CHAPTER 4

ISRAEL'S POLICY TOWARDS INDIA
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India's Israel policy could not have been made unilaterally, and so it is imperative to understand it from the Israeli perspective as well. This approach has two additional advantages: since Israel had made a number of attempts to cultivate India and to establish normal ties with it, this approach gives an idea about the Israeli perception of India; and secondly, with the possible exception of K.M. Panikkar, most of the Indian scholars and diplomats had taken extra care in expressing their views on Israel. This led to the popular belief that Israel and India were basically antithetical to each other and enjoyed no common political ideas. At the same time it would be equally misleading to presume that India has been highly placed in Israel's foreign policy priorities. However, before going into the specifics, it is essential to understand the Israeli foreign policy in general and its basic aims and objectives and the means adopted to further them. In this connection, it should be noted


2. For a detailed discussion on these lines see G.H. Jansen, Zionism, Israel and Asian Nationalism (Beirut 1971)
that the foreign policy of a nation is ordinarily moulded by a mixture of self-interest, pragmatism and idealism. It would be misleading, for example, to concede idealism to non-aligned movement and at the same time view Israel's technical assistance programme as mere propaganda exercise or vice-versa.

This leads to the next question. Where does India stand in Israel's scale of priorities? In this context it becomes essential to examine the popular opinion regarding the Zionist perception of Indian nationalism and their attempts to cultivate ties with India. In this connection, it may be useful to compare the efforts of the Arabs and Zionists to establish close ties with India ever since Palestine became a bone of contention between the Jews and the Arabs. At the same time, a study of the Zionists' attempts to cultivate Indian would be incomplete without looking at their corresponding interests in other parts of the world. Against this background, Israel's policy towards India can be studied under four major heads: the issues of mutual interest, Israeli attempts to formalize relations with India, nature and extent of bilateral contacts and Israel's handicaps in cultivating India's support.
FOREIGN POLICY

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Zionism can be described as the founding principle of the Jewish State of Israel. Ever since the publication of *Der Judenstaat* (The Jewish State) in 1896 and the adoption of the Basle Programme in 1897, Theodor Herzl's political Zionism gained support and popular endorsement among the Jews. The Balfour Declaration and the British Mandate over Palestine gave formal and international endorsement for the establishment of a Jewish National Home in Palestine. However, it was only after the traumatic experience of the World War II and the holocaust, that the formation of a Jewish State gathered momentum and international recognition. At that time, according to Edward Glick, the Zionists had six basic aims and these were largely reflected in the policies followed by them as well as by the State of Israel. They were:

1. to secure an end to British rule in Palestine;
2. to get the UN and all of its member states "to support the Jewish people in the claim for statehood in Palestine and a place in the family of nations";
3. to convince the world that the two issues of Palestine and the displaced Jewry of Europe were inseparable;

3. There is no unanimity as to the nature of Zionism. The Jews had perceived it as a national liberation movement while the Asian nationalists in general had perceived it as a colonial movement. Without attributing any motives the term is used merely to denote it as a political movement of the Jews aimed at the creation of a Jewish homeland.
4. in the event that a partition of Palestine would prove the only means to achieve Jewish self-determination in the Holy Land then to strive for the most favourable boundaries possible;

5. to secure for the Jewish Agency or its successor complete control of immigration into either an undivided or a truncated Jewish Palestine; and

6. to go ahead with the establishment of the State of Jews despite the convening of the second special session of the General Assembly which was to consider a temporary UN trusteeship as a substitute for the partition plan. (4).

These were largely reflected in the decisions taken and the events surrounding the formation of Israel.

Preservation of its sovereign independence and survival would obviously be the basic objective of any state. In the case of Israel this had become the central objective of the state. Such a security consciousness was a reflection of the historical longing of the Jews, the agony of the Holocaust and the circumstances of its emergence. The Arab refusal to accept the UN partition plan and their determination to prevent the emergence of the Jewish state, brought forth an in-built security consciousness in Israel's foreign policy. For reasons of pragmatism and expedience the declaration which proclaimed Israel, left the frontiers of the state undefined.

One could attribute this to several other reasons.

By defining the borders, they would be limiting the

territory of the Jewish State. Secondly it was possible that Israel may not be able to control areas which it declared as within its territorial limits. Thirdly since the Arabs refused to accept partition and were determined to prevent it, an undefined territorial limit would be militarily advantageous for expansion. Fourthly the UNSCOP division was not favourably viewed by the Zionists who considered the Jewish area insufficient and hence wanted modification in their favour. To publicly pronounce a frontier on these lines would not have found approval with the international community whose recognition was too vital to be ignored. And lastly the Zionists had accepted internationalization of Jerusalem merely as a tactical price for a Jewish state and they could not have included it formally in the Jewish state as that would have prevented recognition from a number of states. As a sequel to its proclamation, recognition by major powers became vitally important for its existence. In other words, international acceptance became a necessary condition for the survival of the Jewish state when it was proclaimed on the Sabbath eve of 14 May 1948.

The basic principles of the Jewish state were largely influenced by a number of primary issues. The Arab refusal and their pronounced hostility towards its establishment became the major concern. This
politico-military threat was combined with the Arab economic boycott aimed at financially crippling the infant state. This led to increasing Israeli efforts to establish friendship with extra-regional powers and far-off states both to ensure its political survival as well as to counter Arab efforts. Conceived as the "home" for the Jewish people, Israel was committed to Jewish immigration and the ingathering of the Jews in the diaspora. To ensure a free flow of the immigrants and their rehabilitation and development, Israel needed international support, political as well as economic. Besides, the international community took a keen interest in the developments surrounding the formation of Israel as well as issues like the treatment and rehabilitation of the Arab refugees, the protection of religious sites and places, and the status of Jerusalem. Given the fact that formation of the state had its legal sanctity in the 29 November UN resolution, Israel had to consider international reactions more seriously. Similarly, the growing rivalry between the power blocs, and the pressure exerted by various Zionist organizations abroad did have tangible influence on its foreign policy formulation.

Outlining the foreign policy, the 'Basic Principles of the Government Programme' adopted by the Knesset on 9 March 1949 declared:
1. Loyalty to the principles of the United Nations Charter and friendship with all freedom-loving States, and in particular with the United States and the Soviet Union.

2. A striving towards a Jewish-Arab covenant (economic, social, cultural and political cooperation with the neighbouring countries) within the framework of the United Nations Organization. This covenant will not be directed against any member of the United Nations.

3. Support of every measure to strengthen peace, ensure the rights of man and the equality of people the world over, and strengthen the authority and competence of the United Nations Organization.

4. Assurance of the right of exit from every country to Jews who wish to return and make their home in their historic homeland.

5. Effective safeguarding of the independence and full sovereignty of the state of Israel. (5).

In order to ensure its security and recognition, as well as adhere to its declared principles, Israel had adopted a number of political, economic and military means. In all these efforts one can notice a strategic mixture of idealism and realism.

At the political level, Israel had defined its foreign policy as one of non-identification with either of the blocs. Speaking before the provisional State Council in September 1948, David Ben-Gurion declared: "We have friends both in the East and in the West. We could not have conducted the war [i.e., the Arab-Israeli war of 1948] without the important help we

received from several States of East and West..." This was largely an outcome of the historic necessities of the situation. Being an infant state surrounded by hostile atmosphere, Israel could ill-afford to antagonize either of the blocs; while it depended on the West for economic assistance, the Soviet bloc and more particularly Czechoslovakia provided the crucial military supplies in 1948. More so the Eastern bloc contained a very large section of the Jewish population and a significant segment of Israeli leadership came from the Eastern Europe. With the Jewish people scattered all over the world, it could not afford to make enemies. But this policy of non-identification could not last long especially after the estrangement between Israel and the USSR in early 1950s. Increasing US pressure on the Korean issue, the Arab hostility and the support they received from the Soviets, the growing indifference shown to Israel by the Afro-Asian movement and Israel's increasing proximity with former colonial powers like the Netherlands, Britain and France


7. All the major leaders like Menahem Begin, David Ben-Gurion, Levi Eshkol, Eliezer Kaplan, Moshe Kog, Golda Meir, Shimon Peres and Moshe Sharett were from Eastern Europe.
seriously eroded Israel's earlier commitment to non-

Socialist orientation of its founding fathers provided another political avenue for Israel. From the beginning the Labour Party emerged as the major force in Israel and until late seventies, Labour was in power. Socialist models like kibbutz, collective farming and agricultural cooperatives drew attention and admiration from fellow socialists elsewhere. The formation of Socialist International (1951) and Asian Socialist Conference (1953) provided organizational frameworks. In spite of Israel's membership and participation, the results were minimal. By and large, the Afro-Asians were attracted more towards the radical form of socialism propagated by the Soviet Union than by the liberal form and hence both these fora became predominantly European. Explaining the absence of a cohesive Socialist fraternity, Ram Manohar Lohia observed in 1950:

...some [Socialists] are in the government and others in the opposition. Asian Socialists in Government are afraid to associate with the opposition socialists of a neighbouring country

8. For a detailed discussion Brecher, n.6, pp.39-41

9. For a detailed documentary study on the Socialists contacts see H.S. Aynor et al. The role of the Israel Labour Movement in Establishing Relations with States in Africa and Asia : Documents (1948-75), (Jerusalem, 1989).

10. For various activities of these organizations see the Socialist Weekly Janata (Bombay).
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lest they should displease its government party. No such fear haunts the capitalists or communists because of their world view....(11)

Israel was conscious of the numerical strength of the Arab States and hence its political support for the Afro-Asian world was limited and even insignificant. Further, as in the case of decolonization of Indonesia or the former Italian colonies in North Africa, Israel had peculiar problems and compulsions. In order to overcome this, Israeli diplomacy used economic means on a conspicuous scale. Because of its inherent economic crisis and dependence on external assistance, Israel used technical skills as the means for obtaining political dividends. There were two contrasting arguments regarding the nature of this economic/technical assistance. Some viewed this as "Israel's passport to a full range of political, commercial and cultural relations with the developing


12. The Netherlands was one of the staunch supporters of Israel since 1948. Hence it could not afford to antagonise a reliable ally like the Dutch for an unknown Indonesia. This was explained by Israel's abstention in the UN vote on Indonesia, even though the Israeli Ambassador in the UN was recommending an affirmative stand ISA Documents Companion volume IV, p.190. Even though it had supported the principle of decolonialization the question of Italian colonies added a new problem. Given the general Arab attitude, for Israel, a free and independent Libya would only strengthen the anti-Israeli Arab League.
countries of Africa and Asia." Contending this, the critics had argued that this "picture of Israel as a reservoir of unique skills and practical wisdom is somewhat overdrawn." It is possible that the Jewish or pro-Israeli writers had exaggerated the technical assistance provided by the Jewish state. Besides idealism or altruism, this policy was largely a political move aimed at cultivating friendship in the decolonizing world. Yet these could not dilute the intensity and diversity of the technical assistance provided by Israel. Its size and meagre resources were serious hindrances to Israeli efforts; at the same time these drawbacks inspired trust among the recipients who were very much apprehensive of the 'aid-with-strings' attitude of the Developed World.


15. There was a proliferation of literature on this. They include Leopold Laufer, Israel and the Developing Countries: New Approches to Cooperation (New York, 1967); Michael Curtis and Susan Aurelia Gitelson (ed) Israel in the Third World (New Brunswick, NJ, 1976); Moshe Yegar, "Israel in Asia" The Jerusalem Quarterly, no. 18 Winter 1981 pp. 15-28; Samuel Decalo, "Israeli Foreign Policy and the Third World" Orbis, vol.11 no.3 Fall 1967, pp.724-45; Sisyphus, "Israel's Aid to the Third World: Lessons of the past and prospects for the future" Middle East Review, vol.10 no.3 Spring 1978 pp.30-6 and Michael Brecher, The New States of Asia: A Political Analysis (London 1968), Reprint pp. 131-45.
From 1958 when a special division for international cooperation was established within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs until before the June War, Israeli technical assistance programme encompassed eleven Asian, thirty-eight African, twenty-three Latin American and eight Mediterranean countries. At the operational level, it included the fields of "agriculture, administration, defence, economics, education, community development, communications, health, youth organization, advancement of women, industry, technology and science". Similarly in terms of operation it was diversified and by December 1967, Israel had signed bilateral technical cooperation agreements with as many as 34 countries - 20 in Africa, 18 in Latin America and 2 in Asia. In some cases like Ghana, Israeli assistance began even before these countries gained independence. These were however, only bilateral assistance programmes and Israeli experts served in a number of countries through the UN and other international or multilateral assistance programmes. As an instrument of state policy, technical aid was successful in establishing formal ties with the Developing World, especially with the

16. For the list of countries Laufer, ibid. pp.18-19. However the programme actually commenced in 1954 when Burma began to receive technical assistance from Israel.

17. Yegar, n. 15 p.26

18. Rodin, n.13 p.32
newly emerging decolonized Africa. For example, in 1956 Israel had only seven embassies, four in Europe, three in the Americas and none in Asia or Africa, but on the eve of the mass African boycott of Israel in 1972, it had as many as 32 missions in Africa alone. For the African states, until the Arabs used oil as a political weapon, Israeli assistance outweighed the Arab influence.

A third instrument of Israeli foreign policy was military assistance and arms sales. The military aid programme consisted of two categories viz., the conventional military training and the paramilitary training; the former offers training in the three regular wings of the armed forces as well as the police whereby they function in close collaboration with the military in combating internal security problems; and the latter was an indigenous innovation of the Israelis like Nahal and Gadna wherein army service is combined 20 with agricultural training.

19. Susan Aurelia Gitelson, "Israel's African Setback in Perspective" in Curtis and Gitelson, n.15 p.183

20. Nahal is an acronym for No'ar Halutzi Lohem (Fighting Pioneering youth) It is a course of military science which combines military training and duties with the work on a Kibbutz. Gadna is an acronym for Gdudei No'ar (youth batallions) and is a para-military youth training programme. Susan Hattis Rolef (ed) Political Dictionary of the State of Israel (New York, 1987), p.351.
Among the three means adopted by Israel, its military assistance programme had a very significant impact especially in Africa; and various wings of the armed forces, especially the air force and paratroopers of a number of African countries had strong Israeli foundation and training. Gradually Israel added arms transfers as an important ingredient to its military means to cultivate and influence the Developing World. Beginning with the 1954 arms deal with Burma, the arms transfers grew in the number of weapons, systems and recipients in the sixties. According to Klieman, arms transfer had become "an indispensable component of foreign policy." They are being used as a means of influencing the political behaviour of the recipients on crucial issues like the Arab-Israeli conflict and to further Israel's support base in various international fora. These sales would help establish new relations, renew old ones or to strengthen the existing relations. There were certain drawbacks in this arms trade diplomacy as Israel could


22. For a detailed study on Israeli arms trade see Aaron S.Klieman, Israel's Global Reach: Arms Sales as Diplomacy (Washington 1985); Bishara Bahbah with Linda Butler, Israel and Latin America: The Military Connection (London 1986); and Benjamin Beit-Hallahmi The Israeli Connection: Whom Israel Arms and Why (London, 1988)

23. Klieman, Ibid p.35
not afford to compete with the major arms suppliers, especially in areas like military aid or credit payments. Israel compensated these through aggressive marketing, battle-tested capacity of its exports and its reputation as a reliable supplier. The direction of Israeli arms export would give an idea of its diversity; it included at least 18 from Latin America, 16 from Africa, 14 from Asia, 8 from Europe, and 5 from West Asia and the Pacific.

PLACE OF INDIA

The number of attempts made by Israel to establish formal relations with India might give a misleading impression that India was a high-priority area in Israel's foreign policy. Even though both Asia in general and India in particular were important for Israel, they were not indispensable targets. Both the Zionists and Israel had ignored Asia for a considerable period of time. Admitting this lapse, the December 1954 Background Paper of the Government of Israel added: "Prior to the establishment of the State of Israel there was virtually no contact between the Jewish communities of the Western World and the peoples of Asia." Asia reciprocated the sentiment towards the Zionist struggle and when the fate of Palestine was

24. Klieman, n.22 pp.135-43; Bahbah and Butler n.22 pp.11-14; and Beit-Hallami, n.22 pp.22-75
25. ISA 2564/24
decided in the UN, there were eight Asian members in the world body and of these only the Philippines, which was a former US dependency, supported the formation of the Jewish state. This isolation was never fully overcome, even though Israel was successful in cultivating stable relations with countries like Burma. It was only in 1956, incidentally coinciding with the Suez Crisis, that Israeli leaders began to pay serious attention to Asia in the form of Moshe Sharett's twelve-nation Asian tour.

Is "Israel an Asian entity? Nehru was on record saying: "I do not remember saying anywhere that Israel was a foreign body in the family of Asian nations. I may have said that Israel has looked to Europe and America, more than to Asia, and it has therefore not fitted in with Asia." As Brijen Gupta argued "Israel is part of Asia physically and ideologically separate from the continent... an island almost completely alienated from her immediate surroundings..."

Israeli leaders were also in a dilemma as to the

26. On the contrary major support for partition came from Latin America and this explains the Israeli proximity with the far-off Latin America than with the nearby Asia. For a detailed discussion on the Latin American role see Glick, n. 4

27. Decalo, n.15 pp.731-2

28. Nehru to Olsvangen, d.23.3.1958, CZA K11 81/3

29. Brijen K.Gupta, "Does Israel 'belong' in Asia? A message to the Israeli humanists and Socialists", New Outlook, vol.1 no.2 August 1957 p.9
Asian status of Israel. In July 1956, Golda Meir remarked:

It is natural that we view ourselves as an integral part of the Asian continent, and it is obvious that we shall endeavour to win our place among the peoples of Asia.\(^{(30)}\)

However in the wake of the Suez Crisis and the adverse Asian reaction, Ben-Gurion declared: "From the standpoint of our existence... the friendship of one European nation [i.e., France] which we have secured from July [i.e., July 1956] until the present [i.e., January 1957] is worth more than the opinions prevailing at this time among the Asiatic peoples."

Reflecting similar sentiments, Golda Meir remarked:

I used to look around me at the UN in 1957 and 1958 and think to myself: 'We have no family here. No one shares our religion, our language or our past. The rest of the world seems to be grouped into blocs that have sprang up because geography and history have combined to give common interests to their peoples. But our neighbours - and natural allies - don't want to have anything to do with us, and we really belong nowhere and to no one, except to ourselves.' We were the first born of the United Nations but we were being treated like unwanted step-children, and I must admit that it hurt.\(^{(32)}\)

It should, however, be noted that Israel's isolation in Asia, was also partly due to the Asian reluctance to

\(^{30}\) Quoted in Meron Medzini, "Reflections on Israel's Asian Policy" Midstream, vol.18 no.6 June-July 1972, p.25

\(^{31}\) January 5, 1957 statement of Ben Gurion quoted in New Outlook, Vol.1 n.3 September 1957 p.21

understand and appreciate Israel's problems and dilemmas.

This leads to the next question: how was India perceived by Israel? A historical understanding thus becomes essential to find a meaningful answer. It was widely believed and forcefully contended that the Zionists were indifferent towards India while the Arabs were favourably disposed towards India's struggle for freedom. According to Jansen,

The Zionists were only interested in having the support of Gandhi, with his world-wide reputation; they made no attempt to contact the Indian National Congress, a fact which underlines their basic lack of concern with Asian nationalism as such. The Congress consequently identified itself fully with the Arab nationalist movements in West Asia...(33)

Empirical data, however, does not support such an understanding. The contacts between the Zionists and 34 the Indian nationalists were not inconsiderable.


Obstacles for the Zionists:

Before examining the Zionist contacts with the INC it would be useful to analyse the major obstacles for the Zionist leadership. This would help to broaden the interpretation of the events. Unlike other nationalist movements, the Zionists were aspiring to create a homeland or nation-state in a territory where they did not enjoy numerical majority. Their planned recreation of a Jewish homeland would largely or solely depend upon the Jewish immigration to Palestine. In order to achieve this demographic change, the support and cooperation of the Mandatory Power became the prerequisite. This inhibited the Jewish leadership from being anti-British until the later periods or especially after the 1939 White Paper; they could not have fought the British and still gained a Jewish home. It could be possible that the Zionist collaboration with the British was a tactical move aimed at achieving larger political goals.

Secondly, since the Zionists were aspiring to create a Jewish State, the Jewish solidarity and Zionism were the essential means of their struggle. Thus the major centres of the Zionist activities revolved around those countries which were or becoming major centres of economic or political power. Hence the UK and then the US became centres of Zionist activities. Similarly countries with a large Jewish
population drew maximum attention of the Jewish leaders both because of their political support for Zionism and for the anxiety for their survival in the wake of the Nazi persecution. India came under none of these priority areas. It was a colony of the British empire and hence did not enjoy any political power which would have helped the Zionists. Its economic power was not very significant and it had no practical role for strengthening their struggle. In addition to its meagre Jewish population, Jews in India were historically free from persecution which plagued Europe for centuries. Hence it was not a crisis area needing utmost attention especially to ensure the safety of the Jews. As a result of a tolerant atmosphere, Zionism never took roots in India. And above all, the Zionists had close and intimate contacts with the members of the League of Nations with regard to the activities of the Mandate Power in Palestine. India or the other Asian countries (except Iraq) were not represented in the League Council, which prevented any formal contacts.

If India enjoyed no economic, political, demographic or Zionist incentives, why did the Jewish leaders show interest in India? Easier explanation would be that idealism drew the Zionists nearer India and the Hebrew translation of Nehru's Autobiography can be cited to buttress this claim. However the role of

35. Grateful to Walter Eytan for this understanding.
idealism is rather marginal in international relations and one has to look for more serious explanations. One, India was moving towards statehood and because of its mere size and potential, the Zionists could not afford to ignore India. With its membership in various international organizations like the ILO India was slowly establishing its international influence.

And secondly, India became important for the Zionists because of the religious dimension of the Arab-Jewish conflict in Palestine. In order to strengthen his position vis-a-vis the British administration and to counter the Zionist efforts in Palestine, Hajj Amin Husseinei, the Mufti of Jerusalem, began to look to India for support. British India had the largest Muslim population in the world and beginning from the Wailing Wall incident in 1929, the Mufti was keen to establish Islamic solidarity which culminated in the Jerusalem Islamic Conference in December 1931. In this endeavour the Mufti had developed a wide range of contacts with leaders like Maulana Mohammed Ali and Shaukat Ali and a number of Muslim rulers in India including the Nizam of Hyderabad. Mufti was gradually converting the


Palestine problem into an Arab and Islamic issue and was successful in generating a favourable response from the Indian Muslims. This made the British government in India sensitive to the feelings of the Indians on Palestine. These two developments — Mufti's efforts and the British sensitivity to India's Muslim opinion — raised the Zionist interest in India. Chaim Weizmann, for example, was in contact with Shaukat Ali at least from January 1931 when the latter agreed to Mufti's proposal for a Jerusalem burial for Maulana Mohammed Ali. His contacts with Gandhi and Nehru were only a later phenomenon.

**Zionists and India**

The Zionists had established wide-ranging contacts with the Indian nationalists as well as with various other segments of the Indian polity. They were not confined to Gandhi, Nehru or other top leaders alone. As discussed below, they encompassed the leaders of the Hindu, Muslim and Jewish communities in India; academic associations and institutions; cultivation of Indians serving the British; acquaintance with the princely elements; leading Indian personalities who subsequently became India's diplomats; and grassroot level contacts through various public meetings. Contrary to what

38. C. Weizmann to J. M. Kenworthy, d. 13-1-1931, *Weizmann Letters*, vol. xv pp. 87-8
Jansen wrote, the Zionist attempts to convince Mahatma Gandhi were serious, prolonged, widespread but futile. Earliest known Zionist contacts with Nehru could probably be traced to the Brussels Conference of 1927. Immanuel Olsvanger, an associate of the Jewish Agency, spent a number of months in India, to establish formal links with the Indian leadership. He succeeded in forming a personal relationship with Nehru which continued after Israel was proclaimed. Chaim Weizmann, the then President of the World Zionist Organization, met Nehru on 20 July 1938 when the latter was in London and was in correspondence with the Indian leader.


41. Nehru to Olsvanger, d. 2.2.1938, 22.5.1947, 10.6.1954, 16.10.1956 and 23.3.1958 CZA K 11-81/3


43. As early as in 1916 she addressed a Bene-Israel Mitra Mandal meeting in Bombay. India and Israel (Bombay) vol.4 no.4 October 1951, p.31
Ambedkar came out with formal pro-Zionist pronouncements, others like Tagore, while expressing their sympathy for the Zionist cause, maintained that their view was a "purely personal one and not meant for newspaper publication". Similarly Zionists were successful in making leaders like Sarojini Naidu, Andrews, Radhakrishnan and others accept their invitation to visit Palestine and to have a first-hand account of the developments. Due to the World War II and other problems none of the leading Indian personalities seemed to have visited Palestine. While looking to the Congress leadership for political support, the Zionists were conscious of the need to cultivate a popular support base for their cause. This approach became more important because of the somewhat indifferent and unfavourable attitude adopted by leaders like Gandhi and Nehru. Thus both Olsvanger and Olga Feinberg (who was working for the Women's

44. *Jewish Advocate* (Bombay), October 1941 p.9 and November 1941 p.9.

45. Olsvanger to Tagore, d. 7.10.1936 and A.K. Chanda, Secretary to Tagore to Olsvanger, d. 23.10.1936, CZA S25/3583.

46. At the time of his death in 1940, Andrews was reportedly preparing to go to Palestine. Feinberg to Epstein, d. 8.6.1940, CZA S25/3591

47. Epstein to the Jewish Agency, d. 4.4.1946, CZA S25/3158

48. For the details of his activities in India, see CZA S25/3583.

49. For details see, CZA S25/3586 and S25/3591.
International Zionist Organization) addressed a number of public meetings all over India.

The vocal support for Israel expressed by Master Tara Singh and the consistent pro-Israel stand adopted by the Hindu Mahasabha might give a misleading picture that the Zionists had confined their activities only among the Hindus or anti-Muslim sections in India. As referred to earlier, Weizmann's first major contact with the Indian leadership was with Shaukat Ali. Olsvanger had established personal relations with a number of Muslim leaders including Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, Muhammed Iqbal and Maulana Azad; and the Central Khilafat Committee had even asked him to speak at its New Delhi meeting. Similarly another Zionist, Richard Freund, had a meeting with Asaf Ali in December 1937.


51. Olsvanger to Ghaffar Khan, d. 29.9.1936, CZA S25/3583

52. Olsvanger to Iqbal, d .1.10.1936 and Iqbal's reply d. 14.10.1936, CZA S25/3583.

53. Kallenbach to Weizmann, d.4.7.1937, CZA Z4/17342

54. Declining this offer he wrote: "...knowing that no Palestinian Arab will be present there, I some how feel that my addressing the Conference would (be) mean for me to take advantage of the absence of a possible opponent and that would surely be not fair. If a Palestinian Arab would be present, both he and I could speak and reply to each other before an impartially listening audience..." Olsvanger to M.Irfan, d.3.10.1936, CZA S25/3583

55. Note of Richard Freund, d. 20.12.1937, CZA S25/3586
Another area in which the Zionists had an edge over the Arab nationalists was their widespread academic interests and establishments, and this possibly explains the pro-Zionist views expressed by a number of Western educated Indian intellectuals. As early as in 1909, Chaim Weizmann was offered a professorship by the University of Calcutta but the Zionist leader declined the offer on the plea that "this would upset our Palestine plans". In 1936, reacting to Oslavanger's suggestion for an institutional link between the Benares Hindu University and the Hebrew University, M.M. Malaviya, the then Vice-Chancellor of the B.H.U. wrote: "I will discuss the matter with my colleagues when I return to Benares. But I may say at once that if you wish to send any Jew students to study Sanskrit at the Benaras Hindu University, we shall give him every facility to do so..." (Sic). In the same year B.S. Guha, of the Zoological Survey of India wrote: "It was indeed a very great pleasure to have met you [i.e., Olsvangen] and to be able to establish connection with the University of Jerusalem through your good offices". The participation of the Jewish delegation from Palestine in the Asian

57. Malaviya to Olsvangen, d. 17.10.1936, CZA S25/3583
58. Guha to Olsvangen, d. 2.11.1936, Ibid.
Relations Conference brought in more institutional links between the Zionists and the Indian nationalists.

The Zionists had also shown a keen interest in the Indians serving under the British or representing India in various international meets. The earliest known such contacts existed in 1931 when the Palestinian Zionist leader F.H. Kisch met and befriended Brejendra Mitter and L.K. Hyder Indian delegates at the League Assembly.

And finally the Indian princes and the princely elements proved attractive for the Zionists. Among them Shanmukham Chetty, the Diwan of Cochin who expressed an interest in establishing "trade connections between Cochin and the Jewish Agency for Palestine", princely state of Bikaner which had sought assistance from the Jewish Agency on dry farming and the Maharaja of Patiala with K.M. Panikkar as his Foreign Minister were the most notable ones. As in the

59. For a detailed list of contacts established during the Conference see CZA S25/7485

60. F.H. Kisch to Ms. May d.23.8.1931, S25/5689. Similar contacts were made with P.K.Dutt, Social Secretary to the Indian Round Table Conference in 1931 Note d. 3.12.1931 CZA S25/5689 see also Jewish Advocate (Bombay) 1.7.1938 vol.9 no.6 p.4

61. Shanmukham Chetty to Olsvanger, d. 30.10.1936, CZA S25/3583

62. Revenue Minister of Bikaner to Shertok, d. 29.1.1938 and Shertok's reply d. 14.3.1938, CZA S25/7494

63. Note of Richard Freund, d.20.12.1937, CZA S25/3586
case of Panikkar a number of these contacts proved fruitful after the establishment of Israel.

All these formal contacts lead to two conclusions: if the Zionists had failed to elicit favourable Indian reaction it was not due to absence of their effort but in spite of it; and in terms of their sheer number, depth and diversity the Zionist contacts and efforts in India were far superior to the Arab efforts towards India.

However, a comparison between the Zionist efforts in India and in other parts of the world, would give a different understanding. The Zionists acknowledged, even lamented, that their efforts in India were too meagre. Olsvanger's 1937 letter clearly highlighted this dilemma when he wrote:

If some twenty years ago Zionists would have tried to come into contact with Jawaharlal Nehru, when he studied at Cambridge, we would not see him today taking up such an attitude of lack of understanding towards our cause. The same applies to the greater part of those who are to-day leaders of Indian politics. But the greater part of Indian intellectuals...are at present spending their University years in one or other English towns. That is why the propaganda amongst Indians should be pursued in England.... The most dangerous and irresponsible attitude on our part would be to say: "We do not need these Asiatics at this juncture in view of the probable change in the Palestine political status". We cannot take Palestine out of Asia. And whatever the changes may be, friendly connections with big Asiatic communities will always be of paramount importance to us. (64)

64. Olsvanger to Brodetski, d. 2.12.1937 CZA S25/3588
In the absence of any serious progress in that direction, he once again highlighted the importance of India and observed:

...Work in India must begin as soon as possible. This will be a threefold task:

a. Work amongst the Hindus, chiefly in Congress quarters.

b. Work amongst the Moslems.

c. Work amongst the Bene Israel...

In addition to this, contact must be kept with the British officials in India, some of whom may one day be transferred to Palestine.

Our representative in South Africa will have to bear in mind that the (d)ian Community out there can also become either useful or harmful to us.

It would be a grave mistake to rely for our work in India on the Zionists there. The task is too responsible....(65)

Reflecting on the Zionist activities in regard to India, K.M. Panikkar categorically wrote in April 1947:

"If there is no widespread expression of sympathy even in orthodox Hindu quarters towards Zionist claims, this is due a large extent to the neglect of India by the Zionists themselves. No attempt has been made in the past to create such an understanding due no doubt to the 'Western' attitude of the Jews in general..." And as a remedial measure he observed: "I consider it of the utmost importance that the Jewish Agency should

65. Olsvanger to Arthur Lourie, d.15.9.1939, CZA Z4/15623.
have representation at Delhi." Taking note of this, the Jewish delegation which attended the ARC recommended, *inter alia*:

1. a permanent political representative of the Jewish Agency should be immediately sent to India.

2. a desk for India and Asia should be created in the Political Department of the Jewish Agency;

3. regular coverage should be given to India in Palestine press; and

4. the establishment of an economic liaison office in Bombay should be examined. (67)

Writing on these proposals Walter Eytan wrote a year later: "The KKL ([*Karen Kayemet L'Yisrael* or the Jewish National Fund] has now been looking for some time for someone to go to India for three purposes: (a) KKL work proper (b) work among Jewish youth (c) political contacts. As far as I know, they have still not found anyone. I've been trying to help them, but have so far not hit on any bright ideas... It's perfectly true that we've neglected that country [i.e., India]." According to Brecher, "Ben-Gurion who attached great importance to China in the 1960s was indifferent to both East and South Asia on the eve of

66. K.M. Panikkar's *Memorandum on Hindu-Zionist Relations*, d. 8.4.1947, CZA S25/9029


68. Note by Eytan, d. 3.3.1948, CZA S25/9029. Emphasis added.
Israel's independence." Speaking at the Zionist Executive on 6 April 1948 Ben-Gurion declared:

When we say the whole world it is an exaggeration. We never think of India or China or similar countries, but rather about the countries in which Jews have lived or are living... (70)

None of the leading Zionist figures had visited India prior to the formation of Israel. Taking all these factors into consideration, it becomes clear that while the Jewish attempts towards India were much deeper, the attention paid by them towards India was much less than that paid to other parts of the world.

HOLOCAUST:

As far as their efforts towards Asia in general and India in particular were concerned, the Zionists' major, and probably fatal, shortcoming was their failure to elicit any strong reaction on the holocaust. The massacre of the Jewish people by the Nazi Germany was the most crucial factor for the consolidation of Zionism among the Jewish survivors and for the favourable international opinion towards a Jewish state in Palestine. There were two distinct


70. Quoted in Ibid.

71. According to Eytan, he and Golda Meir should have visited India in September 1947 (which however did not materialize). Eytan's note, d. 3.3.1948, CZA S25/9029
perceptions regarding the indifference shown by the Asian nationalists towards the Zionist claim. According to one school of thought, the Asian nationalists were unaware of the Jewish emotional ties towards the Promised Land. According to another school, the Asian reluctance to endorse the Zionist aspiration could be found in the "incompatibility between the anti-colonial upsurge in Asia and the methods and goals of the Zionist movement." Neither of these arguments can be brushed aside easily. The Judeo-Christian heritage did play a crucial role in the formation of Israel. Yet as validly argued, "Europe's Judeo-Christian heritage did not prevent the sustained persecution of Jews, a circumstance to which Asian history affords no parallel. On the contrary, the Islamic tradition which incorporates and endorses much of the Judaic religion has consistently regarded the Jews as a fraternal People of the Book." At the same time it should be noted that the persecution of the Jews generated a guilt-consciousness and a strong pro-Zionist sentiment among the Christian states of Europe. Secondly the French Revolution paved the way for equal rights for the Jews to which Islamic World does not

73. Agwani, n.14 p.443
74. Ibid.
offer a parallel. European and Latin American attitude towards Zionism was largely influenced by their Christian faith. Likewise, Islamic interpretation of the Palestine question found a larger following in Africa and Asia.

On the specific question of holocaust the INC maintained an unusually subdued stand. It had adopted no exclusive resolution either on the Jewish question or on the holocaust. Making a passing reference to this issue, the Foreign Policy resolution of the Tripuri Congress declared in 1939:

International morality has sunk so low in Central and South Western Europe that the World has witnessed with horror the organised terrorism of the Nazi Government against the people of the Jewish race...(77)

Besides this, the Working Committee resolution on Palestine adopted in Wardha in December 1938, referred to 'the plights of the Jews in Europe' and these were

75. It is undeniable that the treatment of the Jews in the Islamic world was better than in the Christian world but they were not equal subjects. They were given protection in lieu of their dhimmis status. For a detailed study on the Jewish--Islamic relations see Bernard Lewis, The Jews of Islam (Princeton,N.J, 1987 pb). He rightly asks: "How could one accord the same treatment to those who follow the true faith and those who willfully reject it? This would be a theological as well as a logical absurdity." p.4.

76. Encyclopaedia INC does not contain any resolution on the holocaust.

77. Encyclopaedia INC, vol. xii p. 160
the only references to the holocaust. On the contrary, it had adopted as many as six exclusive resolutions on Palestine.

However, the INC came closer to a resolution on the Jewish refugees when Nehru made a vain bid. His draft resolution read:

The Committee see no objection to the employment in India of such Jewish refugees as are experts and specialists and who can fit in with the new order in India and accept Indian standards. (79)

Explaining the motive behind this move, in April 1939 Nehru wrote: "It was not from the point of view of helping the Jews that I considered this question, though such help was desirable where possible without detriment to our country, but from the point of view of helping ourselves by getting first rate men for our science, industry, etc., on very moderate payment... Their coming here on low salaries would have helped us also to bring down other salaries. They would have come for a period and not to settle down for ever..." In short, there was nothing humanitarian about this move. However, because of the strong opposition from Bose this resolution was dropped by the CWC.

78. Ibid vol. xi p. 497.

79. Quoted in Nehru to Subhas Chandra Bose, d. 3.4.1939, Nehru Works, First series, vol. ix p. 537.

80. Ibid.

81. Ibid.
Given the magnitude of the human inferno the lapse was crucial as well as surprising. A general explanation could be that during the World War, the regular functioning of the INC was seriously hampered by the severe restrictions imposed by the British. There could, however, be four plausible explanations as to why the INC, which championed the cause of the oppressed people, adopted a milder, if not indifferent attitude to the holocaust. First, as the subsequent course of events demonstrated, the holocaust proved to be a catalyst for the realization of the Zionist political aspirations in Palestine. The INC leadership could have foreseen that any stronger move in that direction would lead to a reversal or modification of its policy on Palestine as it would be difficult to deplore holocaust without providing a viable alternative. Secondly, even though Subhas Chandra Bose had broken off from the mainstream of the nationalists, it would be difficult to conclude that his influence was eroding. Writing about the developments during 1938, Nehru remarked:

He [i.e., Bose who was then the Congress President] did not approve of any step being taken by the Congress which was anti-Japanese, or anti-German or anti-Italian. And yet such was the feeling in the Congress and the country that he did not oppose this or many other manifestations
of Congress sympathy with China and the victims of fascist and nazi aggression... (82)

Moreover, given Bose's proximity to and collaboration with Hitler, the INC could have avoided adopting stronger position vis-a-vis Germany. Thirdly the absence of a strong Jewish community prevented any intense Indian involvement in holocaust as against the Muslims who successfully lobbied for India's support for the Arabs of Palestine. And finally during those crucial years i.e., 1939-1946, the INC was headed by Maulana Abul Kalam Azad. He later on became Nehru's adviser on Arab affairs and given his sympathy for the Arabs it could be possible that under his influence the INC adopted a milder position on the holocaust.

COMMONALITIES:

Do India and Israel share any political ideas?

Every state is unique and yet one can always find something in common between two seemingly different states. However, by commonalities, we mean common attitude to international developments. In order to

82. Jawarhalal Nehru, The Discovery of India (New Delhi, 1985), 4th ed. p.422. At the same time Bose was able to prevent Nehru's moves to adopt a Congress resolution on the entry of Jewish refugees to India.

83. There was a report from Jewish quarters that in an article in Angriff an organ of Gobbles, Bose had observed: "...anti-semitism must become a part of the Indian freedom movement, since the Jews - he alleged - had helped British to exploit and oppress the Indians". Report of the Jewish Chronicle (London) reproduced in Jewish Advocate, 12, no. 3 November 1942, p.22.
documents viz., the June 1949 aid-memoire of the conversation between India's ambassador to the UN B.N.Rau, and his Israeli counterpart Abba Eban and the memorandum submitted by Walter Eytan to the Indian Foreign Office in March 1952. According to the former:

It is suggested that the government of India might be willing to reconsider its attitude to Israel in the light of the following considerations:

1. There is no conflict of interest between the two countries...

2. Israel, like India, seeks a conciliatory and unprejudiced position in the conflict between East and West...

3. India and Israel, almost alone amongst the new liberated States of Asia, lay emphasis on the economic and social factor in national liberation...

4. Both India and Israel are faced with difficult problems arising from exclusive and expansionist movements in the Moslem World...

5. If normal political relations can be envisaged, there are good prospects for free and fruitful inter-change in the scientific and cultural fields.

6. ...(on questions like) Italian colonies, the Franco regime in Spain, the treatment of Indians in South Africa, enquiry into the positions of aborigines in Latin America, the Israeli attitude coincided precisely with that of the Indian Delegation.

7. Israel has always attempted to understand the special interests and problems which have made it difficult for India to take an objective and detached view in the dispute between Israel and the Arab States...(84)

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84. Aide-memoire of Conversations (of Abba Eban) with B.N.Rau, d. 23.6.1949, ISA 71/14
In the official memorandum submitted to G.S. Bajpai, the secretary general of India's Ministry of External Affairs, Israel declared in 1952:

1. Israel desires to establish full diplomatic relations with India.

2. Israel is a parliamentary democracy - probably the only true democracy in the Middle East...

3. Israel's foreign policy is one of strict independence, identifying itself with that of no other country or bloc of countries...

4. In pursuit of this independence in foreign affairs, and because she has always felt to be an integral part of Asia, Israel was among the first countries to recognise the People's Republic of China (January 1950). She had maintained friendly relations with that republic ever since. No other country in the Middle East has recognised the People's Republic of China.

5. Israel is a vital, vigorous, hardworking, progressive society. She has carried out large-scale projects of social and economic reform...

6. It is one of Israel's primary aims to raise the productivity of her soil... Israel has no unemployment, thanks in part to Government's programme of public works.

7. ... During the first half of 1949, Israel was able to conclude armistice agreements with her four immediate neighbours - Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan and Syria. These agreements are still in force.

8. Israel has made strenuous efforts to bring about a settlement of outstanding issues between the Arab states and herself, but so far without success...

9. Twenty four countries are diplomatically represented in Israel today. These include U.S.A, U.S.S.R, Great Britain, almost all the countries of Europe (East and West) Turkey, leading Latin American states and others (85).

85. For the complete text of the memorandum d. 1.3.1952, see ISA 2554/12
In short, Israel was saying that both the countries had similar attitude towards a number of political issues and was pointing out that its policy on issues like non-alignment (or non-identification as Israel termed it), Asian solidarity, recognition of China, socialism and peaceful co-existence was closer to Nehru's views on these issues. The inclusion of Turkey was a reminder of Israel's acceptance by an Islamic country and thereby allaying the apprehensions of India over the reactions, perceived or potential, of the Islamic World.

Even though India made no difference to Israel in material terms, one could notice shades of Indian influence upon Israel's foreign policy. In elaborating this, it is necessary to quote at length from the letter written by Walter Eytan to Reuven Shiloah, the Head of Israel Delegation to the Lausanne Conference, on 11 August 1949. Explaining Israel's foreign policy, its director-general wrote:

In the course of a debate on foreign affairs in the Indian Parliament on March 8th of this year, Pandit Nehru made the following statement:

"We are friendly with all countries. We approach the whole world on a friendly basis, and there is no reason why we should put ourselves at a disadvantage by becoming unfriendly to any group. India has a vital role to play in world affairs. There is absolutely no reason why we should be asked to choose between this ideology and that. In the past, India spread her cultural doctrine to other countries, not by force of arms, but by the strength and vitality of her culture."
There is no reason why she should give up her own way of doing things simply because of some particular ideology emanating from Europe. By aligning with any particular group we lose the tremendous vantage ground we have of using the influence that we possess- and that influence is growing- for the sake of world peace. We do not seek dominion over any other country, and do not wish to interfere in any other country's affairs, domestic or other. Our main stake in world affairs is peace; to see that there is racial equality and that people who are subjugated are free. For the rest, we do not seek to interfere, and we do not desire other people to interfere in our affairs. If there is interference, political, military or economic, we shall resist it. The supreme question today is how can we avoid a world war. If there is a World War, it will mean such a catastrophe that for a generation or more the progress and advancement of humanity will be put at an end. This is a terrible thing to contemplate. Everything should be done to avoid that catastrophe. I feel that India can play a big part and may be an effective part in helping the avoidance of war. Therefore it becomes all the more necessary that India should not be lined up with one group of Powers or other, which for various reasons today are full of the fear of war and are preparing for it. This is the main approach of our foreign policy. It is possible that other countries who are also not happy at the prospect of war may support our attitude and back us in this match...

...In the passage I [i.e., Eytan] have just quoted you have only to substitute the name "Israel" for "India" and you have an excellent statement of the principles of Israel's foreign policy. I am convinced that with India thinking this way and Israel thinking on the same lines, there is a first-class chance at the forthcoming General Assembly to strike a truely sensational blow for world peace and that Israel can take a leading part in this...(86)

It is somewhat unusual and rare to quote the policy

86. Eytan to Shiloah, d.11.8.1949, ISA 2441/2
CONSULAR RELATIONS

Formal Israeli representation in India can be divided into two categories viz., the immigration office and the consular relations office. Even before the birth of Israel, India was functioning as a transit point for the emigration of Jewish refugees from Iraq, Afghanistan and Europe to Palestine. In order to ensure smooth operation of this, a separate immigration office was established in Bombay soon after India's recognition of Israel. The Jewish Agency had nominated Aryeh Gance as their representative in Bombay for immigration. After a few months he was appointed as the Director of the Palestine Office of the Jewish Agency. As a separate consulate was established in Bombay and as the urgency of the refugee emigration gradually eased, immigration became part of the

87. One could also notice India's influence in the initial Israeli neutral attitude on the Korean crisis as well as Israel's recognition of PRC. For example, see Abba Eban to Benegal Rau, d. 8.12.1950, ISA, 71/14B.

88. For example on the question of Afghan refugees stay in India see Nehru to Patel, d. 27.9.1947, Nehru Works Series II vol.IV p.639-40 From 1949 to 1960 about 5,000 Bene- Israel and Iraqi Jews had emigrated to Israel from India. Israel Year Book 1961 p.378

89. Cable to Government of India sent on 28.12.1950 ISA 2554/12
consular functions and separate representation became unnecessary.

Consular duties are generally confined to the protection of the interests of the nationals in the country of appointment and to look after matters relating to trade, shipping, notarial acts, registration of births, marriages and deaths of its nationals and the issuance of passports and visas. In short, it has only commercial and functional duties without any scope for diplomatic activities. To achieve this minimal representation in India, Israel had to invest a lot of energy, persuasion and diplomatic correspondence. Israel's formal measures in this direction began as early as May 1950 i.e., five months before India's recognition. Writing to India's high commissioner in London in May 1950, Israelis had informed the decision of the Israeli government to appoint F.W. Pollack as the "Trade Commissioner of South East Asia." It appears that there was some diplomatic misunderstanding and the matter did not proceed further. Assuming that India refused to be included in South East Asia, in November 1950, Pollack's designation was changed to "Trade Commissioner for Israel in South East Asia including

90. Kidron to V.K.Krishna Menon, d. 24.5.1950, Ibid.
India." As per the Israeli convention, this change was communicated through Krishna Menon. However, in the wake of the difficulties and delays in using the Indian emissary in London as the conduit, Israel decided to directly approach the Indian foreign office. Accordingly, its director sent a cable on 28 December 1950 informing the appointment of Pollack as the "Trade Commissioner for India and South East Asia." After protracted negotiation and correspondence, an official notification to this effect was issued on 1 March 1951.

Around this time another problem emerged. The economic division of Israeli foreign office was contemplating to terminate Pollack's appointment as Trade Commissioner. The meagre trade possibilities made his maintenance an unviable proposition. However to

91. "If we do not assume that the High Commissioner failed to inform his government, we would be compelled to presume that the Indian Government does not consider the term 'South East Asia' to include India in a way require the Indian Government to take cognizance..." Shimoni to Pollack, d. 6.11.1950, Ibid.

92. Kidron to V.K.Krishna Menon, d 27.11.1950, Ibid.

93. "... We have... abandoned the procedure of contacting the Indian Government through its London High Commissioner and have started calling directly to New Delhi." Shimoni to Pollack, d.15.1.1951, Ibid.

94. Ibid.

95. Leilamani Naidu to Pollack, d.8.3.1951, Ibid.

96. Shimoni to Pollack, d.4.3.1951, Ibid. However it was later decided to continue the arrangement as it was agreed upon after a prologed effort.
consolidate its foothold in India, Israel decided to concurrently appoint Pollack as its Consular Agent and a formal notification was sent on 3 June, 1951. Unlike in the past or because of the past experience, a cable to this effect was sent directly to Nehru in his capacity as the Minister of Foreign Affairs. This changed strategy proved fruitful when on June 8 the Ministry replied: "The President of India is pleased to recognize provisionally the appointment of Mr. F.W. Pollack as Consular Agent of Israel at Bombay" and a formal gazette notification was issued on the same day. Even though Consular Agent is a low-ranked office, Israel viewed it "simply as a functional and technical arrangement, at least till we [i.e., Israel] establish our legation in India." While persuading Pollack to formally submit the letter of nomination, Israel argued: "You [i.e., Pollack] are accredited to the Government of India and not to the Government of Bombay and the sphere of your jurisdiction I [i.e., Shimoni] assume, in contrast to that of most of the foreign consuls at Bombay - the whole of India, not Bombay only." A formal notification in the name of the

97. ISA 2554/12

98. Pollack was not happy with this arrangement and he stated: "It is not my intention to make officially use the title Consular agent which is much lower than that of a Trade Commissioner for South East Asia..." Pollack to Shimoni, d. 15.6.1951 and Shimoni's reply, d. 25.6.1951, Ibid.

99. Shimoni to Pollack, d. 29.7.1951, Ibid.
President Rajendra Prasad and signed by the Prime
Minister Nehru was issued on 28 September 1951.

However, a new problem had arisen when India wanted to know whether Pollack was "an honorary or
decarriere officer"(sic). Since he was not a regular
career diplomat, in January 1953, he was appointed as
the Honorary Consul for India. Simultaneously the
Consular Agency of Israel was raised to the status of
Consulate with effect from 1 January 1953 with Pollack
as the Honorary Consul. Within months, a regular
arrangement was made and Gabriel Doron took over as
Israel's first career diplomat on 1 June 1953. Since
then upto 1980 ten Consuls headed the Israeli legation
in India. However, there were certain lacunae in these
consular ties. One could not find any irrefutable
evidence on the territorial jurisdiction of the
Consulate. Israelis contended that they were
accredited to the Government of India while India
repeatedly underlined their residence in Bombay.
According to the Israelis who had served in Bombay
until the early 1970s, there were no restrictions on
their movements except in sensitive strategic areas on
the borders. They had easy access to India's Minister
of External Affairs and often met the indian prime

100. For a copy of the notification d. 28.9.1951, Ibid.
101. Note from Ministry of External Affairs to Pollack,
d. 31.8.1951, Ibid.
102. Bhansali to Pollack, d. 30.1.1953, Ibid.
ministers. From the mid-1970s their movements were restricted to the State of Maharashtra.

**DIPLOMATIC CONTACTS**

An important landmark in Indo-Israel relations was the official visit to India by the Director General of Israeli Foreign Ministry, Walter Eytan, in early 1952. Commenting on this visit, S. Gopal writes:

In March 1952 Nehru informed the Israeli Government that there was no major objection to the exchange of diplomatic representative, but it might be better to wait for the formation of a new Government after the election... (104)

Examination of Israeli documents provides a better and detailed picture. Towards the end of 1951, Israel became slightly troubled by the absence of formal ties even a year after India's recognition. There was a proposal within the foreign office to open a legation in New Delhi without insisting on 'reciprocity'. Foreign Minister Moshe Sharett was very unenthusiastic about such an idea and was suggesting the accreditation of the Indian ambassador in Turkey concurrently as "Minister to Tel Aviv". Yet Israel was not definite about India's attitude towards such a proposal. In

103. Personal interview with Reuven Dafni and Mrs. Caspi

104. S. Gopal, Jawaharlal Nehru: A Biography vol.II (New Delhi 1976), vol.II p.170

105. Shimoni to Pollack, d. 16.12.1951, ISA 2554/12
order to clarify things at 'the highest possible levels' the Ministry decided to depute its Director General to India. Even on this, there was some scepticism as to how Nehru would receive and respond to this idea. Accordingly, ambassador Benegal Rau was approached and he in turn conveyed it to New Delhi and got the concurrence of the latter with late February 1952 as the suitable time. Then things began to move swiftly and Israel made a formal request with Ben-Gurion, who was also the acting Foreign Minister, writing to Nehru. In a quick reply Nehru formally extended an invitation to Eytan. Accordingly, Eytan reached New Delhi on 28 February and spent one full week before leaving for home on 7 March. A close look at his 13 page New Delhi Diary clearly indicated that the exchange of diplomats was a foregone conclusion.

During his stay he had met diplomats, public figures and others culminating in a lunch with Prime

106. Ibid.
107. Shimoni to Pollack, d. 23.12.1951, Ibid.
108. Unless otherwise stated the entire account of the activities of Eytan was based on his New Delhi Diary, ISA 2383/21
Minister Nehru on 5 March 1952. According to Eytan, in a frank discussion, Nehru had argued that all the difficulties pertaining to personnel and finance or problems of Arab reaction did not matter. But

... that what had held the thing up in the past was his consideration for India's Muslems. We [i.e., Israel] must realise, he said, that the Indian Muslems had suffered a great shock by partition; they were now a minority whose leaders had all abandoned them for big jobs in Pakistan; and though individual Muslems occupied leading positions in India, the Muslem community as a whole was depressed and fearful of the future though less so than two or three years ago. The Indian government had always shown understanding for their delicate position and had not wanted to heap shock on to shock if it were not absolutely necessary. This was what had delayed diplomatic relations with Israel in the past, but it was clear that the positions would now have to be reconsidered...(sic)

Hence it was suggested that as soon as the newly elected government assumed office the issue would be put before the Cabinet and a positive decision could be available in about two months' time. As far as the Ministry was concerned, with the possible exception of R.K.Nehru, the Indian bureaucracy seemed to have favoured and endorsed diplomatic relations with Israel. There were even some discussions on the level of diplomatic representation but Nehru was categorical.

109. He met, inter alia, President Rajindra Prasad, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, Secretary General G.S. Bajpai, Foreign Secretary K.P.S. Menon (Sr.) Common Wealth Secretary R.K. Nehru, Mrs. Vijayalaksmi Pandit, Minister of Rehabilitation Agru Prasad Jain, Secretary of Food and Agriculture Ministry Damla, Secretary of Indian Council of World Affairs Appadorai etc., In short he met all those who mattered in the Indian capital.
that the opening of legations should be reciprocal. Moreover, Under-Secretary Avatar Singh was asked to prepare the budget and other financial details for a resident mission in Tel Aviv. Taking all these into consideration, there seemed to some element of justification in the Israeli feeling that India's decision, though pragmatic from its own perspective, was indeed a breach of faith.

In the absence of a formal diplomatic mission in New Delhi, Israel was establishing and cultivating diplomatic contacts with India in a number of countries. What could have been the possible intention? In the first place, these contacts were part of the normal diplomatic courtesy. Posted away from their native country, it would be natural that Indians and Israelis tried to be friendly and cordial towards one another. In the earlier days, Israel had enjoyed a sense of admiration among the Indian elite and it is logical that a number of Indian diplomats were favourably disposed towards Israel. Some of the Indians who were in close contact with the Zionists in the pre-1947 years had become India's ambassadors abroad and hence

110. Accordingly Eytan had sent a detailed reply indicating that it would be advisable to buy rather than rent a house in Israel. Eytan to Avtar Singh, d. 20.3.1952, ISA 2554/12
their contacts got strengthened. As the discussions between Rau and Eban and Jha and Sasson portrayed, there was a genuine feeling of common interests which brought them closer. Indian missions at times served as the useful conduit for the Israelis to convey various messages, proposals and offers to the government of India.

In some cases, diplomatic contacts established with the Indians abroad proved helpful when the diplomat in question was posted back in India as happened in the case of C.S.Jha or posted elsewhere as happened in the case of K.M. Panikkar. Diplomatic contacts were also used to find a direct access to Indian leaders like the Prime Minister and in a rare and hitherto unknown meeting, an Israeli diplomat had a personal meeting with Maulana Abul Kalam Azad. In June 1951, at the initiative of C.S.Jha, Eliahu Sasson

111. Panikkar's relations with the Zionists could be traced back to 1937. Panikkar to Elath, July 1937, CZA S25/10228. Similarly C.S. Jha had personal acquaintance with Abba Eban and others during the Lake Success conference. Sasson to Divon, d. 14.11.1950, ISA 2413/28

112. Indian High Commission in London, for example was used as conduit for the Israeli Trade Commissioner proposal.

113. "To the extent that politics depend on personal connections, Mr. Jha's occupation of a responsible post in New Delhi is bound to have a beneficial influence on Indo-Israeli relations" Meroz to MAAR, d.20.4.1954, ISA 2413/29
(Sr) had a lengthy audience with India's Education Minister when the latter visited Ankara. In the case of K.P.S. Menon (Sr), personal relations were used to explore and as a follow-up means to push forward diplomatic relations. Indian diplomats also proved to be an important source of information for Israel regarding Arab countries and inter-Arab rivalry. One such lengthy rendezvous took place at the residence of Cap. Liddell-Hart in September 1953 between Elath, Israeli ambassador in London and Panikkar, India's ambassador in Cairo. Similarly Jha briefed his Israeli colleague of the activities and discussions surrounding the Arab League chief Azzam Pasha's visit to Ankara in June 1951.

These broader motives indicate the extent of the formal and known diplomatic contacts between the two

114. E. Sasson to S. Divon, d. 1.7.1951, Ibid.

115. "I am very sorry that the exchange of Missions between India and Israel has not yet taken place...I shall do all I can from this end, as I am really keen that we should establish a Mission in Israel without further delay" Menon to Eytan, d. 23.10.1952, ISA 2554/12.

116. There is a 12 page report on this day-long meeting in the Israeli Archives. On the nature of the meeting Elath wrote: "I had heard from several mutual friends that he [i.e., Panikkar] had been asking after me and looking for a chance of meeting me again privately, since his official position as Indian Ambassador to Egypt and some other Arab countries... now makes it impossible for him to meet me in public". Elath to Eytan, d. 8.9.1953, ISA 2413/29.

117. Sasson to Divon, d. 22.6.1951, ISA 2413/29
countries. Contacts existed between Abba Eban and B.N. Rau in New York, Eliahu Elath and Vijayalakshmi Pandit in Washington and London and Eliahu Sasson (Sr) and C.S.Jha in Ankara. Besides Elath and Panikkar, and Eytan and Menon had longstanding personal contacts which continued for long even though they were not posted in the same capital. India's delegates to the UN like Shiva Rao, Mrs. Kitty Shiva Rao, Amiya Chakraborty and Sucheta Kripalani had a wide range of contacts with and admiration for Israel. It is highly probable that there were a number of such contacts all over the world with Washington, New York, London and Ankara playing the vital role.

Besides these, there were a number of bilateral visits a comprehensive list of which would be difficult to compile. In March 1953, four senior State governments' officials from India -- A. Goswami of West Bengal, G.Khader Beg of Kashmir, S. Prasad of Bihar and C.A. Jamakhanai of Bombay -- were sent to Israel by India "to study Israeli cooperative system of agriculture and marketing". The most crucial official visit was that of Homi Bhabha, the chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission at the invitation of his Israeli counterpart in early 1960s. There were a few

118. Six years later another 6-member Indian delegation went to Israel to study the working of the cooperatives. Debates LS:II 43 21.4.1960, 12917-20

119. Personal Diaries of Yaacov Shimoni
visits which did not materialise; for example, on his transfer to India from Moscow Menon was contemplating a stop-over in Israel in 1954. In 1960 Raj Kumari Amrit Kaur, who was a former Cabinet colleague of Nehru, visited Israel and as a sequel to this, Ben-Gurion had extended a formal but futile invitation to Nehru. Similarly a number of Israeli leaders had visited India over a period of time. Until the mid-1970s when obtaining Indian visas was made difficult for the Israelis, a number of Israeli scientists had come to India to participate in various international meets. These were often used as a meeting point for Indian and Israeli scientists.

The Histadrut had sponsored a number of visits to India, often at the invitation of the INTUC, an affiliate of the ruling Congress party. Israeli scientists had come to India as part of the various UN aid programmes. At the political level, a number of official or semi-official visits had taken place; among the notable visitors were Waltar Eytan (1952),

120. Menon to Eytan, d. 14.9.1954, ISA 2413/29
121. Ben-Gurion to Nehru, d.28.7.1960, reproduced in Aynor, n.9, p.44.
122. For example at the dinner hosted by the Israeli Consul in January 1974, in the honour of the four member Israeli delegation, among others Prof M.G.K. Menon was present. News from Israel (Bombay), vol.21 no.3, 1 February 1974, p.7.
123. For example Ibid. 1 October, 1972 p.12.
Moshe Sharett (1956), Yigol Allon (1959 and 1964), Mordekhai Bentov (1959), Mrs. Dayan (1968) and Moshe Dayan (1977/78). Besides these Israeli leaders, contacts existed between Indians and the leaders of the international Jewry and notable among them were the US Congressman Emanuel Cellar and the president of the World Zionist Organization Nahaum Goldmann.

In spite of the diversity and magnitude of these diplomatic contacts, Israel could not make any progress towards normalization. There was even a proposal to shift the consulate to New Delhi. Such a move appeared logical in the wake of the decision taken by India in August 1953 regarding diplomatic representation. According to it,

The Government of India have...decided that, with effect from the 15th September, 1953, officers stationed elsewhere than at the headquarters of the Government of India will not be deemed to be members of a Diplomatic Mission, and will no longer be included in the Diplomatic List.(126)

And yet such a transfer had its drawbacks. Speaking on diplomatic relations in September 1946, Nehru had highlighted the reciprocal nature of relations and declared clearly;

124. He played an active role in India's recognition of Israel.

125. For minutes of his June 1957 meeting with Nehru in New Delhi, see CZA Z6/2344.

Yes. If we send an Ambassador to Washington or Nanking, they may also send an Ambassador to New Delhi. The Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs has informally indicated to the Government of India that the Australian Government will be happy to raise the status of the Australian High Commissioner here to that of Minister. Naturally it means that our representative in Australia will also become a Minister. (127)

It was natural that Israel also insisted on reciprocity. This probably explains the Israeli suggestion to accredit the Indian ambassador in Turkey concurrently to Israel. That would have enabled Israel to have a consulate in New Delhi endowed with full diplomatic status. Moreover, it was perceived in some circles of Israel that a Consulate in New Delhi would attract undue attention of being a lower representation for Israel when the Arabs had fullfledged embassies in New Delhi. However, by the time Israel was willing to accept a Consulate in New Delhi without any reciprocal arrangement, India's position had hardened and it refused to contemplate any changes in the existing arrangements.

Looking from the Israeli angle, its diplomatic initiatives proved successful only in five major areas and India did not come under any of these categories.


128. Personal interview in Yaacov Shimoni in Jerusalem.

129. Exact date, however, is not available. Probably it could be around late 1950s or early 1960s. Yet it was frequently raised during the tenure of Sastri, Mrs.Gandhi and Desai.
Countries which had a sizeable Christian population and hence a better understanding of the Jeudo-Christian heritage, were quick to recognize Israel and establish normal ties. Countries from Europe and Latin America come under this category. Secondly, countries with sizeable Jewish population and hence Jewish influence, did recognize Israel rather early and the US and the Eastern Europe could be cited as examples. Third category comprises of countries, which had developed a somewhat a hostile or unfriendly attitude towards the Arabs, like Iran and Turkey. Countries like Turkey also needed the support of Israel and thereby the Jewish lobby in the US to enhance its image and to obtain favourable treatment from the US. And finally Israel's technical assistance programme proved to be helpful for the newly independent African countries who were either apprehensive of the Western assistance or which did not receive adequate attention from the West. And India came under none of these categories. On the other hand, its position was far better than a number of other states and hence the need for Israeli help was meagre or non-existent. And to complicate the matter for Israel, India's sizeable Muslim population brought India closer to the Arab perception of the problem.

130. For a detailed study see Amikam Nachmani, Israel, Turkey and Greece: Uneasy Relations in the East Mediterranean (London, 1987), especially pp. 50-5