CHAPTER II

OBJECTIVES OF ISRAELI PRESENCE IN THE THIRD WORLD
AS ARTICULATED BY THE ISRAELIS

It has been maintained that foreign policy is made on the basis of subjective truths as perceived by men acting in their country's interest. In the words of Kenneth Boulding:

We must recognize that the people whose decisions determine the policies and actions of nations do not respond to the objective facts of the situation. It is what we think the world is like, not what it is really like that determines our behaviour... The 'image' must be thought of as the total cognitive, effective and evaluative structure of the behaviour unit, or its internal view of itself and its universe... A decision involves the selection of the most preferred position in a contemplated field of choice. Both the field of choice and the ordering of this field, by which the preferred position is identified, lie in the image of decision makers. 1

Foreign policy, in fact, is made by a small group of persons who are authorized by the existing political system of any particular country, to act on strategic-level issues. The foreign policy decisions may be of various kinds like diplomatic-recognition--or alignment or non-alignment--but whatever the nature, they are undertaken by a small group of persons.

Here, in this chapter, an attempt will be made to find out how Israeli Foreign Policy makers perceived Israel's relation with the Third World and how it was one of their choices in foreign policy options. But at the very threshold of this inquiry, we are confronted with the problem of finding out as to who are the policy makers in Israel, who were the architects of Israel's "Third World" policy.

During the period under discussion, there were fourteen Israeli Governments and fifty four persons had held office in the Cabinet of Ministers.\(^2\) By the process of elimination, we can find out who actually were involved in foreign policy formulation with regard to the Third World. Out of those fifty four persons, most of them were not involved in foreign policy formulation, more so with the Third World. The ministers from the religious parties were not interested particularly in foreign policy and always accepted Mapai's lead in this sphere.\(^3\) The same can be said about the non party members as well. Again, during the period, three ministers were in office even for less than a year.

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2. Facts About Israel, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Information Division, Jerusalem, 1950-1968, esp. under the heading "Cabinet".

3 Discussed in detail in Chapter VII.
Moreover, until the alignment in 1965, three ministers from the Mapam party and three ministers from Ahdut Ha'Avodah had always dissented from the main policy lines. One minister from Herut and seven ministers from General Zionist (afterwards Liberal) also did the same. This brings us to a small group of ministers. Michael Brecher has analysed the position in the following way:

A better quasi-institutional guide would seem to be the group of Mapai ministers, a unique club known as Sereinu—our ministers. There were twenty five members between 1948 and 1968 and from the early years they functioned as an inner cabinet, meeting as a group before most formal cabinet sessions. Given the Mapai majority in the Government, its tight party discipline, and its control over the key portfolios—defence, foreign affairs, finance, education, agriculture, police and usually commerce and education, as well as Prime Ministership—the decisions of Sereinu were almost always final, in foreign and security policy as in other matters,... But not all Mapai or alignment ministers exerted equal influence in party or government decisions. 4

During the period under discussion (1948-1968), Ben Gurion dominated the Israeli political scene from 1948 to 1963 (except for a brief period in mid-fifties), as the Prime Minister as well as Defence Minister. Moshe Sharett was the

Foreign Minister up to June 1956. (He was the Prime Minister of Israel from December 1953 to November 1955). Sharett, with his tremendous zeal and endeavour, in fact, created the Foreign Ministry. During this period (from 1948 to June 1956) decisions with regard to Israel's Third World policy were taken by Ben Gurion and Sharett.

After Sharett's exit, Mrs Meir took over as the Foreign Minister in June 1956. From now, till the exit of Ben Gurion in June 1963, Ben Gurion again dominated the scene and in all the major foreign policy decisions, his part was the most decisive. During this period, Mrs Meir worked for and achieved Israel's outstanding presence in Africa. Further, during this period, Shimon Peres, as Ben Gurion's Deputy, came to the scene as the person who worked untiringly for the alliance with France and also shaped the defence establishment. Peres also contributed to Israel's Third World policy.6

5. Interview with Y. Shimoni, Deputy Director, Foreign Ministry, in charge of the Asian and African Departments, on 21 May 1972.

Ehkol became the Prime Minister in June 1963. Abba Eban became his Deputy Prime Minister. Now, from June 1963, up to the sixth general election, Ehkol, Mrs Heir and Eben were the three ministers who took interest in Israel's Third World policy. From the sixth general elections down to the death of Prime Minister Ehkol, Israel's policy towards the Third World was looked after by Ehkol himself and Abba Eban primarily; Moshe Dayan and Yigal Allon also had some interest in it.

Yigal Allon was the Deputy Prime Minister from January 1963 and Abba Eban was the Foreign Minister from January 1966. These two were the ministers who were primarily concerned with Israel's Third World policy in 1968.

Thus, during the period under discussion, the persons who had formulated, or had taken interest in, and were associated with Israel's Third World policy were, Ben Gurion, Sharet, Mrs Heir, Ehkol, Abba Eban, Shimon Peres,

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7 The Israel Digest, vol. 6, no. 14, 5 July 1963, p. 1.
Moshe Dayan and Yigal Allon. Let us now see how they have articulated their views on the question of Israeli links with the Third World.

Ben Gurion

Ben Gurion became the Prime Minister of Israel on 14 May 1948 and continued in the office till June 1963 with a brief break in mid-fifties. Ben Gurion was the most dominant

8. The present writer is deeply indebted to Professor Michael Brecher for the above description as to who were the founders of Israel's Third World policy. The writer had the good fortune of working under him for a period of a year and a half. During numerous discussions on this particular point, this writer has been guided by him and the description above is on the basis of Professor Brecher's analysis. For the purpose of this study it is enough if we can locate the persons who were behind Israel's Third World policy. Professor Brecher has given an exhaustive analysis of the foreign policy makers of Israel in his book The Foreign Policy System of Israel, n. 4, pp. 211-22.

9. For the biographical sketches of these leaders various sources have been consulted. For Ben-Gurion's biography numerous sources were available. To name only a few: (1) Israel : A Personal History (New York, Tel-Aviv, 1971); (2) Michael Bar-Zohar, The Armed Prophet; (3) Recollections by David Ben-Gurion, ed. by Thomas K. Mannston (London, 1970), etc. For Eshkol, Meir, Dayan and Abba Eban, the biographies consulted are: (1) Eshkol of Israel; The Man and the Nation by Terence Prittie (London, 1969); (2) Golda Meir : Women with a Cause, by Marie Syrkin (New York, 1963), (3) Moshe Dayan : A Biography, by N. Lau-Lavie (London, 1968), and Moshe Dayan by Shabtai Teveth (London, 1972), and (4) Eban by Robert S. John, (New York, 1962). Further Who's Who (Israel Annual) was also consulted. Moreover, Biographical notes of these leaders appeared in Jerusalem Post, New York Times, The Reader's Digest on various issues.
figure in foreign policy decision making during the period. His was the decisive voice in all the policy-decisions.

Ben Gurion has written extensively on various subjects relating to the State of Israel. His memoirs, essays, speeches, letters and interviews have been voluminous. Ben Gurion integrated the notion of Israel's assistance to the Third World countries into his messianic perspective of Israel as a "light unto the Nation". In his essay "Israel and the Diaspora", he says:

In the vision of Messianic redemption an organic connection is seen to exist between the national redemption of the Jewish people and his redemption of this whole of humanity. The Messianic vision that has lighted up our path for thousands of years has prepared and fitted us to be a light to the nations. Moreover, it has put upon us the duty of becoming a model people and building a model state. 10

Again, in 1952, Ben-Gurion came out with his essay "Israel Among the Nations". Here, we see Ben Gurion's conception of the Third World. He says: "Only two exceptional portents of our times need be mentioned here. First the waning hegemony of Europe and the rise of Asia.... The decline of Europe is both political and economic and cultural as well. As Europe sinks, so Asia ascends." 11 He then talks about the past greatness of Asia and perceives that Asia is emerging in the


world to play a major role. He says:

Asia is the largest continent in the world, as well in area as in populousness. Thousands of years ago, it was the birthplace of civilization ....the continent of Europe is beginning to tumble in its political and economic strength and the vast mainland of Asia is stirring to new life, casting off the yoke of Europe and eager to take the place befitting it in the modern arena of policy, economy and culture ....Peoples large and small, of Asia and in the islands of the Indic Ocean have been set free of its, and once again two great and ancient nations - China and India - stride into independence. Their weight in the scales of humanity is increasing and is likely to tip those scales more yet hereafter. 12

Ben Gurion with his sense of history could perceive that Asia is going to play a major role in world history and cautioned his people:

Let us not make light of the great spiritual legacy of the peoples of India, China and Japan; not only by reason of their political and numerical importance, but because of their intrinsic quality and the spiritual links that are being forged in modern Asia, they are pregnant with a destiny no less great and fruitful than Europe once knew. 13

Now, Ben Gurion is confronted with the question; there does Israel belong? Does it belong to Asia or to Europe?

He maintains that geographically "the homeland of the Jewish people stands upon the Western edge of Asia. For the first two thousand years of its existence that people had its roots almost wholly in Asia and in adjoining Egypt." 14

12. Ibid.
13. Ibid.
14. Ibid.
But Ben Gurion does not deny the European cultural heritage of the Jews and says: "The Jews must not and have no right to cast aside their European inheritance of science and technology, nor will they estrange themselves from their own spiritual legacy." 15

Thus, realizing that Israel belongs both to Asia and Europe, Ben Gurion comes out with the hope that -

it is as though by the Providence of history it had been called upon to be a living bridge between the peoples of Asia and Europe after two thousand years of wandering and dispersion, it is returning to its ancient homeland in Western Asia... and this marvel is being staged just when the limelight is waverino from Europe to Asia and it is just then that the people of Israel has become once more an independent factor, albeit small in its numbers and small in the area of its land, yet not insignificant in its quality and potential capacity in the limitless continent. 16

Thus, we see that Ben-Gurion perceives Asia as an emerging world-force and calls upon the Israelis to realize it and says "Less than all other peoples, may the people of Israel not shut its eyes to the rise of Asia and its people." 17

In his essay on "Israel's Security and International Position", Ben Gurion talks of the problem of backwardness of the Afro-Asian countries. Here, there is no more the glorification of Asian culture or emergence of Asia as a world force etc., but the naked truth that these Afro-Asian countries are

15 Ibid.
16 Ibid.
17 Ibid.
18 "Israel's Security and Her International Position before and after the Sinai Campaign", Government Year Book, 5720, 1959/60, pp. 9-37.
underdeveloped countries suffering from all sorts of material backwardness and that they need help to get them out of the rut. Thus he says:

What can be discerned at the present time and in the near future is that the cold war rather than involving a danger of a military clash between the democratic West and the Communist East, is a struggle for the souls of the peoples of Asia and Africa, who are in fact, the greatest and the gravest problem of our era. The root of the problem is the tremendous gap - material and cultural - between the European peoples (including Soviet Russia) and America on the one hand and the peoples of Asia and Africa (except Japan) on the other....Most of the Asian peoples gained their liberty only after the Second World War, and their social, economic, and cultural standards are extremely low, while in several countries, such as India and Egypt, the large masses living in the villages eke out an existence on a very low level, on the brink of starvation. 19

And thus Ben Gurion goes on to say that in the East-West ideological struggle the countries of "Asia and Africa have not defined their allegiance and majority of these peoples fear all the great powers; China, the Soviet Union and the Western Powers as well." 20 Ben-Gurion firmly believes that Israel "is capable of playing no inconsiderable role in the ideological struggle, thanks to her historical heritage, her intellectual and spiritual qualities and her creative pioneering

19. Ibid.

20. Ibid.
initiatives."  

Further, he says:

Israel has been granted the great historical privilege, which is therefore, also a duty, of assisting backward and primitive peoples to improve themselves, develop and advance, thus helping to solve the gravest problem of humanity in our time...the problem of dangerous gap between Asia and Africa on the one hand, and Europe and America (and Australia) on the other.  

But, though Ben-Gurion has been eulogising the glorious past of the ancient Asian culture and has seen a great resurgence of the Asia, and has talked about Israel being a "light unto these nations", he has not been a starry-eyed idealist. His approach is practical and down to earth. He has put his ideas clearly when he said:

And this nation of Israel, which has been gathered together from all countries, needs the friendship of all countries or most of them, so that it may withstand the hostility of its near neighbours who have designs against its existence....Though there is no doubt that ultimately we shall break the wall of hatred that surrounds us in the bordering countries, we shall do so not by a frontal attack but indirectly, by strengthening our bonds with the periphery in the Middle East, which includes non-Arab Moslem and Christian countries.  

Thus, Ben Gurion has been talking about the strategic importance of the countries of the periphery to the Arab world, for Israel's security and for the strengthening of its position. Moreover, Ben-Gurion is convinced that to break the 'wall of
that exists between Israel and the Arabs, he needs the friendship of the Afro-Asian countries. He thinks that he can do so -

by winning respect, sympathy and friendship among the peoples of Asia and Africa whose support the Arab bloc relies on, inside and outside the United Nations, in its hostile policy to Israel. Friendship with Asian and African peoples is both an end in itself and a means to an end. Our aspirations for peace and cooperation with the Arab peoples lead us to the non-Arab peoples in Asia and Africa. 25

Moreover, friendship apart, Ben-Gurion was conscious of the economic factor with regard to Israel's relations with the Third World. He said: "So far Europe has held the first place in Israel's exports, America second place, Asia only third, and Africa the fourth. There is no doubt, however, that the two latter continents will play a larger role in our foreign trade in the future." 26

In his essay "Towards a New World", Ben-Gurion describes Asia and Africa as two different entities. That is probably because of the fact that Israel met with two different responses in its dealing with the countries of Asia and Africa. He said: "But we must distinguish

25. Ibid.
26. Ibid.
between Asia and Africa. Most Asian nations have a long tradition of history and culture.... of few peoples in Africa have a continuous history and a long tradition.... But he maintains that whatever be the tradition or history of these countries and whatever be the form of government, these countries tend not to belong to any bloc and the only common feature among them is that "all are interested in material and cultural aid." He thinks that "its source can be decisive." Then he comes to his old theme and opines that "for Israel it is both a moral and a political issue and from both aspects there is no doubt that Israel must look upon such aid as a historic mission as necessary for Israel as it is beneficial to those we help." 

Ben Gurion thinks that if his message that Israel could be of help to the economic upliftment of the Arab countries could be conveyed to the Arabs, possibility of peace would be brighter. Thus he says: "The way of arriving at peace and co-operation with our neighbours is... by making the largest possible number of friends in Asia and Africa who will understand Israel's importance and her capacity to assist the progress of developing peoples and convey that understanding to our neighbours." 

28. Ibid.
29. Ibid.
30. Ibid.
31. Ibid.
Another reason as to why Ben Gurion wanted to have links with the Third World was to counteract the Arab propaganda against Israel in those countries. He made it very clear when he said: "We must be alive to the desperate attempts of Arab rulers to blacken Israel's name in Asia and Africa and upset fraternal relations established by cooperation between our emissaries and their peoples and by the experience of their representatives here." 32

Thus having talked about the great cultural heritage of Asia and its emergence in the world as a force to be reckoned with, and that the countries of Asia and Africa are in dire need of assistance and that how Israel could be a 'bridge' between these countries and the West and how Israel could work as a 'model' for these countries, Ben-Gurion comes to a crucial point which is very important as far as his views about the Third World are concerned. He said: "In spite of the growing importance of the Asian and African countries, however, Israel's Foreign Policy cannot remit an ounce of its efforts to maintain its

32. Ibid.
ties with Europe and America." Ben Gurion thus gives reasons as to why it should be so:

There are three reasons why Israel has a great and momentous interest in these two continents:
(1) They contain the overwhelming majority of the Jewish Diaspora. (2) For a long time to come they will continue to be the centre of culture and research; our civilization and military students will acquire higher education there which cannot yet be completely obtained in Israel and our research workers will need cultural ties with the scientist of Europe and America. (3) The equipment for the Israel Defence Forces that cannot yet be manufactured in Israel - and this is the major part of the equipment for our land, air and sea forces - can be obtained only in the friendly countries of these continents, for no arms are being manufactured yet in Asia and Africa and it will be a long time before they are. 36

Moreover, "in course of time the share of Asia and Africa in Israel's Foreign trade will grow, but the importance of Europe and America will not diminish and the capital that Israel needs will come mainly from the two latter continents, not only from Jews but also from Governments and non-Jewish businessmen." 35

Thus, on an analysis, we will find that Ben-Gurion could clearly see that the Third World countries could not

33. "Israel's Security and Her International Position before and after the Sinai Campaign", n. 19.
34. Ibid.
35. Ibid.
supply Israel with the four ingredients: (1) military aid, (2) economic aid, (3) Jews, and (4) political support, that were necessary for the survival and continuation of Israel as a sovereign independent country. Moreover, economic relations with them was also only marginal.

Thus, Ben Gurion's perception of the Third World was in terms of historic movement of anti-colonialism. His image of the Third World countries was that they were underdeveloped and backward and he came out with the notion, over and over again, that Israel's relations with these countries should be of "light unto nations" mission.

And, of course, he fully realized the Third World's political-diplomatic importance for Israel.

Moshe Sharett

Moshe Sharett was the Foreign Minister of Israel from 1948 to 1956 and had held a very esteemed position because of his reputation through his pre-State role as "Diplomat of Yishuv". He was the Prime Minister of Israel from December 1953 to November 1955. Apart from the period when he was the Prime Minister, Sharett was the next to Ben-Gurion. He, in

36. "It is of course clear that, as in the past, the brunt of the struggle on behalf of the Jewish National Home will be borne by the Yishuv in the front line trenches... (However) this great weapon was in itself the result of two powerful political instruments, the Balfour Declaration and the Mandate....", Zionist Review (London), 19 May 1939.

fact, was the creator of the Foreign Ministry. He is known as the father of Israel's Asia policy and he is said to have prepared the blue-print for Israel's Africa policy as well.

Before trying to make an attempt at formulating Moshe Sharett's views of the Third World, we would like to point out that material in this regard is scanty. It is true that there are voluminous speeches of Sharett at the Knesset and elsewhere (many of them with English translation), but very little material is found there to formulate our ideas about his views of the Third World. In his book Roaming Over Asia, precious little is available to know his views of the Third World. A collection of his speeches from 1946 to 1949 appeared as At the Gate of the Nations, in 1958. Moreover, there are numerous articles in the newspaper Davar. The first volume of his Political Diary was published in 1964. But with all that one must admit that not enough material is available for our purpose.

Now, talking about Moshe Sharett's role in establishing relations with Asia and Africa, Walter Eytan says:

He had been able to achieve much in the field of international relations....He (Israel) had overcome great obstacles to establish in Asia links which have stood the test of time and
she had begun to make her way on the African continent which then was stirring into independent life. 38

On the same theme, Moshe Sharett's biographer Aaron Soviv says:

As more and more of the nations of Asia and Africa gained their independence and were admitted to UN membership Moshe Sharett cultivated their friendship and established cultural and economic links with them. All the technological, administrative and educational know-how of Israel was unselfishly put at their disposal (of prime importance in cementing these friendships were the treaties and close ties established with Burma and Ghana). 39

For political-diplomatic reasons, Israel desired to be considered an integral part of Asia. Moshe Sharett, as the Foreign Minister, fervently expressed this feeling while speaking in Rangoon in 1953 at a mass rally organized by the First Asian Socialist Conference. He emphasized the point that the creation of the State of Israel was "not an innovation in Asian history. It was an act of restoration...we have returned to our homeland in Asia and we are proud to occupy our place in the family of Asian peoples, so many of whom achieved or rather regained their independence at the same time as we." 40


But, he knew that because of historical reasons, it might sound hollow if Israel tries to identify itself with Asia. So, he rather came out with the thesis that Israel, because of its past link with the West, is in a better position to help out the countries of Asia. He made this point very clear when he said:

In a certain sense, we of Israel differ from all the other peoples of Asia with whose representatives we are privileged to sit around this table. We have our remote origin in the Western part of this continent. Our physical tie with that land was never broken. Our spiritual tie with it has always been intense and formed a dominant theme of our history throughout the centuries....

We rejoice at having been re-admitted into the fraternity of Asian peoples assembled here under the banner of socialism. While re-integrating ourselves into the fabric of Asian life, we do not propose to divert ourselves of the heritage of civilization which we have acquired during the long centuries of our wandering in distant climes - rather we are anxious to graft that heritage on to the ancient stock of our national culture. We believe that such a fusion of what is best in the ancient and modern worlds is essential to enable Asia to progress. 41

In his speech to the UN General Assembly on 15 November 1951, Moshe Sharett's sympathetic perception of the Third World was discernible. He said:

What we see around us is, in the broadly historic sense of the term, a revolutionary phase, the root cause of which lies in the obsolescence of time-honoured relationships of dependence and sway....

....A synthetic and harmonious solution of the problem entails on both sides, courageous forethought, freedom from prejudice and wise restraint. 42

This is just an expression of concern and sympathy for the Third World. Here we do not find that Sharett was anyway relating the Third World to Israel's security and its foreign policy (as Ben Gurion did). Further, Sharett continued:

Israel is fully conscious that poverty and ignorance are hereditary enemies of lasting peace. The Government of Israel is determined to do all it can to root out these twin evils...and to add its proof that true democracy can be as fully operative for the common weal in Asia as in any other part of the world. 43

Thus, we see that "indeed Sharett was much more sensitive to the Third World". Further, "it was he who

42. Israel in a World of Transition, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Jerusalem, 1956, pp. 8-11.
43. Ibid.
Prepared many of the intellectual and policy guidelines for Israel's far-reaching presence in Africa, which, Golda Meir, his successor as Foreign Minister, was to transform into a major policy initiative from 1958 onwards.  

Mrs Golda Meir

Mrs Meir was the Minister for Labour and National Insurance from March 1949 to June 1956 and, from June 1956 to January 1966, she was the Foreign Minister of Israel. Mrs Meir has not made any attempt to conceptualise her views of the Third World. But, from the various speeches in the UN and elsewhere and interviews, we can draw a picture of her views of the Third World.

Though as early as 1956, Mrs Meir said: "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", yet her efforts in Asia have been less successful. Mrs Meir's most successful foreign policy initiative was the Israeli

44. Michael Brecher, n. 4, p. 274.

technical assistance programme in Africa. During her tenure as the Foreign Minister (1956-66) Mrs Meir visited Asia once (1962), and Africa four times (1958, 1959-60, 1962 and 1964). Her visits to Africa show the amount of interest she had taken in Africa. In the words of Mary Syrkin, her biographer:

Golda was less successful in establishing warm personal ties with the statesmen of Asia. While the basic human and political needs of the young African peoples appealed to her innate simplicity, the ancient complex civilizations of Asia were harder to fathom. Subtlety and ambiguity were virtues which Mrs Meir neither admired nor cultivated. 46

Mrs Meir herself said: "As for our relations with countries in our own continent of Asia, they are stirrings of a certain value, but the labours that have still to be undertaken there are multiple and exacting." 47

Mrs Meir gave a humanitarian dimension to the question of the Third World. In her address to the Fifteenth Session of the UN General Assembly on 10 October 1960,


47. Budget speech of the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mrs Meir, in the Knesset on 4 March 1963.
this particular aspect of her approach to the Third World came out very clearly. She said:

How can we expect Africans to be impressed by the feats of the space age when so many of their own people still are illiterate? You cannot expect the mother in an African village to be elated over the advance of medicine in the world when she sees her children suffering from trachoma, tuberculosis and malaria.... No people can build its future if it does not remember its past. But a people cannot live only by brooding over the past; it must invest all its energy and ability in the future.

The cry that goes out from the African and Asian countries today is: Share with us not only food but also your knowledge of how to produce it. The inequality in the world today is not only in the gap of material things, but what is even more frightening, the gap between those who literally reach for the moon and those who know not how to reach efficiently into their own soil to produce their daily needs. 48

Thus, from the above, it may be maintained that in the Ben Gurionian vein she talked about the tremendous gap between the developed and developing countries. And, over and over again, she appealed to the developed countries and to the United Nations to help these countries to get out from their predicament. She said:

48. UN General Assembly, 10 October 1960, when sixteen new states were admitted to the United Nations.
Supplied by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Israel, Jerusalem.
To us, as I believe to the world, Africa is the central challenge of our time. It symbolises the abhorrence of exploitation and discrimination of peoples that for centuries had been victims of that treatment, but it is also a challenge to the developed world, which is hidden to muster all its forces for the arduous task of narrowing the vast gap between the millions of African and the inhabitants of older and advanced countries. 49

On the other hand, in her various speeches and addresses, we find that Mrs Meir constantly sought to identify Israel with Africa. Thus she said:

In the eyes of the State of Israel and of the Jewish people, Africa is not only an essential part of the world...it is a symbol of aspiration to equality and rejection of that discrimination and differentiation with which the pages of Israel's history are also crowded. We feel a strong spiritual and emotional closeness to the peoples of Africa as they arise and take the road to independence. We perhaps, better than any other people, can understand the tremendous surge of happiness and pride which sweeps that great continent today. 50

Similarly, in her budget speech in 1962 also, Mrs Meir repeated the same theme: "The Government and the people of Israel welcome and fully identify thereby with the accelerated continuation of the process of liberation of peoples." 51

49. Ibid.
50. Budget Speech of the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mrs Meir, in the Knesset on 4 March 1963.
51. Ibid.
Talking about the objectives of Israel's relations with the emerging Third World countries, Mrs Meir said:

Surely these connections have a variegated basis, yet it seems to me that it is possible to state with all modesty but with all certainty that these bonds are based on the fact that on the part of Israel, there is not the slightest direct or indirect intention of dominating them, but the will to co-operate and help each other within the framework of friendly relationship between equals, and this fact is well known, as has been proved in the liberated and developing countries. Our hope and prayer is that these countries shall achieve economic, social and educational independence as soon as possible and without unnecessary tremors and the purpose of our contribution is to speed up the process. 52

During her second visit to Africa, Mrs Meir made the following statement in an answer to a question regarding Israeli goals: "Israel wants something in return for the co-operation and goodwill it brings to African peoples and governments. This great thing is Friendship." 53 But right here, it may be emphasized that Mrs Meir did not consider the desire for friendship as an end in itself. Like Ben-Gurion, Mrs Meir also was not a starry-eyed idealist. She believed that in order to jump over the Arab fence, an Israeli presence in Africa would be helpful. 54 She very bluntly expressed this

52. Ibid.
53. Quoted in "Israel's Policy in Africa", by Bernard Reich, Middle East Journal, Winter 1964, p. 73.
54. Ibid.
opinion when she said: "Our aid to the new countries is not a matter of philanthropy. We are in need of fraternity and friendship of the new nations than they are our assistance." 55

Mrs Meir firmly believed in the effectiveness of Israel's presence in Africa. As early as 1960, she said: "Now (it is) possible to say that Israel had broken through the political siege...and out into the international scene." 56

In 1961, she again expressed the same optimism and said that "the process of (breaking through the siege) has gone forward and become surer." 57

Moreover, Mrs Meir was not unaware of the economic aspect of Israel's links with the Third World. In her budget speech in the Knesset on 30 March 1959, Mrs Meir said:

In the wake of this development of political relations with Africa and Asia, joint economic undertakings have been created...The turnover and extent of the work engaged in by the joint concerns already reaches substantial totals, and this item in our invisible exports is becoming a perceptible element in our foreign trade. 58

55. Mrs Meir's Speech to the Knesset on 24 October 1960.
56. Mrs Meir's Budget Speech.
57. Ibid.
Thus, from the above analysis, it becomes clear that in spite of Mrs Meir's awareness of the political-diplomatic and economic consequences of Israel's relations with the Third World, the essential element in her views of the Third World is that of humanitarianism and sympathy and, we can do well to close this brief analysis by quoting her again: "Israel has always assumed, is assuming today and will continue in the future to assume an active role in every operation and every objective meant to consummate the restoration of human and national dignity to once downtrodden peoples in Africa and in every other place on earth."  

Levi Eshkol

Eshkol joined the Ben Gurion Cabinet in October 1951 as the Minister of Agriculture and Development and continued up to June 1952. He assumed the responsibility of the Finance portfolio in June 1952 and continued up to June 1963. Then he became the Prime Minister (and Defence Minister as well) in 1963 and continued as the Prime Minister till his death in March 1969. In June 1967, Moshe Dayan

59. Budget Speech of Foreign Minister, Mrs Meir, in the Knesset on 4 March 1963.
became the Defence Minister. From June 1963, when he took over as the Head of Government till his death, Eshkol was obviously at the helm of affairs and in all the policy decisions including Israel's policy towards the Third World, he had had a major role to play. But, before going to probe into his ideas about the Third World, we could not help quoting Michael Brecher: "An official who knew him well remarked after Eshkol's death that he never understood foreign policy." This was the greatest frustration of his public life.

Levi Eshkol was the only Prime Minister of Israel to have visited Africa. He visited seven African states in May-June 1966. From the speeches he made there and to the Knesset after he came back, we can see that Africa was prominent in his global image.

Early in 1964, Levi Eshkol talked about the intention of having friendly relations with the countries of the Third World. He said:

Over the heads of our recalcitrant neighbours, we shall continue to offer our friendship to the developing nations most of which have

60. Eshkol has published two books: (1) On the Way, and (2) In the Fanges of Settlement. In fact, there is no evidence of his formulating any ideas about the Third World in these two books. However, there are various speeches and interviews and addresses of Eshkol from which we can draw a picture of his views about the Third World.

61. Michael Brecher, n. 4, p. 296.
recently been liberated from foreign tutelage. We can meet them as a nation that - like them - has regained freedom in recent years, and share with them the fruits of the experience we have gained in rebuilding our country, in science, technology and social values. 62

During his visit to Africa, Levi Eshkol harped on the same note; but here he tried to identify Israel with the African countries. Addressing a special session of the Ivory Coast Parliament on 2 June 1966, Eshkol said that together with the African States Israel has joined the struggle against racial discrimination and religious intolerance in all their forms wherever they appeared. He further stressed the point when he said that Israel had been born from a longing for freedom and memories of persecution and "that is why Israel is following with sympathy the construction of new societies throughout Africa." 63

During his African tour, in Congo, in reply to a dinner speech by Premier Leonard Mulemba, Eshkol observed 64 that it was perhaps not a coincidence that the Jewish and African peoples shared the ideal of freedom, which they attained in the same historical epoch. For generations, the terms

64. Ibid.
"Negro" and "Jew" had been by-words for oppression and agony, servitude and exploitation. These terms had become the litmus paper for the conscience of mankind. 65

After his return to Israel from his African tour, Eshkol in his Reflections on Africa expressed the same feelings and spoke of the fact that "the African states and Israel are also bound together by memories of the servitude and suffering that were so long the portion of the African peoples and of Jewry." 66

Talking about the exemplary co-operation between Israel and Africa Eshkol said:

On its motives and significance I pondered ceaselessly during my recent travels through Africa. In the end, I formed the view that it is not least the outcome of the following factors:

(i) African states and Israel gained freedom from foreign dominion during the same historical period....

(ii) Israel has no wish to secure a foothold in any African State against its will or interest. Our major concern is to impart knowledge and skill to local personnel so that they can take the whole responsibility into their own hands with the least delay.

(iii) Like Israel, the new States of Africa fell into the category of developing countries. 67

65. Ibid.

66. Israel, Israel Prime Minister on African Tour, no. 7, Autumn 1966, Published by the Department of Information, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Jerusalem.

67. Ibid.
With all these ideas of Israel's identification with the African countries and the desire to help them, the question of African countries' help to break the "well of Arab hostility" was always there in Eshkol's mind. Again he said:

Israel's friendship with Africa is a matter not of one-sided aid but of reciprocity.... Israel watches the unfolding of the African States with the warmest sympathy. It identifies itself, with all its heart and soul, with their aspirations to solve their problems, to enjoy peace and progress. We value inestimably the appeals which African States are making for the establishment of peace not only in Africa, but in the neighbouring Middle East also....

During his visit to Ivory Coast in May–June 1966, Eshkol in reply to a dinner speech by the President of Ivory Coast, Houphouet-Boigny said: "The friendship expressed to us envelops continents and annihilates distances. Driving through Abidjan, I had the vision of this powerful wave of friendship breaking down the wall of hostility which surrounds us and that Africa was proclaiming that peace would finally triumph." 69

Thus from the above analysis, it becomes clear to us that Africa loomed large in Eshkol's global image.

Abba Eban

Abba Eban was the Minister without portfolio in the Ben Gurion Cabinet from December 1959 to August 1960 and then

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68. Ibid.

69. The Israel Digest, vol. 9, no. 12, 17 June 1966.
again from August 1960 to June 1963, he was the Minister for Education and Culture. Then, from June 1963 to January 1966, he was the Deputy Prime Minister and from January 1966 he has been the Foreign Minister (till the period under discussion).

Abba Eban is a prolific writer. Among his publications are *Voice of Israel; My People: Story of the Jews; Tide of Nationalism; and Zionism and the Arab World*. These publications apart, his interviews, press conferences, speeches are voluminous. And from these we can make an attempt to assess his views of the Third World.

In a speech given on Radio Australia on 4 April 1967, Abba Eban explained the objective of Israel's presence in the Third World. He said: "Israel is endeavouring to carry out beyond her frontiers an international vocation in one of the central problems that affect the destiny of our age. I refer to the drama of development....This explains the unexpected presence of Israel amongst the developing areas of Africa, Asia and Latin America."  

70. *Radio Australia, 4 April 1967.*
On 24 January 1967, Abba Eban had made a speech on the occasion of the establishment of the "Israel Asia Friendship League". In the course of the speech, Eban said that Israel was an Asian country. But it is interesting to note that in the very same speech he said that a few days earlier he argued with the same degree of enthusiasm that Israel had such strong links with Europe that the "European Common Market States must accept her as an Associate Member".

It seems that Eban had realized the importance of Asia in world politics. Thus, during his visit to the five Far Eastern countries, he said that his mission was to strengthen relations with "a part of the world which is important beyond dispute".

Moreover, in the statement by the Minister for Foreign Affairs in the Knesset on 3 April 1967 on his tour in Asia,


72. Ibid.

73. Bangkok Post, 2 March 1967.
Australia and New Zealand and Israel's Relations with that region, Eban said: "The strengthening of Israel's position in these countries is important for itself, but also as an indication that we are becoming more rooted in their consciousness - a trend particularly vital in the face of pressures aimed at wooing Asia away from us." Then he adopted the line of cautious optimism and said: "I am convinced that with a reasonable investment of manpower and by other means, Israel can immediately buttress its position and enhance its positive presence in East Asia and the Pacific." As the Foreign Minister Abba Eban has received various African dignitaries, addressed various conferences and met thousands of African trainees in Israel. But he does not seem to have conceptualized his views on Africa. He recognizes that Israel's presence in Africa has political-diplomatic value. Thus he says:

Israel's presence in the sphere of development is not manifested in a vacuum but constitutes a central expression of our overall policy respecting national and social liberation,...We shall not alter our policy in Africa or anywhere else on earth in the case of total liberation and intensified development. The value of this activity is not measured in short-term political or economic profits. It opens out to sweeping horizons and it is too early yet to estimate finally the bounty of its effects. But the advantages which Israel has already gained from


75. Ibid.
its efforts are considerable. This enterprise has raised the status of Israel among the nations, it has won its prestige and appreciation inside and beyond the developing countries, it has imper­ted to Israel an international and humanitarian mission extending beyond its own borders, it has extracted Israel from its total regional isolation, it has shown up the ludicrousness of Arab charges which distort the political and social image of this country, it has inspired confidence in the capacity of small states to contribute to the shaping of the world of commerce, and it has created within the developing world's assets of confidence and understanding that can make their influence felt for the benefit of Middle Eastern peace. In the areas of economy and trade, too, links have been forged whose advantages are assured, if only in a long-term sense. 76

In his statement at the 21st Plenary Session of the UN General Assembly on 4 October 1966, Abba Eban said:

...and its (General Assembly of the UN) condemnation of apartheid must be governed by a stern consciousness of what ensues whenever men are classified in different levels of privileges, rights and disabilities. Israel's solidarity with Africa, on this question is determined by the memories that our people carry with them across generations of martyrdom and discrimi­nation. 77

Thus from the above, it is evident that Eban's interest in the Third World was only peripheral.

Shimon Peres

Shimon Peres became the Deputy Director General of the Ministry of Defence in 1952 and the Director in 1953. In

76. Budget speech by the Israel Minister for Foreign Affairs, Abba Eban, in the Knesset on 14 February 1967.

77. Israel Information Service (New York).

78. Shimon Peres' views about the Third World were essentially gathered from an interview Mr. Peres was kind enough to give to the writer on 30 May 1972.
1959, he became a member of the Knesset, and was made the Deputy Defence Minister by Ben Gurion. Thus, from the mid-fifties down to 1965 (when he resigned as a result of the split in Mapai), Shimon Peres was in the decision-making elite circle of the Israeli Cabinet.


Peres' essential approach to the Third World countries is that of "to be of help to others". He said:

The world into which they (the newly independent countries of Asia and Africa) emerged as independent participants was a world divided into the haves and the have-nots, and they were the have nots... The challenge of our generation is the mobilization of all the moral forces in the world to bring about a revolutionary rise in the standards of the underdeveloped nations in the economic, political and social fields.

And so it was Israel's hope that she might help in some small way to realize this aim... because of her genuine desire to be of service. Moreover, the emergence of these poorer new nations "stimulated the Israeli hope of fulfilling a cherished dream to become a giver and not only a taker, a State that not merely receives but which also proffers aid." This is a basic...

79. In an answer to a question put by the writer, Peres emphatically said that the "Bandung debacle had nothing to do with Israel's going over to Africa." Not everybody agrees with his view.


81. Ibid.
question of ideology Israel believes in; "and ideological considerations play a central role in even the most practical of our decisions." 82

But the objectives of Israel's relations with the Third World, according to Perea, were political as well. He made it very clear when he said:

To be helpful was our primary consideration. The political factor came later, and was in no way contradictory. Political independence for the new states of Africa and Asia did not automatically mean an immediate improvement in their material lot; but it did give them freedom of expression and voting rights in the bodies of the United Nations. Their sudden appearance on the podium of world assemblies aroused first curiosity and then attention, and the world began to take notice of their declarations and political positions. Israel was understandably anxious that they should get to know the true image of Israel society and add their young voice to call for peaceful negotiations to settle the Middle East dispute, rather than be drawn into the Arab propagandist orbit. 83

Further, he described Israel's links with the African countries as "our peaceful efforts in Africa to surround the belt of enmity with a belt of friendship in the new independent countries". 84

Moreover, the military strategic position of East Africa was a major factor in Israel's military and economic

82. Ibid., p. 154.
83. Ibid., p. 155.
aid to Africa. He himself describes the situation thus: "In a talk with the Emperor, I said that 'Israel is very anxious for Ethiopia to be strong, independent and developed' and that Israel is ready to do much to further this aim [for] a strong Ethiopia can bring about great changes in East Africa, mainly by making it stable and secure." 36

This point was more poignantly brought home to him in an interview he had given to Michael Brecher (June 1966) when he delineated the policy solutions he would attempt in the next decade. One of them is: "To build a 'second Egypt' in Africa, that is, to help convert Ethiopia's economic and military strength into a counter-force to Egypt, thereby giving Africans another focus." 36

Thus we see that in Shimon Peres' view, the Third World is a factor in global politics and it is related to Israel's security and foreign policy.

Yigal Allon

Yigal Allon entered the Knesset in 1954 as a leader of the party Ahдут Ha''avodah. In 1961, Allon became the Minister of Labour when his party joined a coalition ministry led by Ben-Gurion. He continued in that capacity of the Labour Minister till January 1965, and from January 1968 he has been the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Immigrant Absorption.

35. David's Sling, n. 80, p. 152.
Avlon's publications are quite a few. He has written a penetrating analysis of the Arab-Israeli conflict - named Curritn of Sand, another on The Campaign of Palmeh, and two accounts of Israel's armed forces since the early days of Yishuv - The Making of Israel's Army and Shield of David. Moreover, he has written quite a few articles. But the most important article for our purpose is the one he had written about his reflections on his visit to India in 1959 entitled "Meetings in India".87

In Avlon's views also, the Third World was a global political force. But his centre of attention was and has been India. From his above mentioned article, we find that he nourished the fond hope that Nehru, a socialist and a democrat that he was, will ultimately give up his stand of 'national interest' and will have normal diplomatic relations with Israel. There has obviously been no breakthrough in this direction but Avlon still holds that Israel-Indic friendship is in the interest of Israel. In the article mentioned above, Avlon has described his meetings with various leaders of India (including Nehru) but the essential message he tries to convey is that it would be in the interest of both India and Israel to have friendly relationship. In his "meetings" he was hopeful about it. Thus, after his arrival from the Indian tour he told newsmen that "Mr Nehru expressed regret (during their meeting)...

87. Mibbshim (From the Inside) In Horoi, vol. 27, no. 4, December 1955, pp. 355-71 (in Hebrew). Translated to Writer by Mr. Joshua Brilliant, an M.A. student in the Department of Asian Studies and Research Assistant in the same Department.
that because of unfortunate coincidences in the past normal relations had not been established between India and Israel. Israel should not interpret this as a hostile attitude toward Israel and wished Israel prosperity and development." 88 According to Allon Nehru hoped that one day normal relations would be established between the two countries. Allon thought that closer relations between India and Israel were possible even without the establishment of normal diplomatic ties.

Thus we see that in Allon's perception of Israel's relations with the Third World, India held the most conspicuous position. Allon has not conceptualized his views of Africa, but his approach is that Israel should identify itself with the emerging countries of Africa.

Moche Dayan

Moche Dayan became the Minister of Agriculture in December 1959 and continued in the same office till November 1964. In June 1967, he became the Defence Minister.

Dayan published the only book that he has written - the widely known - Diary of the Sinai Campaign, in 1965. A collection of his speeches and statements on security and foreign policy after the Six-Day war was published as New Men - Other Relationships in 1969. But he has made numerous speeches,

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given numerous interviews, and has held numerous press conferences. Moreover, during his tenure as the Minister of Agriculture, Moshe Dayan, went to Africa twice in 1960 and in 1963. During his second visit he wrote a series of six articles in the Jerusalem Post. 89

Obviously, Dayan has not conceptualized his ideas about the Third World. His approach is that these Third World countries are underdeveloped countries and as such, they should be helped and that is what he wanted to do as the Minister of Agriculture. He said: "...but on the whole, it can be said that after decades of activity on their part modernization has scarcely penetrated beyond their boundaries." 90

Again he said: "Their countries are big, their problems manifold and complex and few solutions are anywhere in sight." 91

Elaborating his argument he said: "While the political parties here bear ideological names (socialists etc.) they are actually based on the tribal structure and the people support 'leader A' or 'leader B' depending on where they come from and not what they believe in." 92 Thus, this having been the condition of the people in that continent, they just needed to be helped.

89. Jerusalem Post, 12, 19, 22, 26, 29 November, and 2 and 6 December 1963. The general title is "West African Diary".
90. Ibid., 29 November 1963.
91. Ibid., 12 November 1963.
92. Ibid., 22 November 1963.
So, in his concluding remarks of those series of articles, he said: "The countries I have just visited (Togo, Cameroon, the Ivory Coast, the Central African Republic and Ghana) have made it clear that they want us and our agricultural operations there can and must be expanded." 93

But this help is being given not for nothing. By this process, the Africans know the Israelis and Israel. And, an image of Israel as a friendly country is definitely for the benefit of Israel. He thus said:

"Through our people Africans are introduced to Israeli farmer.... They are introduced to the Israeli village.... Above all they are introduced to Israel dedicated to assistance and development of the African countries working hand in hand with native citizens in the bush on the tractor and... introducing them to modern cultivation. 94"

From the articles mentioned above, one can make out how Dayan feels to what extent the continent of Africa is problematic and what little Israel can do about it. Since the problem of Israel's security is upper-most in Dayan's mind, Euro-America has necessarily been the central focus of attention for Dayan and consequently the interest in the Third World has just been marginal.

Thus, from the above analysis we see that for none of the leaders of Israel has the Third World been a major

93. Ibid., 6 December 1963.
94. Ibid.
foreign policy goal. The reasons are obvious. Israeli leaders' perceptions of the international politics are mainly influenced and dominated by Israel's security and survival as a sovereign independent state. The war of Independence of 1948-49, though successful, assured Israel only of immediate survival. The Arab Powers' determination to have a "second round" was made no secret. So, it is hardly surprising that the quest for lasting security has been the obsession with all the Israeli foreign policy decision-makers.

Thus, we see (from the above analysis) that Ben Gurion perceived the Third World in terms of the historic process of anti-colonialism and he looked at Israel's relations with it in the level of Israel acting as the "light to the nations". However, he realized the political importance of these countries to Israel. The "Sharett era" in Israel's foreign policy was marked by the ideological principle of non-identification. Sharett's attitude towards the Third World countries was primarily based on this factor. He could realize the political diplomatic importance of these countries for Israel for breaking the "Arab Wall of hatred". Sharett, in fact, was the initiator of Israel's Third World policy.

Mrs Meir realized the value of the Third World's friendship towards Israel. But her approach to the Third World was basically humanitarian and she meant to help the African countries and she, in fact, was able to establish strong links with Africa. Eshkol was the only Israeli Prime
Minister to have visited Africa (in 1966). He thus demonstrated that Africa was an important factor in his foreign policy.

Shimon Peres' perception of the Third World was more or less on Mrs. Meir's line. He was, in fact, the architect of Israel's military assistance programme to the Third World countries. But security and arms procurement have been his overwhelming obsession. For Eban, Dayan and Allon, the Third World has been of marginal interest.

95 See Shimon Peres, n. 80, pp. 31-103 and 137-49.
CHAPTER III