

INDIA ISRAEL RELATIONS FROM 1948 TO 1992

India was not the only country to warm towards Israel. Russia, China and Turkey also capitalised on the changed circumstances to establish full diplomatic relations with Israel. Other Asian states, such as Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam renewed their diplomatic ties with Jerusalem in that period. India did not want to lag behind China, which had been gradually improving its relations with Israel since the 1980s. The upgrading of relations was, therefore, part of a larger global post-Cold War phenomenon of the urge to normalize relations with a growingly important international actor which possessed advanced technologies and excellent relations with Washington. Israel took the opportunity to improve relations with countries once in the Soviet Orbit (Eastern Europe and Central Asia) and many others, previously reluctant to have full-fledged relations with Jerusalem.

Foreign policy of a country is the offspring of domestic policy. The domestic and foreign policy cannot be completely compartmentalized. They are closely related, in fact, they need an integrated approach. So, national interest becomes the guiding principle in foreign policy. India's foreign policy makers are fully aware of its national interest as the guiding principle. Nehru, who is the architect of India's foreign policy, once said, "the art of conducting the foreign affairs of a country lies in findings out what is most advantageous to the country". This is India's principle in its foreign policy, including in its policy towards West Asia. So, India cannot adopt an isolated foreign policy towards Israel. There are ample facts and evidences that its Israeli policy is conditioned by its policy towards the Arab states and the latter's policy towards the Jewish state. This pattern of India's policy towards Israel is due to certain difficulties which it faces in its national interest. So, Indo-Israel relations have to be looked within this broad parameter of Arab-Israeli relations and changes taking place therein, and how India has responded to these changes.

India and Arab Israel Wars

India had vehemently opposed the partition of Palestine, however, accorded the recognition to the state of Israel, later, in September 1950. But with the recognition of Israel, India did not exchange the diplomatic representative between the two states. Israel was, though, later on permitted to open a consulate in Bombay (Now Mumbai).

Nehru the then Prime Minister of India explained his decision of extending recognition to Israel: ¹

“It is not a matter of high principle but is based on how it could best serve and be helpful in that area. We should like the problem between Israel and the Arab countries to be settled peacefully. After careful thought, we felt that recognizing Israel as an entity will need not at this stage exchange diplomatic personnel, and we think it is the correct decision.”

Moreover, India by giving recognition to Israel showed its respect to the decision making body of the United Nations.

India was looking at the conflict between Arabs and Israelis from ideological and principled perspective. So, it was quite obvious that India could not go along with Israelis². Before the termination of the British mandate over Palestine, Zionist forces moved to occupy the cities and areas in territories allotted for the Palestinian state. By 14 May, 1948 over half of the Palestinian population was forced into exodus, as over two thirds of the Palestinian land became occupied by the Zionist. Ben Gurion admitted before the Mandate ended that, “No Jewish settlement, however remote, was entered or seized by the Arabs, while the Haganah---- captured many Arabs positions. So, on the day do destiny that part of Palestine, where the Haganah could operate was almost clear of Arabs.”

On the eve of 15 May, 1948, while Britain had completed the withdrawal of administration and the army, David Ben Gurion proclaimed the creation of Israel. At this point the Arab league sent a telegram to the U.N. The telegram stated that as a consequence of Zionist aggression, the Arab states, “were compelled to intervene for the sole purpose of restoring peace and security and of establishing law and order in Palestine”, to prevent as well, “the spread of disorder and lawlessness into the neighbouring Arab lands, and to fill the vacuum created by the termination of the Mandate”. ³

However, the intention of Ben Gurion and his terrorist companions were quite different under the garb of filling up the vacuum on account of British withdrawal, they unleashed unprecedented act of terror. The annals of Zionist history are full of

leaders outdoing other leaders in insisting on the importance of military power and the role of force and terror in the building and safeguarding of the Zionist state. Joseph Trumpeldor, Viladimir Jabatinsky, Ben Gurion and all the Israeli generals asserted that the violence and terror are the backbone of the plan to enforce the Zionist programme. This was necessarily so because the Zionists have, simply invaded a country, evicted the majority of the population, followed this up with further use of force and terrorism. ⁴

“I would suggest to you to come round in time to the “Greater Palestine” programmed before it is too late. The Basel programme must contain the words “Greater Palestine” or Palestine and its neighbouring land otherwise it is nonsense. You do not get the 10 million Jews into a land of 25000 square kilometres”⁵ were the words David Trietch sent to Theodore Herzl on 29 October, 1899, express with perfect clarity the inner logic of Zionist policies. ⁶

“Deir Yassin, massacre has clearly exposed the Zionist policies and also put before the world a shocking example of what the movement stood for. Deir Yassin, an Arab village of the main road to Jerusalem and surrounded by Jewish land had taken no part in the war ... on 9 April terrorist bands (Irgun, Lehi, Hagana) attacked this peaceful village and killed most of its inhabitants. “It is imperative that the truth about Mr. Begins and his movement be made known in this country---- The undersigned therefore, take this means of publicly presenting a few salient facts concerning Begin, and of urging all concerned not to support this latest manifestation of fascism”.

Begin, Shamir and Sharon were nothing but a triumvirate of war criminals. Even Ben Gurion described Begin as “a thoroughly Hitlerite type”. ⁷

“On May 1948, the Israeli state was duly proclaimed and Begin came out of the underground to make his first radio speech. He said, “The Hebrew revolt of 1947-48 has been blessed with success. O God of Israel, keep the soldiers and bless their swords, which give a new birth to the covenant, though, than had sealed with the beloved people and their chosen land forward to the ground! forwarded to Victory! The terrorist had triumphed”.⁸

In what the Zionist claim to be a “War of Independence”, five Arab armies, i.e. Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and Iraq crossed the border of Palestine on 15 May, 1948. Though the Arab armies were less equipped, in the face of a decisive Israel military superiority and despite the fact that its unified command was held by British military personnel, whose final target was to secure the new-born Israel state, the Arab Armies made limited military successes, while the Egyptian army had reached an advanced line near Tel Aviv, the Jordan and Iraqi armies controlled wide areas including Lydda and Ramallah. As its military position was deteriorating, Israel turned to the U.N. for intervention, charging that the Arab had started the war. On 22 May, 1948, the Security Council convened to discuss the situation and adopted, after a resolution calling upon, “all governments and authorities, without prejudice to the rights, claim or positions of the parties concerned, to abstain from any hostile military action in Palestine, and to that end to issue a ceasefire in order to their military and paramilitary forces”. The tragedy became imminent when the U.N. through its Secretary General, Trygve Lie, upheld Israelis accusation against the Arabs for starting an aggression. Supported by the members of Security Council, the Security General threatened the Arab State and warned of action, including sanctions.

This endorsement by the world body opened a history of injustice against the Palestinians as U.N. had remained silent in the face of Zionist aggression and occupation offering a deaf ear to their complaints ignoring its own resolutions and Charter⁹ The war, which ended in favour of Israel brought more Arab territories which were allotted to the Palestinians by the U. N. under the occupation of Israel. It resulted in the forced migration of thousands of Palestinian Arabs to the border of neighbouring Arab States. After this war, Israel was again provided benefits by the U.N. when her application for the membership of the U.N. was approved in May, 1949 by the U.N. Israel’s admission to the U.N. was granted almost after one year of its creation. India voted against Israel’s admission stating that “India could not recognize Israel which has been achieved through the force of arms and not through negotiations.¹⁰ India is linked with Arab states by historical, political and economic accords. Arab solidarity with India in her campaign against imperialism and colonialism made India’s foreign policy tinged with an Arab blend. In this kind of circumstances, it was quite obvious that Arab would like India to be along with them.

Arab influence on India in later years loomed larger and made the latter appear to be more Pro-Arab and anti-Zionist.

Taking recognition as a welcome gesture, the Israeli government made a move for establishing normal diplomatic relations. Dr. Walter Eytan director general of the Israeli foreign ministry paid an official visit to India in March 1952. According to him, it seemed that the Indian Prime Minister had approved the idea of establishing diplomatic ties with Israel. Yet, formal decision had to be taken later, after the general election. The following year when the Egyptian met Nehru in Berne, the government of India had already jibbed what was accomplished with the permission of Indian government to establish an Israeli Consul general in Bombay which is termed as "*India's Diplomatic Siberia*".¹¹

Nehru was the main architect of India's foreign policy. He took a great caution in dealing with Israel and later refused to normalize relations with Israel.¹² The Jana Sangh, Swatantra party and the Praja Socialist were against the government policy. The Jana Sangha argued that India should adopt more pragmatic foreign policy, because foreign policy, according to them, was policy and not an immutable principle. They said that Israel was the only democratic country in West Asia and it was, therefore, imperative that India must have full diplomatic relations with Israel.¹³

The Sangha thinking was oblivious of the fact that the so called democratic state of Israel was established at the expenses of the majority of the Palestinians, an act quite contrary to the basic principles of democracy. The main reason for the non-development of normal relations with Israel was due to the earlier principled stands so valiantly taken up by the Indian leadership of the Indian Liberation Movement. The Congress Party after independence dominated the Indian political system and its foreign policy. Its overwhelming majority in the parliament enabled it to overrule agendas set by Jan Sangh to benefit Israel at the expense of Palestinian. So, the non-establishment of diplomatic relations with Israel could be ascribed to the continuation of the policy persuade by the congress in the preceding years. In the early years of the independence, Indian economic position was not sound. India was launching her first plan and could not afford to lose her Arab friends, which were of vital importance for her basic economic needs. Pragmatically, trade relations between India and Arab States were more significant and bigger in volume than Israel. They still are.

Moreover, remittances which India gets from Indian Community working in these Arab countries are exceptionally high. On the other hand, Indo-Israeli trade was limited and had lessor scope for expansion. The commodity pattern also made Arab countries advantageous for India. India imported from Arab states items like oil, cotton, phosphate, and so on, which have less substitutes, unlike, Israeli diamond and citrus fruits and its products.¹⁴ Moreover, since 1973, Indo-Arab trade relations became increasingly important. The question of India's relations with the region was and is closely linked with the oil economy. On the other side, India's consultancy if applied sufficiently could help Gulf countries in technology.¹⁵ India's West Asian policy had to be directed to counter Pakistani propaganda. This is necessary because of two main reasons: - to win the Arabs to her side especially at the U.N. and to look into the popular sentiments of the liberal minded overwhelming population in India. India's non-establishment of normal relations with Israel also had something to do with Pakistani factor, to give no chance to Pakistan's propaganda against India among the Islamic nations.¹⁶

The Indian West Asian policy was greatly influenced by her relation with the Arabs and the Arabs Nationalist Movement. The Egyptian revolution in 1952 created a new dimension in Indo-Arab relations, which had a chain reaction to her attitude towards Israel. After the revolution (1952) Nasser's Egypt assumed the leadership of the Arabs more than ever before. Egypt, which had taken an uncompromising attitude against any form of imperialism and colonialism, represented a form of Non-Alignment. The very structure of her policy, which is governed by revolutionary idea made her not to align herself with any other bloc. This ideological commitment made Egypt support all countries committed to the same objectives.¹⁷

Egyptian government's opposition to imperialism, qualified by non-alignment, found a place with Indian foreign policy makers. India's and Egypt's consistent opposition to all forms of imperialism's intrigues and manoeuvres led to their attacks on the Baghdad pact. This common policy brought India and Egypt closer. This friendship was further cemented during the Belgrade Summit of non-aligned countries.¹⁸

India's relation with Egypt had a major role in her policy towards Israel. Since India's relations with Egypt were very cordial, it would have been almost impossible

to move closer towards Israel, which was seen as the outpost of the West and the belligerent state by Egypt. So, India did not take steps towards the normalization of her relations with Israel.¹⁹ India was very much against the colonialism and imperialism. After adopting the socialist pattern of society, it strengthened her friendship with the former Soviet Union. Nehru visited Moscow in 1955, which became able to get the Soviet Union's support in many ways.²⁰ Since 1953, India had continuously rejected Israel's proposal for developing diplomatic relations. Regarding the clashes, which took place between Arabs and Israelis since the creation of Israel, India came more open and vocal in expressing her condemnation of Israel. Her attitude towards these conflicts (1948, 1956) has been influenced by her national interest. India condemned Israeli alliance with imperial powers because of the large scale aggression. One more thing India found contradictory with Israel was the creation of Israel on religious basis, which was totally against the secular ideology of India.²¹

The year 1956 was a landmark in the history of West Asia. It marked the emergence of a new regional order. This was precipitated by the Suez Crisis. On 26 July 1956, Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal Company in response to the withdrawal of Aswan Dam loans by contributing powers, which was done in reaction to the Czech arms deal of May 1955 and thus disturbed the regional status quo.²²

A conference was convened in London where Nehru assured Nasser that the purpose of India in attending the conference was not to weaken Egypt's position, but to prevent any unilateral actions to be taken at the conference. In the conference India ardently prevented the western move to aggrandize their economic interest and upheld Egyptian right to nationalize the Canal.²³ In spite of a number of diplomatic efforts to solve the problems, Israel, in collaboration Britain and France, launched a sudden and pre-mediated attack on Egypt on 29 October, 1956²⁴, India did not expect such a sudden attack and expressed her hope that the United Nations would be able to take steps to prevent extension of hostilities. Nehru publicly condemned Israeli actions and branded it as a case of clear naked aggression.²⁵ He even asked the former Yugoslavia and the Bandung countries to join him in public condemnation of the aggressor.²⁶ India held that Israel had no right to invade the Suez. By invading Egypt and also by joining hands with the imperial forces, Israel lost the sympathy of Afro-Asian nations including India. On the question of Egypt's denial of passage through the Suez to Israel, India had the opinion that it would be quite natural and obvious that an Arab

country, which was at war with Israel, would show lethargy to the latter's flag passing the Canal. But this could be solved through peaceful means.²⁷

Nehru declared in the Lok Sabha on 16th of November, 1956 when he spoke at length regarding the attack on Egypt that the aggression had come as a shock, it was a scandalous case of aggression by two strong powers against weaker country.²⁸ India played a very constructive role in the crisis through the Afro-Asian meeting and in U.N. India was a co-sponsor of the 19-nations, Asian-African resolution on the question of the withdrawal of the Israeli Anglo-French forces from the Egyptian soil.²⁹ Even opposition parties had joined the government in condemning the aggressor. It was seen as a new phase of colonialism and imperialism. Various political parties urged the government to cut all liason with Britain and denounced India's membership of the common wealth.³⁰ India's approach to the Suez Crisis was an outcome of her national interest and her desire to solve the problem in a peaceful manner. As India was one of the principle user of the Canal, her economic activity affected due to its closure, Egypt and India held the British responsible for the Crisis.³¹ Throughout the crisis India was busy coordinating the major event with other non-aligned nations. In the initial period India was mostly acting alone, but once the tripartite attacks were launched on Egypt, India supported Egypt fully and unequivocally condemned the aggressors.³²

India also showed strong reactions against Israel in June war of 1967, Indian government blamed Israel for escalating the situation into an armed conflict. Referring to the Indian soldiers in the U.N. emergency force who were killed by Israeli forces. Indira Gandhi condemned the killing as deliberate, unprovoked. The India government as always, took a very Pro-Arab stand and even went to the extent of sponsoring the UAR draft.³³ The war also crystallized India's West Asian Policy into supporting the Palestinian cause. She identified herself closer with the Palestinians and openly supported them in their struggle against the Israeli government.³⁴

India being a non-aligned country was reluctant towards the hostile policy of Israel and condemned the American policy towards the Arabs. Due to Israeli aggression of 1967 against the Arabs, India decided to break off relations even at the consulate level with Israel as an immediate measure and she extended moral support to the deprived Arabs who were the victims of Israeli aggression.³⁵ The Indian

government in conformity with its Pro-Arab policy condemned the Israeli aggression. Looking at the crisis from a global perspective, the then Prime Minister of India, Mrs. Indira Gandhi observed in the Lok Sabha on 6 June, 1967.³⁶

“The world today witnesses a disaster in the West Asia and the situation becomes grave by the hour. If not stopped, this war is likely to expand into a wider one drawing into its vortex other countries and developing perhaps into a world war, it is our solemn duty as a government to help in restoration of peace in the present perilous situation”. Expressing the same concern for West Asia, she said in the Rajya Sabha on the next day, i.e. 7 of June, 1967, “The world is in grave peril. Our own national interests are bound up with peace and stability in West Asia”.³⁷ In the U.N. India stressed the need for lasting peace and wanted Israel to withdraw its armed forces to the position held before the commencement of the hostilities. Speaking in the emergency session of the U.N. general Assembly on 21 June, 1967 Mr. Chagla remarked, “the foundation of the lasting peace in this region can be based only on a total, immediate and unconditional withdraw of Israel from the areas now under its occupation.”³⁸ He also argued that the dispute cannot be settled through the armed conflict.³⁹

Mrs. Indira Gandhi, while addressing the General Assembly on 14 October, 1967, also stressed the need for solving the problem by “political means” based on the principle of security, sovereignty and territorial integrity of all the states in the areas.⁴⁰ In December 1967, Mr. D. P. Dhar, a member of the Indian delegation to the U.N. special committee reiterated the Indian position, which recognized the Palestinians as a people and not merely as refugees. It was also emphasized that the lasting solutions of the many problems existing could be worked out only when the key issue of the refugee problem was dealt with and steps were taken to ensure the just rights of the Arab people of Palestine on the basis of paragraph-II of resolution 194 (III).⁴¹

During the Arab Israeli conflicts through 1967-69 India took side with the Arab and denounced, Israel for attacks on Beirut international airport in December, 1969. India was also unhappy with Israel over her occupation of Al-Aqsa mosque in eastern Jerusalem. At U.N., India urged for the immediate implementation of the Security Council resolution on Jerusalem.⁴²

India's stand on June war was not shared by all political parties and public at large. India-Israel relation, though had touched a very low ebb, was viewed by them in the context of Arab's stands vis-à-vis India crisis in the preceding years. Opposition leaders from Jan Sangh, the Swatantra party, the Praja Socialist Party and the Somyukta Socialist Party criticized the government stand. They advocated that by supporting the Arab unreservedly India unnecessary would encourage the Arabs to adopt more hostile attitudes towards Israel, which could create more tension in the region.⁴³ They also pointed out that India was going out of her way and should stop acting like the fourteenth Arab state. And some people did not endorse government policy of supporting the Arabs blindly.⁴⁴ opposition members (Excluding the Communists) who did not share governments view on the issue were conditioned by Arab stand on India's crisis in 1961, 1962 and 1965. When the Indian army took over Goa in December, 1961 Israeli Press accused India maintaining a double standard.⁴⁵ On the contrary, Egypt closed Suez Canal and did not allow Portuguese arms and ammunitions to flow towards India. A shining example of Indo-Arab fraternity, non-aligned principles and third world solidarity in contrast to Israel's leaning toward West.

This unfriendly tone of the Israeli press, however, changed in 1962, when China invaded India, India sought military assistance from all over the world. The Israeli response was favourable.⁴⁶ Israelis less concerned with India's predicament have always tried to sell arms to friends and foes alike presently China is also on the buyers list.

The U.S. support to India also helped in that context. So, after 1962 Chinese aggression, a powerful lobby was active in India, which canvassed, for various reasons, in favour of immediate establishment of diplomatic relation with Israel. It is also argued that India should adopt Pro-American policy which would bring India and Israel together,⁴⁷ and that was imprudent on the part of India to thrust all weight behind the Arab because when she got only lukewarm attitudes from the Arabs in 1962 and 1965.⁴⁸ Opposition members-Jan Sangh, The Swatantra Party, Praja Socialist, Somyukta Socialist Party were admonished by India's indifference towards Israel. It was argued that while some countries like U.S.A., U.K., Yugoslavia, Kenya and so on maintained good relation with both Arabs and Israel, why could India also not do the same? It was said that leadership in India should not succumb to Arab

pressure in a bid to appease them. They also argued that majority of the Arabs were with Pakistan and even UAR remained partially neutral. When UAR could remain friendly with Pakistan, India, China, why could India not be friendly with both Israel and UAR. Jan Sangh even asked whether India's Policy was to be conducted in her interests or in Arab interest. They viewed Israel as a force in the region and as the symbol of stability.⁴⁹ While they think so they conveniently forget that Israel is the greatest destabilizing factor in the region.

In 1973, war broke out again in West Asia. During the war, India supported the Arabs as she felt that their action could not be termed as aggression as Israel had provoked the war by not adopting a more flexible attitude in negotiating a proper settlement. It declared that "the cause of tension in the area is Israel aggression and the refusal to vacate the territories occupied by armed forces". Declaring India's sympathies with the Arabs, it further said that Arab cause based on justice and demanded immediate implementation by Israel of United Nations Resolution 242 (1967) for peaceful solution of the problems.⁵⁰

On 6 December, 1973, the then India Foreign Minister Swaran Singh stated that, "Our sympathies for the Arabs are for two reasons. First, they are our centuries old friends and Second, their territories have been occupied following the Israeli aggression"⁵¹. Mrs. Indira Gandhi also gave two reasons for India's sympathy towards Arabs. First, India old and solid relations with Arab required India to "Stand by its friends in the time of their travel" and the Second, Israel's refusal to Arab lands occupied in the 1967 war and its refusal to honour U.N. resolutions.⁵²

India's policy towards the Arab-Israel conflict was based on the principled opposition to the acquisition of land by force and it wanted Israel to withdraw to pre-June 1967 frontiers so that progress would be made to resolve the crisis during the Israeli attack the Ministry of External Affairs in its statement condemned Israel and held the view that the intransigence on the part of Israel was the basic cause leading to the outbreak of hostilities.⁵³

After 1973 Mr. Arafat was called by the U.N. General Assembly to address the world body on 13 November, 1974. Arafat in his historic address stressed the PLO's willingness and priority for a peaceful solution to the issue. He further stated as, "Today I have come bearing on Olive branch and a freedom fighter's gun. Do not

let the olive branch fall from my hand.⁵⁴ Responding to Mr. Arafat's address the then Indian Foreign Secretary, Mr. Kewal Singh made a statement at the U.N. General Assembly on 19 November, 1974, in which he endorsed the views expressed by Arafat at the U.N. India introduced a draft resolution on 21 November, 1974 in favour of the Palestinian people to self-determination . It also stood for the Palestinian national independence and sovereignty.⁵⁵

Israel after signing the Camp David accord and its subsequent peace treaty with Egypt turned towards Lebanon. In their bid to crush the PLO, Israeli moves were an attempt to bait the Palestinians into provoking a confrontation in southern Lebanon, the Israeli provocation may be an effort to justify an attack that Israel otherwise could not afford to make because of unprecedented international pressure.⁵⁶ The atrocities committed by the Israeli military during the Lebanese Crisis were very horrific and condemn.

South block expressed her shock over the Israeli aggression on Lebanon. She condemned Israel's infamous history of misdeeds⁵⁷ stressed the recognition of the rights of the Palestinians for establishing durable peace in the region. India also puts efforts to solve the problems, though her efforts had Arab tinge.⁵⁸ In India the Israeli consul. Yosef Hassen, Commented on India's official stand on the crisis, which is highly objectionable. In a newspaper interview, he bluntly said that Indian politicians were afraid of the Arabs and thereby succumbed to their pressure. This was seen by the government of India as an unacceptable interference in the domestic affairs of India and in retaliation, the Israeli consul was asked to leave the country within forty eight hours.⁵⁹

When the extent and gravity of political and diplomatic support of India to PLO was popularly recognized, by yet another significant diplomatic move, on 10 January, 1975, India accorded diplomatic recognition to PLO. Indian was the first non-Arab country to make such a move. Yasser Arafat endorsed the move and hoped that this would strengthen the struggle of the Palestinian people "a very big push forward".⁶⁰

The period of 1980's witnessed a new initiative and intensification of India's move to strengthen the PLO diplomatically and politically on 26 March, 1980,⁶¹ the then Indian Foreign Minister P.V. Narsimha Rao announced in the Parliament that

India had decided to accord full diplomatic recognition to the office of PLO in New Delhi.⁶² After this move Mr. Arafat paid a three day visit to Indian between 28 and 30 March, 1980 on the invitation of Mrs. Gandhi, During his visit Mrs. Gandhi stated that sympathy for the Palestinians has been a part of independent India's foreign policy from its very inception".⁶³ Mrs. Gandhi also reiterated that a just peace and comprehensive solution to the Middle East crisis could be found only with the "full participation of the PLO as an equal partner in any settlement".⁶⁴

India's Palestine policy was further strengthened when Arafat again paid second visit to India as head of the state in exile in May 1982. During his visit he was described as "The symbol of a people afire with the spirit of freedom" by Indira Gandhi.⁶⁵

The Palestinian agenda surged up to the forefront once again. Tel Aviv too suffered more causality in the Lebanon in 1982 war. On account of the role of the Shinbet, the Israeli secret service evoked greater international sympathy for the Palestinians.⁶⁶ The PLO had appealed that the United Nations peacekeeping force should replace the Israeli troops in the areas from where they were pulling out.⁶⁷ Indian solidarity with Arabs and Palestinians in particular could be seen by the very fact that India permitted the PLO to open an office in New Delhi on 10 January, 1975,⁶⁸ This shows that Palestine factor became the guiding principle towards the West Asian crisis. The Palestinian cause was upheld as a high principle of humanity and the Israeli government was looked upon as aggressor with imperialistic design.

India's reaction to the Israeli invasion of Lebanon was sharp and harsh. The than Indian Foreign Minister, Mr. Rao referred the matter on 19 June, 1982 as the "enactment of savage drama involving the butchery of our Palestinian brothers and sister."⁶⁹ Mrs. Gandhi on 25 July, made a statement in the Lok Sabha condemning the Israeli attack and maintained that "Israeli attempt to wipe out the Palestinian movement cannot succeed in the long run".⁷⁰ In September ,1982 Mrs. Gandhi further sent a message to Mr.Arafat in which she praised the PLO's spirited resistance to the Israeli invasion of Lebanon.⁷¹

Janta Government and Its Relations with Israel

Indo-Israel relations had shown a negative trend since the beginning of the fifties. The government policy even sank deeper in the 1960's. But during the latter parts of 1960's, there came up a strong Pro-Israeli lobby in India. The Chinese invasion of 1962 was seen by this group of people as an acid test of friendship. Israel's transfer of weapon like mortar to India during the crisis was seen as an act of friendship⁷² since then this lobby had been campaigning for Israel in India. But the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, Indo-Israeli relations touched the lowest ebb. The government of India's sympathy for the Jewish people for their suffering in the past, though had not withered away it was very wary of Zionist actions. The Indian government, along with many nations asked the Israeli government to leave the occupied territories, which were endorsed by the U.N. Security Council resolutions 234 and 338. So, India was standing by the Palestinians cause within and without the United Nations.

The Parliamentary election of March 1977 brought to power the Janata Party headed by Morarji Desai, with the former Jan Sangh leader Atal Bihari Vajpayee as the minister of external affairs.⁷³ On West Asia despite their canvassing for a change when they were in opposition, the Janata Party continued to back the Arabs and the Palestinians. India reaffirmed that for the establishment of the peace in the region, Israel should vacate those territories which they had been occupied since 1967 and allow the Palestinians the right to self-determination or even separate state of their own in which they could live in security and peace. The Indian government also reportedly deplored Israel's act of aggression and of building Jewish settlements in the occupied territories which aggravated tension between the Israelis and Palestinians.⁷⁴

The Janata Party stressed clearly that in the international field, it would pursue a genuinely non-aligned policy. It should not only remain non-aligned, but must also appear to be so. The party would follow a policy, which would not show that India was tilting towards a particular bloc.⁷⁵ So, the non-alignment policy continued to form the cornerstone of India's foreign policy. In view of this, India had to follow the old policy which had been pursued since independence and there was no shift in it. During the Janta's rule it examined the foundation of India's foreign policy and considered non-alignment as one of the cardinal principles of foreign policy. Developing relations

with Israel would sound to many Indians and Arabs as a turning away from the policy of non-alignment because of the simple reason that Israel was a very close ally of USA. Indo-Israeli ties remained on the shelf during the Janata period. Moshe Dayan, the then foreign minister Israel visited Indian but this trip did not produce the expected results.⁷⁶

When Moshe Dayan came to India there was no diplomatic relations between India and Israel, even though an Israeli consulate was established in Bombay. The main reason behind the visit was to muster diplomatic relations with India. During his visit Mr. Dayan met with the then Indian Prime Minister and had some discussions with him. Indian Prime Minister, Mr. Desai put his view before Mr. Dayan.⁷⁷

“You must make peace with the Arabs. The Israelis have suffered from the Nazi’s and the persecution in Europe, but the Palestinians should not be made to pay for that. The refugees should be settled and you had to withdraw from the occupied territories, which would be proclaimed a Palestinian state”.

He further stated:

“Israel was not established fact, the Arab must guarantee her existence, but Israel must take possible the rise of a Palestinian state. The solution is to establish a Palestinian state in the Arab territories, which Israel should evacuate”.

Thus, it is clear from the above discussion that Mr. Desai was firm on Israel’s withdrawal and the emergence of Palestine state. The refusal to allow Israelis to establish a second consulate in New Delhi in addition to the Israel had in Bombay clearly shows that how much Mr. Desai was firm regarding the Palestine issue. Desai also stated that he could be out of the office if the visit of Mr. Dayan were to be published.⁷⁸ As Dayan himself has recorded that he felt humiliated and was let down by the then Indian Foreign Minister Mr. Vajpayee.

Gulf War of 1991 And India’s Response

The end of the cold war had its ramification on the international political environment. It brought in a different world order and its effect has spread far and wide. The

disintegration of the former USSR and her socialist block led to the disbanding of the Warsaw Pact, and left USA as the only superpower.⁷⁹ The USA policy having a free hand in conducting war against Iraq by hijacking the United Nations should also be looked from the end of cold war political angle. In west Asia regional power, in the post-cold war era, was concentrated at two extremes, Iran in the Persian Gulf and Israel. The Gulf regimes mainly rely on the USA as their principle source of security and other Arab states suffered from the collapse of the former USSR. It made Israel unmatched military power in the region.⁸⁰ This gave Israel to a great extent, a free hand in conducting her foreign affairs.

New Delhi voted for the U.N. resolution authorizing the use of force to expel Iraqi troops from Kuwait and rejected Iraq's linkage of the Kuwaiti and the Palestinian problems. In January 1991, India also permitted the United States military aircraft to refuel in Bombay. The refuelling decision stirred such domestic controversy that the Chandra Shekhar government withdrew the refuelling privileges in February 1991 to deflect the criticisms of Congress (I), which argued that India's nominal Pro-United State tilt betrayed the country's non-aligned principles.⁸¹ Others argued that India's Pro-US policies and its support to the United States during the war was the clearest indication of India's shift from the old practiced non-alignment stand.⁸²

On the regional level the Gulf war of 1991 witnessed a major realignment of force in the West Asia. The leading Arab countries, including radical Syria joined the hands with the US in waging a divesting war against a fellow Arab country-Iraq.⁸³ On the international level the Gulf crisis confirmed the unchallenged dominance of the US as the principle external influence and power, and signalled the corresponding demise of the Soviet Union as a significant regional actor. The Arab-Israeli conflict is also the area where the US has the greatest potential for being a catalyst for peace in the region.⁸⁴ the Madrid conference of 1991 in which the Arabs and the Israelis started talking face to face was the clear proof. It is because of this Madrid conference that Israel and PLO recognized each other after two years of the conference, which was managed for the first time after the eight visits of James Baker to the region.⁸⁵

Establishment of Diplomatic Relations with Israel

The decision of having diplomatic relations with Israel came from the Narsimha Rao government in 1992. After the cold war era India's decision making structure came

under intense pressure and the establishment of diplomatic relations with Israel a close ally of the U.S. is the clear evidence of shifting of Indian policy from PLO to Israel.

Narsimha Rao's decision of establishing the diplomatic relations with Israel in 1992 was a hasty step, which was taken under outside pressure then diplomatic prudence. The first sign of a change in the Indian Pro-PLO and anti-Israel policy appeared little in the meeting, which was held between the then Prime Minister, Narsimha Rao a Zionist leader Isi Joseph Leibler in New Delhi, in November 1991. The discussion centred round the possibility of the establishing diplomatic ties between India and Israel. The Prime Minister's response, according to Leibler, was more positive and pragmatic than his predecessor. Further Leibler talks with the Indian Prime Minister were facilitated by the U.S. Leibler openly admitted this in his press conference.⁸⁶

The Leibler-Rao meet was followed a more visible gesture of the government of India under Narsimha Rao softened stance towards Israel when India voted for the revocation of the U.N. resolution 3379 of November 1975 that had equated Zionism with Racism. The fact remained that mere revocation of the resolution did not change the basic character of Israeli state policy, which formed the *raison d'être* of the 1975 resolution. The state of Israel was founded, and continues to exist on the basis of a racist ideology, i.e. Zionism. Further, it led one to believe that the earlier motion (and India's support to it by implication) was a mistake or that Zionism had somehow changed and repented on its past policies. In reality it was neither, as the regime occupying Palestine became more outrageous and belligerent in pursuit of the expansionist dream. Moreover, this was done without taking the Indian public opinion into account, neither a debate was held in the Parliament nor opposition was taken into confidence. India's long cherished principled stand against Racism was thrown to the winds overnight.

In this context, it would be interesting to note the observation made by the Indian repetitive at the U.N., Rikhi Jaipal, in his statement of explanation of Indian vote in favour of Resolution 3379"⁸⁷

"Zionism has deprived, noted the statement, the Arab people of their national right and of the right to self-determination. It is surely understandable that the victims of Zionism should regard it as a form of racial discrimination and it is, therefore,

proper for the General Assembly also to regard it as such. To condone the evil effects of Zionism would be giving the green light to various other forms of racism endemic in human societies". Had this fact changed on 16 of December, 1991 i.e. when India, voted for the repealing of the said resolution. The argument that by attending the West Asia Peace Conference in Madrid, Israel had changed itself and shown its desire to work for a peaceful solution of the Palestinian problems did not hold good in the face of the then prevailing situation in the occupied territories. The then prime minister Yitzhak Shamir continued the policy of building new settlements and expanding the existing ones in the West Bank and Gaza as if there was no peace process. There was no let-up in the Israeli policy of brutalization, demolition, detention and deportation vis-à-vis the Palestinians from the occupied territories in the midst of the peace process was an example. This was done despite the fact that the U.N. Security Council passed on resolution strongly condemning it.⁸⁸ A statement issued on 5th of June, 1992 by the Council of Arab Ambassadors in New Delhi clearly indicated how much had the state of Israel changed around six months after the revocation of the resolution 3379 , while reminding the world of the 25 years of the 1967 Arab Israeli war, the Council statement said that even as apartheid was being dismantled in South Africa, Israel had adopted a "system of racial discrimination against indigenous Palestinian Arabs who are living on their own land as Second Class Citizens."⁸⁹

Hence, there were reasons to believe that in this case too it was the US factor, which influenced India's decision. India succumbed to US pressure after the discussions in New York and voted in favour of the pro-Israeli resolution. There was a general agreement, within the U.N. General Assembly, to proceed with the revocations sometime in 1992. This was obviously to wait and watch till Israel changed itself substantially vis-à-vis Palestinian so as to justify a reversal of the 1975 resolution. But the then US President, George Bush, had his own domestic political calculation and compulsions to push through the repealing of "Zionism is Racism" Resolution as early as possible. It may be recalled that the then Bush administration had virtually irked the powerful American Jewish Lobby on the well-known \$10 billion housing loan guarantee to Israel. The US President came down heavily on the Israeli Prime Minister on this issue, and ultimately Shamir had to bow down. Hence the repealing of the 1975 resolution was said to be a balancing act. Moreover, this gesture was essential, argued the Bush administration, to coax Israel to soften its stand towards the peace process. It

indeed is a ridiculous logic. The fact remained that in the aftermath of the Soviet collapse, the US sought to use the U.N. for its own foreign policy ambitions. In this case too, the American diplomatic machinery at the U.N. was pressed into service to put pressure on countries, not excluding India, to support the US move in the revocation of the said Resolution by the General Assembly. Yasser Arafat, during His visit to New Delhi in the following weeks, candidly talked about the American pressure tactics.⁹⁰ Further, the statement made by the then Indian Prime Minister before the Parliament just two days after India voted in the U.N. vindicated this. While declaring that his government would use foreign policy as a dynamic instrument to further national interests, Prime Minister Narsimbha Rao listed out the overriding priorities of India's foreign policy in the post-cold war era. They were, preventing any threat to India's unity and territorial integrity, ensuring geopolitical security by creating a durable environment of stability and peace in India region, creating a framework conducive to the economic well-being to the people by encouraging a healthy external economic environment, and trying to restore, internationally, the centrality and criticality of the development in the evolution of political and economic policies all over the world. A careful analysis of the last two points clearly suggested the reasons as to why the weakling Prime Minister had to follow the US line. Because otherwise in his opinion the loans from the International Monetary Fund and World Bank would not have flowed steadily, resulting in the total collapse of India's "ambitious economic liberalization" programme. The foreign policy postulates as enumerated by the Indian Prime Minister was nothing but object surrender in the face of difficulties. The Indians were virtually mortgaging their otherwise independent foreign policy stance to the outside dictates, which could harm the nation in the longer run.

On the same day, 18 December, 1991, Yasser Arafat requested an audience with Prime Minister Rao probably to protest against India's volte-face. The President of the state of Palestine, who in earlier times, visited this country more frequently than any other world leader, was in for a great surprise this time. His visit kept getting postponed on flimsy pretexts, that the Prime Minister was preoccupied with two foreign dignitaries and with the preparations for the Republic Day. It was indeed ironical that Prime Minister P.V. Narsimha Rao, who headed the foreign Ministry for a long time, spearheaded many important Pro-PLO decisions, and above all had to

establish close personal rapport with the PLO leader, would deny an audience to Arafat under various pretexts. What was more ironical probably was, that while Arafat was having a difficult time in meeting the then Prime Minister, hectic efforts were on to facilitate the meeting of Indian and Israeli diplomats in the US. An official level meeting, highest till then, between the Israeli Representative, Joseph Haddas and the Indian Deputy Chief Mission, Lalit Mansingh, took place at the Indian Embassy in Washington during the second week of January 1992. This meeting clearly indicated that the two countries were very close in establishing full diplomatic ties. In addition, this also brought to the open the active US role in facilitating this breakthrough.⁹¹

Finally, New Delhi took the initiative and gave a date, which was not as suitable for the PLO leader as he was tied down by the outgoing West Asia peace negotiations. But still he had to make it in view of the far-reaching developments. The receptions accorded to the visiting Palestinian dignitary were lacklustre at the worst and make believe warm at best. It sought to conceal the subterranean tensions in Indo-PLO relations. During the official level talk with the PLO Chief the Indian Prime Minister reiterated his consistent and unequivocal support for Palestine and the inalienable rights of its people to self-determination. The Prime Minister also assured Arafat of extending all support to the Palestinians in whatever way possible to achieve the twin objective of establishing peace in the region and helping the Palestinian friends. While taking an appreciative note of the on-going West Asia peace process and wishing it all success, Rao underlined the fact that India had a vital interest in peace and stability in a region so close to it. The security situation in West Asia, the Prime Minister added, impinged on India's security environment. On the whole, India tried to convince the Palestinian leader that it had not abandoned the Palestinian cause totally despite New Delhi's increasingly softened stance towards Tel Aviv. He was given the impression that while, "our hearts" were still with the struggling and suffering Palestinian people and with the martyrs of Sabra and Shatilla and the Intifada, but "our heads" were adjusting to the dictates of a fast changing World.⁹²

Arafat, on his part, gave a brief assessment of the peace talks. He expressed his strong conviction that India's participation in the third round of West Asia peace talks, scheduled to be held in Moscow on 28 and 29 January, 1992 was essential, though the modalities were not discussed. However, the most significant announcement from the PLO Chairman came during a press conference on the second day of his stay in New

Delhi,⁹³ “exchange of Ambassadors and recognition of Israel are acts of sovereignty in which I cannot interfere” declared Arafat “I respected any choice of Indian government”. He further added, hoping that such a change would not affect Indo-Palestinian relationship, which was “so strong”.

Arafat above mentioned statement was extensively reported in and interpreted by the media as clear-cut go-head signal from PLO to India to establish ties with Israel. In reality, this was not so and reflected only a fragmented analysis of the whole thing. A careful reading of Arafat’s subsequent statement in the same press conference, made it evident that the PLO leader’s “clear message” was not so clear. It was a conditional signal. Arafat explicitly emphasized that India’s full diplomatic relations with Israel was not a pre-condition for its association with the peace process.⁹⁴ In other words, diplomatic relations with Israel were not only the way by which India could be involved in the West Asia peace processes. To substantiate his point, Arafat remarked that Jordan, along with many other Arab countries, represented at the peace conference, were without diplomatic relations with Israel. In other context Arafat stated that he would prefer if India established diplomatic ties with Israel “slowly” to enable the PLO to attain its objective at the peace talks.

Thus, an objective interpretation and correct understanding of Arafat’s message required that India should have followed a cautious and go-slow policy in establishing full diplomatic ties with Israel. It should have waited till the ground realities in the West Asian theatre changed substantially so as to remove the very basis of its decade’s old anti-Israeli policy. One failed to understand why Indian policy makers were in such a hurry? After all, India had extended formal recognition to the state of Israel long ago, notwithstanding its earlier opposition. From the very beginning, India insisted on a negotiated settlement of the Arab-Israeli- Palestinian conflict. It neither encouraged nor supported the PLO position of dismantling the state of Israel. That was enough to convey that India accepted the fait accompli in West Asia. So, what great difference did it make by establishing diplomatic ties with Tel Aviv? Israel’s mere attendance of the Madrid peace conference in no way reflected a substantial policy change on its part towards the occupied territories and the Palestinian living under military occupation in gross violation of established international law. Further, India did not have a guilty conscience, like the Western power who shut their doors to the Jews during the Holocaust, to compel us to look for

ways to compensate the state of Israel. The architects of independent India's foreign policy were very clear about the purposes and justification behind an anti-Israeli posture. By then, however, India's course of action had already been decided. A particular section, within the foreign policy establishment, who claimed themselves to be the realists guided by so called real-politic considerations had vigorously argued for the immediate establishment of ties with Israel. Finally, within a few days of Arafat's departure from New Delhi, India decided, on 29 January, 1992, to establish full diplomatic relations with Israel. It should not be forgotten that the announcement to this effect was made by the then Indian foreign secretary on the eve of the Prime Minister Rao's departure for the U.N. Security Council Summit in New York.

It is essential to emphasize that a section, favouring normal and friendly relationship with Israel, had always been there within the foreign policy establishment, and the opinion –making institutions like the media and universities. At times, it even permeated into the political circles. This was mostly due to the persistent lobbying of the Zionist in India. And certainly, the Zionists are unbeatable as far as the subtle art of lobbying and creation of pressure groups within a country's deciding- making structure is concerned. The establishment of an alien entity, called the state of Israel, on Palestinian land, was largely due to the Zionists success in this field. Hence, India, because of its geo-strategic importance in the world politics, never escaped the attention of the Zionists. So much so that even during the time of Indira Gandhi , who was known for her activism Pro-PLO and anti-Zionist policy, the Zionists did not relent on their persistent efforts to effect a change of mind on the part of India in this regard. They did it when Rajiv Gandhi came to power. In both the times, it was the same person, one Greville Janner, who happened to be the President of the Common Wealth Jewish Council,⁹⁵ Interestingly, Janner was a member of the British Parliament and belonged to the labour party. He was a Zionist in belief and orientation. Notwithstanding their constant attempts, the Zionists lobby failed to achieve any breakthrough due to two interrelated factors; the then international power balance, and India's foreign policy orientation, which maintained synthesis between ideology (of anti-imperialism, anti-colonialism, antiracism etc.) and the high ideas of the freedom struggle.

This never meant that the pursuance of national interest was a go-by under the euphoria of ideology. But national interest was never computed by the calculus of loss

and profit alone. After all, India stood as a symbol and source of inspiration for most of the third world countries having similar experiences of colonial rule and post-colonial nation building process. As a result, the section championing the cause of the Zionist lobby in India constituted a microscopic minority in the face of a broad anti-Israeli consensus within the country.

There are some main arguments put forward by the realist school, first by establishing the diplomatic relations with Israel, India would be in a better position to involve herself in the West Asia peace process and thereby influence the Israeli policy in favour of the Palestinians.

Those who believed this were probably living in a make believe world, far away from the dynamics of Israeli- Palestinians conflict and negotiations. It has already been stated how Arafat disputed this logic by stating that there were other ways and means by which India could have been involved in the peace process. What was more important was the degree of influence India could have exercised on Israel by becoming part of the peace process. By attending the talks, the Indian Prime Minister or Foreign Minister could, at best, have delivered and addressed the theme of which was known to everybody, including Israelis. The crucial question was: would the Israeli have heeded to it? The Israeli position vis-à-vis the peace talks were governed by the domestic compulsion/ pressures that the then Shamir government was confronted with and not by our sermons. For instance, the shift from the procedural wrangling to matters of substance and the report that the Israeli negotiators in Washington had offered a plan for the Palestinian self rule in the occupied territories brought the wrath of two right –wing parties. This ultimately brought down the Shamir government for a while. And later the government survived a no-confidence motion in the Knesset due to the renewed support of one the Tzomet Party.

This exposed how precariously balanced was the Shamir government and how the power equation in Israel and a decisive bearing on its policy towards the Palestinians. Any other consideration was no consideration at all. Here, it may not be an exaggeration to say that even the President of the US, which has been a constant source of support-diplomatic, political, military and economic to the continued economic to the continued existence of Israel from the beginning, at times found it difficult to influence the Israeli government beyond a point. This is for country from

which Israel receives billions of dollars (approximately \$ 5 billion) in foreign aid annually. In view of this it sounded ridiculous to expect that India could influence Israel's policy even nominally.

Second, it was argued that in concrete terms there were distinct advantages for India in establishing contacts with Israel in specific areas like military modernization, agricultural innovation and investments of global Jewish establishment. India could also benefit in combating militancy in Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir from the Israeli experience and expertise in this regard.

Both the arguments were nothing new and had been surfacing off and on. There had been a section, which from time to time argued that India's non-relationship with Israel put her at a disadvantageous position, preventing New Delhi from playing a positive and purposeful role in bringing the two adversaries closer to a settlement. To what extent India has been playing a role in this regard ever since its full diplomatic relations with Israel is therefore everyone to see. As for the concrete benefits, it may be noted that as far back in the 1960's the government of Rajasthan has shown interest in Israel's arid-zone forming techniques. On the question of countering militancy, the problems in Jammu and Kashmir and Punjab had cropped up in the 1980's a period when India took many decisions in support of the PLO. Why did India not establish diplomatic relations with Israel and benefit from its expertise in combating militancy when the problem was at its peak? ⁹⁶

Apart from the untenability of the above arguments, the main issue, while dealing with Israel was that moral aspects assumed more influence than the so called real politic compulsions which often signified an outright selfish pursuance of national interests without any regard to World peace and human values. Israel was, and perhaps still is a state unlike any other.

The establishment of diplomatic relations, then certainly questioned and diluted India's commitment to the high ideals of non-alignment, which had been the guiding force of our foreign policy during all the decades after independence, Israel represented all that was anathema to the NAM. NAM's struggle against imperialism, neo-colonialism, racism and the rights of small countries to determine and shape their own future needs no repetition. Of course, there were some who argued that with the discredit of socialism in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, imperialism was

dead and similarly with the collapse of the Cold War, NAM became redundant. Such a view smacked of one's ideological ignorance and lack of knowledge about the dynamics of international politics. The significance of NAM extends beyond a general resistance to bloc division. It signifies a refusal to the mere political and economic appendage of the center(s) of military, political and economic power. It is a struggle for the protection of the developing countries from external domination and exploitation. Moreover, bloc politics is fast getting replaced by hegemonistic politics. Hence, the relevance of NAM is more than ever before in view of the emerging unipolar (politically) world and the inherent danger of domination over small and economically weak countries. At such a critical juncture, the establishment of ties with Israel meant that India was distancing itself. From the NAM instead of giving direction to the movement in shaping the emerging international order, for instance, by voting along the US line for the repealing of resolution 3379, India for the first time moved away from a collective NAM position. In any case the concrete advantages that people talked about were not so lucrative as to compromise with the basic elements of India's foreign policy. Third, it was argued that the emergence of an Islamic bloc in world politics made it essential that India changed its Pro-PLO stance and closer to Israel.

The talk of the emergence of an aggressive Islamic block is basically an American projected new horror in the Post-Cold War International Politics.⁹⁷ While establishing ties with Israel, the Pakistani factor was also utilized to justify the untimely/ hasty decision. It was argued that in the event of the emergence an Islamic bloc, Pakistan would fully exploit it against India. Hence, there was a need to counter this by forging an anti-Islamic alliance along with Israel and the US. The formation of an anti-Islamic alliance was, and still is, in conformity with the US-Israeli design. But one fails to understand how it serves India's foreign policy goals and national interest. No doubt, the tensions between India and Pakistan is since 1947, but India has even then dealing with the West Asian and North African countries and it has maintained a fairly cordial relationship with the Muslim countries. That the India's Pro-Israeli policy necessarily meant a dilution of her commitment and support to the PLO and its cause became clear from subsequent events. By establishing the diplomatic relations with Israel, India did not become anti-PLO, but certainly she developed apathy towards it. The contacts between India and PLO since then have been almost

insignificant. The only high-level official contacts between the two sides was the Rao-Arafat meet in Tunis on 20 November, 1992. This too was a mere courtesy call, which the Indian-Prime Minister paid to the PLO leader during a stopover in Tunis on his way to Dakar for the G-15 Summit. The meeting lasted for about twenty minutes. There was no specific agenda even though Arafat was reported to have briefed Rao about the peace talks in general. ⁹⁸

As against this, Indo-Israel Cooperation stepped up to mark the new found friendship. This was specially so in the political arena. It appeared that the Indian politicians were indeed suffering from a guilt conscience and wanted to compensate Israel for years of non-relationship. There was almost a scramble among Union Ministers and state Chief Ministers to pay a visit to Israel. In a period of one year from June 1993 – July 1994, as many as nine political leaders visited Israel. In addition, as many as 18 India delegations visited Israel within a period of two years after establishing the diplomatic relations. ⁹⁹

India's move to establish diplomatic relations with Israel came into effect during the weak minority government headed by P.V. Narsimha Rao in 1992. Before this move the Narsimha Rao government voted the United Nations Resolution to repeal the longstanding United Nations resolution equating Zionism with racism. Not only this, India even also obtained from voting on a resolution condemning Israel over fresh settlement in the occupied territories, at an International Habitat Conference in Nairobi. ¹⁰⁰

When the diplomatic relations were established some claimed that Chandraswami was instrumental in the process, another that it was part of a process of wooing the US, Israel's mentor. The government claimed it was a key element in India's overall West Asian strategy, which had been devastated by its less-than categorical stand on the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. It was said the move would get India a seat at the West Asia peace talks.

Indian officials in Tel Aviv say Palestinian leaders any even the PLO have welcomed India's participation in the West Asia peace process. Being realists, they realize that India's establishment of diplomatic ties with Israel was inevitable. Another related worry among secular elements in India is the tendency of the Hindu right – wing to see Israel as a fellow “Muslim-basher”.

The changes in the relationship between India and Israel and between Israel and its Arab neighbours are the profound consequences of the end of the Cold War and the emergence of a multipolar world. Increasingly, as the world's remaining superpower shrink to normal size, the responsibility of resolving regional conflicts will devolve on the region. Responsibility and accountability will be spread more evenly. The development of relations between Indian and Israeli or the decision of establishing diplomatic relations is supposed to be part of the overall transformation in policy must be seen as part of this process.

Thus, the period witnessed a very grim situation in Indo-Israeli relations. The hopes which Israel had in the 1950s had vanished in the later years. But in spite of this, it tried to make use of whatever opportunities, it could find to woo Indian friendship. India, on the other hand, gave rays of hope to Israel in early part of the fifties. But, as history reveals, it became more vocal against Israel than before and by 1982, all sign of having diplomatic ties with Israel disappeared in thin air so taking the whole spectrum, we can see that the period referred to is indeed the period of negative dimension.

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