordial ties with rival camps allowed it to play a mediatory role during a crisis situation.

Where and how does Israel fit in?

Literature survey:

A survey of literature on India's policy towards Israel reveals certain noticeable trends. The inadequate attention paid to the subject is most striking. There are not many serious studies on the area even though a number of articles appeared on the subject. For example, there has been a general tendency to ignore Indian recognition of Israel as a not-so-important event. There are two major studies on India's recognition, but their main focus is India's

15. K.P. Misra, *India's Policy of Recognition of States and Governments* (Bombay, 1966), and B.N. Mehrish, *India's Recognition Policy Towards the New Nations*
recognition policy. Their conclusions on crucial issues are contradictory. While K.P. Misra describes India's recognition of Israel as *de jure*, Mehrish portrays it as *de facto*.

Another trend among various observers has been their tendency to cite the statements by various Indian leaders without offering any critical examination. Mahatma Gandhi, for example, has been quoted in almost all of the Indian writings on Israel, Palestine or West Asia. Being the leader of the nationalist struggle during the crucial phase, his views undoubtedly assume importance. At the same time, neither he was infallible nor his views sacrosanct. G.H. Jansen for example, wrote the most exhaustive work on Israel. In *Zionism, Israel and Asian Nationalism*, he discusses in detail Indo-Israel ties and concludes that Zionists never made any serious attempt to cultivate Indian nationalists. But he had no access to the Zionist documents on the issue, which point to the contrary.

Among specific issues, the June War drew wider attention. The *West Asian Crisis* edited by M.S. Agwani is one of the few works on the subject which gives

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16. For a detailed study infra pp.


adequate treatment to the crisis. One of its papers discusses the Indian position on the June War. The bitter political controversy and widespread media coverage led to the publication of *India and West Asia: A Survey of Public Opinion* and *The Arab-Israeli Conflict: An Indian Point of View*. These works were written soon after the War and hence their data base is rather inadequate. For example, Indar Jit Rikhye who was the commander of the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF) during the June War, wrote his memoirs in 1978. This gives a totally different picture of the circumstances in which the Indian soldiers of the UNEF were killed in Gaza. The June War also prompted the government to come out with *India and Palestine: The Evolution of a Policy*. It is the only official publication on the subject till date. Even though the Suez Crisis saw a few official publications, their relevance for Indo-Israel ties is marginal. *India and


Palestine frequently quotes the public statements of Gandhi and Nehru, newspaper reports and the writings of Arnold Toynbee and yet it cites no official and unpublished sources.

The same trend also prevails in non-governmental writings. Nehru's biographer S. Gopal had access to Nehru papers. And yet on the role of Maulana Azad on normalization, Gopal preferred to depend on the verdict of Michael Brecher. This shows the difficulties of a researcher in this field. Unlike in the West, biography culture is in its infancy in India. As a result, more often than not, the memoirs of crucial actors in Indian diplomacy are non-controversial as well as non-informative on Israel. Mrs. Vijayalakshmi Pandit is a good example. As India's Ambassador to the US and the UN, she played a vital and crucial role in India's recognition of Israel. Yet she makes no reference to Israel in her memoirs except when discussing the Suez War.

The much-talked-about India's Federal Plan in United Nations Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP) is not given any serious and critical attention. As it

was not discussed in the UN, it would be logical that Indian observers highlight the virtues of the plan. Only B.N.Mehrish discusses it in detail. But his study was on India and the PLO and he only discusses the UNSCOP and offers little coverage of the post-1964 developments. Even here he describes the Indian plan without trying to examine its validity and viability. This tendency is widespread. By and large, Indian academic writings follow the official line. In the 1970s, observers like Surjit Singh, R.K.Srivastava and L.K.Padmanabhan tried to study Indo-Israel ties separately. As the subject is a complicated one and as they tried to study it over a longer time frame, they could not provide any in-depth analysis. Among the non-Indian writers, Michael Brecher is most notable. In his New States of Asia, he tries to place Israel in an Asian perspective. But his contention regarding the


Judeo-Christian heritage is strongly refuted in India especially by M.S. Agwani. Even though Brecher bridges the gaps in the subject, his main focus is not Indo-Israel relations. In his study of Gandhi, Gideon Shimoni gives an account of the Mahatma's role and influences. While he had access to Israeli sources and personal papers of Kallenbach, his access to Indian sources, especially to those of the Mahatma, was limited.

Based on these available secondary sources, certain broad inferences can be drawn. It is clear that neither India nor Israel are vital for each other. There are no serious economic, cultural, historical, ideological or religious ties between the two nations. While the numerical superiority of the Arabs figures prominently in the Indian thinking, the same does not apply to the Jews in the diaspora. At the time of independence, India was looking for fewer commitments abroad. As far as possible, it wished to avoid tension and controversy in its foreign policy. Cultivating Israel could offer little advantage to India. As will be discussed subsequently, India was also not a high priority area for Israel. In short, both could afford to live without the other.


What then is the rationale of studying this area? The most common explanation could be that it has been neglected for a long time. Undoubtedly it is the most controversial aspect of India's foreign policy and a comprehensive study on Israel is not available till date. Even on the Indo-Arab ties, there are no comprehensive and critical studies which would help place Israel in a proper regional context.

Taking these factors into consideration, an attempt will be made to examine the following major problems:

1. Does India have a policy towards Israel?
2. Does India maintain relations with Israel? If so, what is the nature of such relations?
3. What are the factors responsible for India's position vis-a-vis Israel?
4. How does Israel fit into India's policy towards the West Asian region?
5. Does Israel form a part of the overall foreign policy of India, or does it constitute an exception?
6. Is it possible to draw certain generalizations about India's foreign policy?

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND (1920 - 1948)

For a proper understanding of the Indian policy, it is essential to look at it in a historical context. From the early years of British rule, West Asia has been important for India due to economic, political,
commercial and military reasons. In the twentieth century, India got involved in West Asian affairs first through the khilafat question and latter through the Palestine issue. The former was religious in character, the later nationalist.

a. The Khilafat Question

The Khilafat question was the first occasion on which the INC had taken a direct interest in a foreign event. Until the mid-1920s it was the only West Asian issue which dominated the Congress thinking. The INC was conscious of the general lukewarm attitude of the Muslim masses towards the nationalist struggle. As Mohammed Ali remarked in 1923 "the Congress which called itself `Indian' and `National' felt the need for Muslim participation, for it could not justify its title without it". Therefore, the Khilafat question was perceived by the INC and its leaders as the vehicle for the long cherished Hindu-Muslim unity. In 1919, protesting against the hostile attitude of the British ministers towards Turkey and the Khilafat issue, the INC demanded a settlement "in accordance with the just

34. For a detailed study see Charles H.Heimsath and Surjit Mansingh, *Diplomatic History of Modern India* (New Delhi, 1971)

35. Rajkumar, n.6 p.6.

36. His Presidential address at the Cocosnada session of the INC December 1923. *Encyclopaedia INC*, vol VIII p.191. Almost the entire speech was devoted to the Hindu-Muslim question. For the complete text of the speech pp.184-309.
and legitimate sentiments of Indian Mussalmans and the solemn pledges of the Prime Minister", failing which "there will be no real contentment among the people of India". At its special session in Calcutta in September 1920, it went on to proclaim that "it is the duty of every non-Muslim in every legitimate manner to assist his Mussalman brother in his attempt to remove the religious calamity that has overtaken him."

Subsequently a series of resolutions were adopted.

In 1921, the Congress Working Committee (CWC) urged the Indian soldiers not to cooperate with the British efforts against Turkey because such actions were "in direct defiance of Mussalman opinion." In June 1922 the Lucknow session of the All India Congress Committee (AICC) went a step further. It demanded the liberation of Jazirat-ul-Arab from all non-Muslim control as a pre-condition for peace and contentment in India. Reflecting similar sentiment the Gaya Congress of 1922 demanded "(the) effective guardianship of Islam and the Jazirat-ul-Arab free from all non-Muslim control". In the wake of abolition of the office of

40. Ibid. p.478.
41. Ibid. p.542.
Khalifa, the Khilafat question lost its importance. As a result the INC modified its stand by demanding "the removal of alien control from the Jazirat-ul-Arab". Even though it could not adopt an outright communal stand like the Muslim League, the INC could not divorce itself from the Islamic influence. Commenting on the support extended to the cause of the Khilafat B.R.Nanda concludes: "it really stemmed from the Congress leaders' eagerness to appease Muslim opinion, and somehow to wean the Muslims from unquestioning loyalty to the Raj".

b. Palestine

After the Khilafat issue faded from the scene, Palestine came to be the major focus of Indian interest in West Asia. Earliest direct reference to Palestine came in 1923 when Congress president Mohammed Ali urged the Indians to make common cause with the Palestinians. The 1924 AICC resolution on the 'Egyptian Crisis' was the first non-Khilafat move on West Asia. The first

42. Ibid. 613. This was also the last INC resolution on the Khilafat question.


44. The concept of Jazirat-ul-Arab also applies to Palestine.

45. Quoted in Aloo I.Dastur, "India and the west Asian Crisis", United Asia, vol 2. no.1 January-February 1968, p. 27.

formal resolution on Palestine was adopted at its Calcutta session in January 1928. Coming in the wake of the Brussels Congress on Oppressed Nationalists, the INC declared:

This Congress sends its warm greetings to the people of Egypt, Syria, Palestine and Iraq and its assurance of full sympathy with them in their struggle for emancipation from the grip of Western Imperialism... (47)

For the next eight years there was no specific reference to Palestine in the deliberations of the INC. The Wardha session of the CWC, adopted a resolution in 1936 on "Arabs in Palestine. This came in the midst of disturbances and violence in Palestine following the increased Jewish immigration and the consequent Arab revolt. Without mentioning any of these issues, the resolution confined itself to express its greetings and sympathy "to the Arabs of Palestine in their struggle for independence against British Imperialism". This was also the first exclusive INC resolution on Palestine. Subsequently, Palestine became its only pre-occupation in West Asia. Taking into account the increased attention given to Palestine by the Muslim League, the INC declared 27 September 1936 as Palestine Day. Meetings were held all over the country to express India's solidarity with the Arabs.

In October 1937, the AICC session in Calcutta

47. Ibid. vol. IX, p.538.
forcefully declared its,

...emphatic protest against the reign of terror that has been established in Palestine by British Imperialism with a view to coerce the Arabs into accepting the proposed partition of Palestine and assure them of the solidarity of the Indian people with them in their struggle for national freedom.(49)

In his presidential address to the Haripura session of the INC in February 1938, Subhas Chandra Bose for the first time drew attention to the Jewish dimension of the problem. He highlighted the contradictory and inconsistent policy of the British in Palestine. Because of the heterogenous composition of the Empire, the British had to be pro-Arab in the Near East and India and pro-Jewish elsewhere. On similar lines Ram Manohar Lohia, the then secretary to the Foreign Department of the INC wrote in October 1936:

British Imperialists have clever knack of promising two or more sets of contradictory things... The fact is, and it seems to be quite in keeping with British diplomacy, that Palestine was promised both to the Jews and to the Arabs...(51)

Continuing its earlier policy, the Haripura Congress condemned "the decision of Great Britain as Mandatory

49. Ibid. p.260.

50. Bose remarked : "The contradictions and inconsistencies in Britain's Foreign Policy are the direct outcome of the heteregeneous composition of her empire. The British Cabinet has to please the Jews because she cannot ignore Jewish high finance. On the other hand, the India Office and Foreign Office have to placate the Arabs because of imperial interests in the Near east and in India..." Ibid, p.400.

51. Lohia to Olszanger, d.13.10.1936, CZA S25/3583.
Power to bring about the partition of Palestine and protested against the continued reign of terror". Keeping in tune with the nationalist struggle in India, the INC extended sympathy to the Arabs of Palestine. As a solution to the ongoing conflict, it was of the view that the proper method of solving the Arab-Jewish problem would be an amicable settlement between themselves. It appealed to the Jews "not to seek the shelter of the British Mandatory and not to allow themselves to be exploited in the interests of British Imperialism."

Three months later the INC, for the first time, evoked the principle of the right of self-determination for Palestine. Deploiring the "unnameable atrocities committed by the British Army and Police", the CWC argued that "the issue of the future government of Palestine should be left to be decided on the principle of Self-determination." On the question of the Jews, it declared in unequivocal terms: "While sympathising with the plight of the Jews in Europe and elsewhere, the Committee deplore that in Palestine the Jews have relied on British armed forces to advance their special claims and thus aligned themselves on the side of

52. Encyclopaedia INC, vol.XI, p.427. It should be noted that while the modus operandi of the Jews was questioned, it did not pronounce its position on the central issue of the Jewish National Home. Similar resolution was adopted by the AICC in its Delhi meet in September 1938. Ibid. pp.445-6.
British Imperialism." While demanding direct Arab-Jewish cooperation it visualized the establishment of a "free democratic State in Palestine with adequate protection of Jewish rights." The fifty-second INC session at Tripuri in March 1939 reiterated this resolve.

A month before the Tripuri session, in February 1939, the Congress Party was able to adopt a resolution in the Indian Legislative Assembly demanding India's withdrawal from the League of Nations. The supplementary motion moved by Abdul Qaiyum cited British Policy in Palestine as one of the reasons for such a demand. Subsequently little attention was paid.

53. CWC resolution adopted in Wardha in December 1938. Ibid. p.497. It is interesting to note that the proposition 'IN' is used instead of 'OF'.

54. Ibid. vol.XII, pp. 159-60.

55. The Congress motion moved by T.S.Avinashilingam Chettiar was adopted by 57 votes in favour and 43 against. For the complete debate see India, Legislative Assembly Debates, Official Report, Fifth Legislative Assembly, vol.I, 3.2.1939, pp.170-200.

56. It should however be noted that there was some ambiguity in the adoption of the resolution. The amendment was not put to vote separately. Even though it also demanded India's withdrawal from the League, its rationale was different. Only Qaiyum, the sponsor referred to the British role in Palestine. Referring to the ambiguous situation Sir Abdur Rahim, the President of the Assembly remarked: "The question has arisen whether the Chair can put the amendment to vote. There is no precedent that the Chair can find and the Chair does not know whether any question like this has arisen before..." Ibid., p. 200.
given to Palestine for some time. The INC was preoccupied with the ongoing World War and the political restrictions that followed. With India's own liberation around the corner, the INC could not or did not direct its attention elsewhere.

However, any understanding of the policies of the INC towards Palestine would be incomplete without underlining certain crucial omissions and lacunae. They include:

1. There was no reference to Balfour Declaration in the INC resolutions; (57)

2. The INC had not taken any position on the Jewish problem or a possible solution for it. (58)

3. The INC never formally repudiated the Jewish claims over Palestine.

4. The criticisms of the Jews were directed at their *modus operandi* and not on their basic motives.

5. It accepted, through the presidential address of Bose, that the British gave contradictory promises to the Arabs and the Jews. Yet it did not visualize or suggest a compromise between these conflicting promises.

6. Even though it demanded a democratic state in Palestine with "adequate protection of Jewish rights" it was not clear whether these rights were political and national or religious and social.

57. Similarly there was no direct reference to the Mandate being granted to the British.

58. However Ram Manohar Lohia in his capacity as the Secretary, Foreign Department writes in October 1936: "The battles of the persecuted Jews have to be fought out in the different countries where such persecution is practiced in common with other freedom loving colonial and progressive forces" Lohia to Olsvanger, d.13.10.1936, CZA S25/3583. However the point is that while it took a keen interest in the welfare of the Arabs, the INC was silent on the Jewish problem.
7. Its stand on the holocaust which generated worldwide sympathy for the Jewish National Home, was rather mute or disproportionately moderate to the magnitude of the genocide. (59)

These omissions in the INC stand compel a closer scrutiny of the views of Gandhi and Nehru on Palestine. While answering some of these issues, they also raise some new questions.

i. Mahatma Gandhi's Attitude

His position as the leading figure of the freedom struggle, makes Gandhi's views important. Moreover, none of the Indian writings on West Asia fail to refer to his views. On Palestine he had almost become indispensable. At the same time, any uncritical acceptance of these views would be misleading. Gandhi was not a historian; more often than not his pronouncements were opinions rather than facts. And above all, Gandhi was frequently quoted but never questioned. These factors should be taken into consideration while examining Gandhi's views on Palestine.

Gandhi's association with the Jews can be traced to his Satyagraha days in South Africa and Hermann Kallenbach and H.S.L. Polak were his comrades-in-arms for many years. Yet Kallenbach did not try to influence Gandhi until the mid-thirties when Gandhi's pro-

59. Discussed infra.

60. They include Jansen, n.17 pp.169-181; India and Palestine, n.22 pp.11-12; Mehrish, n.27 p.138, Singh, n.28 pp.388-9; Srivastava, n.29 pp.239-40; Agwani, n.32 pp.447-8.

61. For a detailed study see Shimoni, n.33.
Arab pronouncements became widespread. As a humanist, Kallenbach's long association with Gandhi became an instrument for the Zionists only from mid-1936 when Moshe Shertok (later on Sharatt) approached him "to take part in, or rather to lead" the Zionist mission in India in order to establish formal contacts with its leaders. Shertok to Kallenbach, d.15.7.1936, CZA S25/3239. Soon Olsvanger visited India as the first Zionist emissary. A number of Zionists visited India and through Kallenbach established contacts with Gandhi and other INC leaders and they include A.E. Shohet of the Bombay Zionist Association and Olga P. Feinberg of WIZO. Shohet to Epstein, d. 7.3.1939, CZA S25/3587; Feinberg to Epstein, d. 28.6.1939, S25/3586; Kallenbach to Weizmann, d.2.7.1937 and 4.7.1937, CZA Z4/17342; Shohet to Epstein, d. 24.3.1939, CZA S25/3954. But the result was not encouraging. For example on 21.12.1938 Epstein writes: "Dr Leo Kohn inclines to the same opinion as I do that polemics with Ghandi (sic) will only help to spread his anti-Zionist views. However, if we could publish in some prominent Indian papers an article explaining Ghandi's mistake in regard to the Palestine question, then Dr. Kohn would write such an article... I already wrote to our office in London enquiring how far Ghandi's article on Palestine was read in the English press in order to know if it needs a reply on our side. If such spreading of the article is limited, it is again better to prevent the pro-Arab circles in London from making an issue out of the Mahatma's views for anti-Zionist propaganda..." Epstein to Shohet, d.21.12.1938, CZA S25/3587. For similar views Epstein to Shohet, d.14.12.1938; Epstein to A. Lourie, d.21.12.1938; Shohet to Epstein, d.7.3.1939 in CZA S25/3587 and Shimoni to Pollack, d. 18.5.1947, S25/3586. As a result a series of articles began to appear in the Jewish press in India critical of Gandhi. They include: "Gandhi and the Jews" Jewish Advocate (Bombay), d. 2.12.1938. "Jewish Satyagraha" Ibid; "Mr. Gandhi on the Jewish Problem", The Jewish Tribune December 1938; "Open Letter to Mahatma Gandhi", Jewish Advocate, 30.12.1938. "Public Opinion", Ibid. d.30.12.1938, "Mr. Gandhi and the Jews", Jewish Tribune, June 1939. "We are treated as Sub-Human, We are asked to be Super-Human" Ibid June 1939. We are treated as Sub-Human, We are asked to be Super-Human" Ibid June 1939 and Martin Buber and J.L. Magnes Two Letters to Gandhi (Jerusalem, 1939). In the wake of all these, Mahatma did modify some of his earlier positions in his "Withdrawn" published in Harijan on 27.5.1939. Gandhi Works, vol.69, pp.291-2.
Gandhi was very concerned about and sympathetic towards the Jews who, he considered, were treated worse than the untouchables of India. However, this apparently did not affect his views on their political demands. In March 1921, when the Khilafat question dominated his political thinking and activities, he wrote: "By no canons of ethics or war... can Palestine be given to the Jews as a result of the War". Elaborating this, a month later, he declared:

The Muslims claim Palestine as an integral part of Jazirat-ul-Arab. They are bound to retain its custody, as an injunction of the Prophet. The Jews cannot receive sovereign rights in a place which has been held for centuries by Muslim powers by right of religious conquest. The Muslim soldiers did not shed their blood in the late war for the purpose of surrendering Palestine out of Muslim control...(65)

This statement which came after the Balfour Declaration and before the Mandate of Palestine was granted to Britain, ruled out a Jewish State in Palestine.

Writing in Harijan on the eve of the World War II, he declared: "Palestine belongs to the Arabs in the same sense that England belongs to the English or France to the French. It is wrong and inhuman to

63. He writes: "They (the Jews) have been the untouchables of the Christianity. The parallel between their treatment by Christians and the treatment of untouchables by Hindus is very close". Harijan, 26.11.1938, Gandhi Works, vol.63 p.137.

64. Young India, 23.3.1921, Ibid, vol.19 p.472.

65. Young India, 6.4.1921, Ibid., p.530.
impose the Jews on the Arabs. What is going on in Palestine today cannot be justified by any moral code. This is the most widely quoted statement of Mahatma Gandhi. The Zionist dependence on the British assistance drew wider criticism from Gandhi. He wrote:

The Palestine of the Biblical conception is not a geographical tract. It is in their hearts. But if they must look to the Palestine of geography as their National Home, it is wrong to enter it under the shadow of the British gun. A religious act cannot be performed with the aid of the bayonet or the bomb...(68)

His attitude towards the Jewish resistance against Hitler also underlined his commitment to non-violence. He described the Jewish non-violence as a passive one since "they do not resist (Hitler) because they know that they cannot resist with any degree of success".

However, the conventional interpretation of Gandhi becomes vulnerable on a number of accounts. He never

questioned the Jewish longing for Jerusalem. On the contrary, towards the later part of his life, he was rather sympathetic towards them. In the wake of the holocaust, Gandhi tells Louis Fischer in 1946: "The Jews have a good cause. I told Sidney Silverman (British Labour M.P.) that the Jews have a good case in Palestine. If the Arabs have a claim to Palestine the Jews have a prior claim..." In April 1947, he remarked that if the Arabs "provide refuge for the Jews without the mediation of any nation, it will be in their tradition of generosity". Speaking to Reuter a month later he remarked: "If I were a Jew, I would tell them: 'Don't be so silly as to resort to terrorism, because you simply damage your own case which otherwise would be a proper case..." Answering an American journalist in June, he stressed that the solution to the Palestinian problem lay in the total abandonment of "terrorism and other forms of violence" by the Jews. But he did not


73. Ibid. p.417.

74. Ibid., vol.88 p.48.
demand the abandonment of their demand for a national home. These are published sources. In a statement handed over to Kallenbach in July 1937, Gandhi speaks out candidly on Palestine. In this hitherto unpublished statement, Gandhi observes:

Neither the mandate nor the Balfour Declaration ... can be used in support of sustaining Jewish immigration into Palestine in the teeth of Arab opposition.

In my opinion the Jews should disclaim any intention of realising their aspirations under the protection of arms and should rely wholly on the goodwill of Arabs.

No exception can possibly be taken to the natural desire of the Jews to found a home in Palestine. But they must wait for its fulfilment till Arab opinion is ripe for it...

At the same time, conscious of his idealism he adds, "My opinion is based purely on ethical considerations and is independent of results." Therefore Gandhi's views on Palestine are not as unequivocal as portrayed by various scholars.

In addition, some of his views are questionable. At the time of the Khilafat crisis, he categorically wrote in April 1921 that the injunction of the Prophet "does not mean that the Jews and the Christians cannot freely go to Palestine, or even reside there and own

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75. Statement given by Mahatma Gandhi to Mr. Kallenbach on Zionism in July 1937. Since Kallenbach refers this statement in his letters to Weizmann dated 2.7.1937 this statement should have come on or before 2.7.1937. Curiously this statement, is not available in the Gandhi-Kallenbach Correspondence of National Archives of India, New Delhi. For a copy of it see, CZA Z4/17342.
property. What non-Muslims cannot do is to acquire sovereign jurisdiction". If one accepts this argument of Koranic injunction, then the Jewish claim to Palestine becomes stronger as it was 'promised' centuries earlier. Secondly Gandhi's commitment to non-violence was not total and absolute and this dilutes his criticism on Jewish violence in Palestine. While he demanded Jewish non-violence against Hitler, his views on Arab violence were milder. While deploring the use of force by the Jews and their reliance on foreign help, he remarked:

... I am not defending the Arab excesses. I wish they had chosen the way of non-violence in resisting what they rightly regarded as an unwarrantable enroachment upon their country. But according to the accepted canons of right and wrong, nothing can be said against the Arab resistance in the face of overwhelming odds...(77)

Similarly his support for the Khilafat movement was not conditional upon the latter being absolutely non-violent.

76. Young India, 6.4.1921, Ibid. vol.19 p.530. In May he wrote : "...the Mussalman claim (to Jazirat-ul-Arab) is not based on Futwahs but on a Koranic injunction which a child can understand. the Mussalman claim is again based upon justice, even apart from the spiritual authority. Jazirat-ul-Arab was under Mussalman control before the war..." Young India, 25.5.1921, vol.20 p.129.

77. Harijan, 26.11.1938, Ibid. vol.68 p. 140.

78. Talking to a Muslim friend in 1939 he remarked : "My mind goes back to the days of Khilafat agitation...when at a meeting of the Muslim League before 1920 I asked for the supreme sacrifice, two or three names were given by Kharija Saheb Abdul Majid, but I believed that many would come forward (contd.)
Thirdly in the same article where he wrote 'Palestine belongs to the Arabs' he asks:

Why should they [i.e., the Jews] not, like other peoples of the earth, make that country their home where they are born and where they earn their livelihood? ... The nobler cause would be to insist on a just treatment of the Jews wherever they are born and bred. The Jews born in France are French in precisely the same sense that Christians born in France are French...(79)

But the centuries-old Jewish problem arose mainly because of the absence of such a political climate. Likewise, his views regarding Jewish dependence upon the British assistance should be understood in the context of his opposition to Bose seeking Japanese help for the deliverance of India. Even though it was a noble cause, Gandhi was of the opinion that Bose was 'misguided'.

Therefore, the Mahatma's views on Palestine are not as unequivocal as they are portrayed. Palestine is not a simple question of rights and wrongs. And Gandhi was aware of this predicament. Hence his public pronouncements were confined to issues like the Jewish violence, Arab character of Palestine or the imperial connections of the Zionists, where there were irrefutable arguments at the right time. And they did. But looking back upon those days I see that I compromised non-violence. I was satisfied with mere abstention from physical violence." Harijan, 17.6.1939, Ibid. vol. 69 p.314.

Even though he had initially endorsed the Islamic sanctions on Jerusalem, he realised that it had Judaic dimension as well. He used religion as a medium of mass communication or during the Khilafat movement, as a vehicle for Hindu-Muslim unity. At the same time, he could not agree to a religion-based state whether in India or in Palestine. This largely influenced his views on the question of a Jewish homeland in Palestine. But when a communal partition became inevitable in India itself and when the majority of the INC was willing to go along with it, as discussed earlier, Gandhi began to revise his views on Palestine, this time publicly. He opposed partition both in India and in Palestine. Likewise, he accepted it as an inevitable result of history. This explains a shift in his views since mid-1946. Yet he could not compromise on the Jewish violence.

ii. Jawaharlal Nehru

As Bandyopadhyaya says, ever since the Madras session of the INC in December 1927, Nehru became the ‘recognised spokesman of the Congress on foreign affairs’. After the formation of the Foreign Department of the INC, "practically every resolution of the Congress on foreign affairs was inspired, drafted and piloted by Nehru". Therefore his views assume paramount importance. Nehru had a sympathetic

understanding of the plight of Jews. In May 1933 he writes:

They (the Jews) had no home or nation, and everywhere they went they were treated as unwelcome and undesirable strangers... They were humiliated, reviled, tortured and massacred; the very word "Jew" became a word of abuse, a synonym for a miser and a grasping money-lender. And yet these amazing people not only survived all this, but managed to keep their racial and cultural characteristics, and prospered and produced a host of great men... Most of them, of course, are far from prosperous; they crowd in the cities of eastern Europe and, from time to time, suffer "pogroms" or massacres. These people without home or country... have never ceased to dream of old Jerusalem, which appears to their imaginations greater and more magnificent than it ever was in fact...(82)

At the same time, the creation of a Jewish National Home in Palestine was unacceptable to him; "Palestine was not a wilderness, or an empty, uninhabited place. It was already somebody else's home... this generous gesture of the British government (i.e., the Balfour Declaration) was really at the expense of the people who already lived in Palestine..." he argues forcefully. Reading the whole question of Palestine, he remarks, "The Arabs tried to gain their (Jewish) cooperation in the struggle for national freedom and democratic government, but they (the Jews) rejected these advances. They have preferred to take sides with foreign ruling Power, and have thus helped it to keep back freedom from the majority of the people".


83. Ibid. pp.764-5.
On another occasion he highlighted the inability of the well-populated Palestine to absorb any new immigrants from abroad. Describing the Palestinian problem as a nationalist struggle against the British, he drew a parallel with India's freedom movement. Speaking in Allahabad on the occasion of the Palestine Day in September 1936, he reminded his audience of the British policy of playing off one community against another in order to consolidate its position. In his message to the Mufti of Jerusalem in September 1937, he hoped for an undivided and free Palestine. Elaborating this, he wrote to the editor of *Jewish Advocate* in August 1937 that a real solution to the Palestine question should be based on the following factors:

1. independence of Palestine;

2. recognition of the fact that Palestine is an Arab country and therefore Arabs must have a predominant voice in it; and

3. recognition of the fact that the Jews in Palestine are an integral factor and their rights should be protected.

In October 1938 he declared in unambiguous terms that "Palestine is essentially an Arab country, and must

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85. Ibid. p.130.

86. Ibid. pp.136-7.


remain so, and the Arabs must not be crushed and suppress in their own homelands." This view was frequently reiterated, as late as in the ARC. This had subsequently become the policy of free India.

Like Gandhi, his views are also not free from certain drawbacks. Speaking in Allahabad in 1936, he ruled out Palestine being a religious issue. Both the Arabs and Jews invoked their religious injunctions. The resolutions and pronouncements of various Congress and Muslim League leaders would clearly testify this. The very concept of Jazirat-ul-Arab endorsed by the INC, is religious. Secondly, Nehru could not define the Jewish rights in Palestine which he endorsed. And lastly, he judged the entire event within the paradigm of imperialism. For example in 1936 he writes: "I cannot tolerate this imperialism in India or Palestine and the question I ask everyone is whether he stands for this imperialism or against it." Imperial manipulation in Palestine was beyond any doubt. But the main issue was different: whether the Jews have any political rights in Palestine? If so what are their limits? Even though Nehru repeatedly reiterated the Arab character of Palestine, he never directly answered this question.

89. Nehru, n.82 p.767
92. Nehru to Olsvanger, d.25.9.1936, CZA S25/3583.
iii. Rationale:

This leads to the inevitable question of rationale behind the INC position. The Indian leaders were unfamiliar with and unaccustomed to the Jewish problem. Even though most of them were Western-educated, they could not understand or comprehend the Jewish longing for Jerusalem. For them the entire problem began with the Balfour Declaration and not earlier. This conditioned their attitude towards Palestine. They portrayed the Jewish aspiration merely as a religious longing devoid of any political demands. As a result the INC did not look upon Zionism as a national liberation movement. While the Arabs were fighting the British, the Zionists were collaborating with the latter. This imperial connection of the Zionists was frequently highlighted by Nehru. Commenting on this, Ariel Glucklich observes:

... instead of identifying Zionism with modern liberation movements, Indian intellectuals identify Zionism with its countries of origin -- as English, Russian and American colonialism. (93)

The INC was conscious of the religious aspect of the problem. Commenting on the Jewish lobby, a US Congressman observed: "Israel succeeds in the Congress for a simple reason. Two or three per cent of the voters care intensely about it and the rest are

uninformed and don't care". More or less the same logic applies to the Indian Muslims. The Arab point of view was strongly articulated by the Muslims. The resolutions adopted by various Muslim organizations like the Muslim League, All India Khilafat Conference, Jamiatul ulema-e-Hind etc would testify this. On the other hand, the Zionists had no constituency in India. Even individuals who were sympathetic towards them did not come out openly in support of the Zionists. As manifested in the case of Gandhi, the Indian attitude was conditioned by the Hindu-Muslim unity. The need became acute in the 1930s when the Muslim League took an aggressive position on Palestine and openly demanded the abrogation of the Balfour Declaration. Supporting the Arab cause might not have secured popular Muslim support for the INC. But a contrary position would have definitely alienated the Muslims from the INC. In other words, its attitude was a pragmatic one, even though couched in anti-imperialism.

94. Quoted in Kennan Lee Teslik, Congress, the Executive Branch and the Special Interests: The American Response to the Arab Boycott of Israel (Westport, Conn, 1982), p.36.


Therefore, when the future of Palestine came before the UN, the broad framework of the Indian position was well known. As early as in 1938, Nehru visualised the formation of "a larger Arab federation with a Jewish autonomous enclave." In the following year, the Tripuri session of the INC proposed an "independent democratic state in Palestine with adequate protection of Jewish rights." As will be discussed subsequently, this was more or less reflected by the Indian position in the UNSCOP.

97. Nehru, n.82 p.767