CONCLUSION

Since the dawn of civilization, India and West Asia have had extensive contacts in social, political, economic and cultural fields. The creation of the Zionist state of Israel in 1948, rendering Palestine Arabs homeless in their own land was strongly resented by the India. However, India recognized the Zionist state in September 1950, but did not establish full diplomatic relations. India being a champion of anti-colonialism, anti-racism, could not have established diplomatic relations with Israel without compromising on these principles. India’s policy of non-alignment also did not match with Israel’s de-facto membership of Western bloc. Thus, close relationship with Israel could have seriously undermined the image of India as a champion of Third World Interest.

Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru both had while sympathizing with Jews in their sufferings at the hands of Nazis in Europe, unequivocally opposed the planting of a Zionist state in an Arab homeland. In September 1947, the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP) submitted two reports, the majority and minority. The minority report was supported and signed by India because it proposed a federal state comprising of two autonomous units, i.e. Jewish and Arab units. But the majority report was accepted which failed to provide a sovereign Palestine state. Thus India voted against the UN plan for the partition of Palestine in 1947 and again on Israel’s admission to the UN in 1948. After independence India offered her good offices for conciliation, whenever peace seemed to be in danger, such as in
Korea, the Suez and the Congo crisis. The Indian commitment to the Non-Alignment Movement made it very cautious in its dealings with the superpowers encroachment on the independence of the countries in any form. India criticized the principle of opening the door to all Jews of the world to the Palestine.

Though India maintained a consistent policy towards the crisis in the region, there were certain groups of people who did not see eye to eye with the government. The Hindu Mahasabha represented them. They always criticized the Nehru government for withholding the recognition of Israel. They willfully ignored the fact that Israelis are the occupiers with imperialistic and colonialist ideology. Nevertheless, India being anti-imperialism and anti-colonialism her support to Palestine struggle was obvious.

After approving recognition to Israel, the Indian government allowed Israel to open a consulate in Bombay but the diplomatic relations were not established. Though the recognition was granted but the Indian government continued to support the Palestinian cause. She always supported Palestine as an Arab country and viewed Israel as an imperialist creation. On September 1950, India formally recognized the Zionist State of Israel. The decision to recognize Israel was a mark of respect to the institution of United Nations, which had accepted the state of Israel, The deferment of Israel’s recognition would have been treated as an act of defiance.

Taking recognition as a welcome gesture, the Israeli government made various efforts for establishing diplomatic relations with India. But the then
Prime Minister rejected these efforts and also refused to normalize relations with Israel. However, the Jan Sangh and other likeminded groups however, considered Israel as a democratic state in the region and always demanded for having the diplomatic relations with the Zionist state. The Jan Sangh argued that when the USA, Russia, UK, Yugoslavia and the other countries of the world can have diplomatic relations with Israel and Arab countries, it does not make any sense why India alone insult Israel and the world Jews in a stupid bid to appease the Arabs. The party believes that India can partly checkmate Pakistani influence in the Middle East by normalizing the relations with the state of Israel. The Jan Sangh argued that why India should side with the Arabs against Israel? When, they (Arab countries) do not side with India against Pakistan.

Nevertheless these people thought that friendship with Arabs was merely a ploy to appease the Indian Muslims. For them, the Palestinian cause was of no value. The massive trade with the Arab world and remittances which India was receiving on account of millions of Indians working in Gulf was of no consequence to them; their heartfelt desire was friendship with Israel. They argued that India’s unnecessary support to the Arabs could encourage them (Arabs) to adopt more hostile attitude towards Israel. It is ironic that they were ignoring the fact that Arabs were not hostile to Israel but it was Israel, which was very much hostile to the Arabs. The Jan Sangh also argued that Indian leadership was succumbing to Arab pressure in a bid to appease them and thought Israel to be a worthwhile force in the region and a symbol of stability.
However, they conveniently forgot that Israel was and still remains the greatest destabilizing factor in the region.

Jan Sangh, which later on merged into Janta Party, came into power in 1977 after the defeat of Mrs. Indira Gandhi’s Congress Party in the parliamentary elections. Although, the Janta Government did not complete its full term, it stuck to India’s age old foreign policy postulates. With regard to Palestinian question, it maintained a consistent stand.

The coming to power of Janta government as Jan Sangh its major component represented by no less a person Mr. Atal Bihari Vajpayee as Foreign Minister had its repercussion on India’s policy towards Israel. The presence of Morarji Desai, a true Gandhian, did not allow much space to Vajpayee to maneuver the policies in favour of Israel. Moreover, in Israel, the ultra Zionist party led by Menahem Begin came to power which always wanted to usurp West Bank, Jerusalem and Golan Heights as part of “Greater Israel” project. Likud and its policies were continuously opposed by the Janta government and in spite of Vajpayee’s overturns to Israel, there was not much of development towards initiation of relationship with Israel. The postulates of India’s foreign policy remained rooted in principled ideological stand that was to support the Palestinian Cause. The period during Janta Government rule witnessed a very grim situation in Indo-Israeli relations. The hopes for the diplomatic relations with India which Israel had in the early years had vanished in the later years and she tried to make use of whatever opportunities she could to woo Indian friendship.
India condemned the Camp David Agreement and the Egypt-Israel Treaty of March 26, 1979, which meant the total abandonment of the cause of the Arab countries and Palestine. India firmly stated that the Palestinian question was central to the entire dispute and unless that was resolved to the full satisfaction of the Palestinians themselves, there could not be lasting peace in the region.

In the second half of the eighties, both India and Israel witnessed a change in their political leadership. Rajiv Gandhi was elected as the Prime Minister of India in 1984, while in Israel the National Unity Government (NUG) was formed on September 13, 1984 and according to the coalition Shimon Peres became Prime Minister of Israel for two years. He made a major effort to improve Israel’s foreign relations such as establishing diplomatic relations with Spain, Poland and some African countries and tried to improve relations with India. During Rajiv Gandhi era, the relation between Israel and India was not confined to open official meetings directly or through a third party, but also extended to secret meetings and consultations. Rajiv Gandhi took some pro-Jewish decision like lifting restriction on Israeli sportsmen coming to India to participate in the Davis Cup. He did not hesitate to collaborate with Israel at certain levels. But the West Asian policy under Rajiv Gandhi remained more or less the same as before. He maintained the broad framework of supporting the “Liberation Movements” in the region.

However, the end of the cold war brought a different world order and its effects had spread far and wide. The disintegration of the Soviet Union and her
socialist bloc led to the demise of Warsaw Pact, United States of America remained as the only superpower. India responded to the changing international political environment. While keeping the Nehruvian policy, certain aspects of foreign policy was moulded according to the changes in inter and intra-Arab politics and their relations with Israel are seen in her policy in the post cold war era.

The shift in India’s policy towards Palestine Policy surfaced in 1988 when the Indian delegation to the United Nations General Assembly session on Palestine issue refrained carefully from condemning Israel. Earlier, condemning Israel and holding her responsible for escalating tension in West Asia has been the conventional part of Indian speech in the UN. India also recognized Israel’s right to exit in peace and security within internationally recognized boundaries. It was observed that India was initiating a new approach to the problem which could prove to be a prelude to Indo-Israeli relations, to which the Israeli government was quick enough to respond. India witnessed a fair amount of uncertainties in her foreign policies at the beginning of the nineties. Governments had been formed and had fallen within very short intervals. There was confusion whether Indian foreign policy was moving towards the West or had remained as steadfast as before. This period also witnessed a grave economic crisis which had its ramification on foreign policy as well.

The change of governments during this short span of time also had certain impact on Indo-Israeli relations. The Janata Dal government of V.P.
Singh was attached to Indian tradition of keeping aloof from power rivalry. But the minority government led by Chandra Shekhar had shown sign of drifting more towards the United States, permanent ally of Israel. In the domestic front, the Indian government had not strength to revive her economy which was in a very bad shape. This economic compulsion made India look for external help and compelled her to have a second look at her foreign policy towards the West and also towards the state of Israel. The importance of the later was felt because of the strong Jewish financial lobby in USA which is always sympathetic of Israel. Hence, the instability of governments in India and her economic crisis at the beginning of the nineties directly or indirectly influenced her foreign policy which proved favourable for the Zionist state.

The 1990s witnessed tremendous changes in regional and international politics. This decade will go down in history as one the most important and momentous years of this century. The pace of changes had been fast and effective covering various spheres of life. There were political and economic changes at global level which were accentuated by massive advancement in information technology. Every part of the world was integrated. Geographical distance had been conquered and the world was shrinking. This was in response to the development in scientific and technological creativity. Micro-electronic revolution had been moving at a great speed. It was often referred to as the “Fourth Industrial Revolution”. With these developments, the world was also moving towards capitalist economy and economy factors had become more prominent than ever before.
In this fast changing world, India could not keep herself aloof from the rest of the world. India has moved towards forming closer relations with new economic centres like Germany, Japan, and USA etc. In view of these realities, the government feels that India would benefit more and could serve her national interest best if her economy is integrated with the global economy.

Moreover, India needed high and sophisticated technology and foreign investments to become a regional power politically and economically. So, without opening up her economy or in other words without liberalization India would not be able to achieve her objectives. This policy of liberalization had made India join the global economy. Liberalization of economy gave India more room for cooperation with industrialized nations even with Israel.

The shift of India’s foreign policy towards West Asia was evident clearly in December 1991, when India voted along with the rest of the Security Council members of the United Nations on the question of terrorism in Libya and the revocation of the earlier UN General Assembly Resolution 3379 of 1975 which equated Zionism with racism.

The upgradation of Indo-Israel relationship to the ambassadorial level was announced on January 29, 1992. Although, India had recognized the State of Israel in September 1950 but it had desisted from establishing full diplomatic relations. The most important reason behind it was the blatant disregard which Israel displayed for all civilized code of conduct in international affairs, it not only occupied the land which did not belong to it but also refused to negotiate a settlement. India’s policy of non-alignment also
did not match with Israel’s de-facto membership of Western bloc led by the US.

There were some arguments that by establishing the diplomatic relations with Israel, India would be in a better position to involve her in the West Asia peace process and thereby influence the Israeli policy in favour of the Palestinians. But those who believed this were probably living in a make believe world, far away from the dynamics of Israeli-Palestinian conflict and negotiations. Even Yasser Arafat had stated that there were other ways and means by which India could have 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. If India were to make a decision primarily on the criterion of Israel’s West Asian attitude, there was and there still is no case at all for establishing the diplomatic relations. True, all of them have begun talking but Israel continues to hold out and is in illegal occupation of an entire country and parts of others. It is getting what was denied to it without an inch or an ounce of concession.

There was another argument put forward by BJP leaders that if India can have diplomatic relations with China and Pakistan, who are supposed to be in occupation of the Indian land, what was the problem in having ties and yet opposing the policies of someone who is occupying not our but somebody else’s territories. The argument used by these leaders was utterly amateurish. They were ignoring the fact that Israel is in occupation of an entire country, is stealing all its water and is in the process of appropriating occupied lands
through illegal settlements being allotted to immigrants welcomed on the basis of religion. A doctrine diametrically opposed to what India professes to stand for.

However, several events such as Gulf war and the disintegration of the Soviet Union profoundly altered the patterns of the international politics. After the Gulf war which undermined the unity of Arab world, it was no longer contradictory to espouse the cause of Palestinians and at the same time, have normal dealings with Israel.

After the establishment of diplomatic relations, both India and Israel came closer to each other. The Indo-Israeli cooperation stepped up to mark the new found friendship, this was specially so in political arena. It appeared that the then Indian politicians were indeed suffering from a gilt 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 visits to Israel. In a period of one year from June 1993 – July 1994 many political leaders visited Israel. In addition as many as 18 Indian delegations visited Israel within a period of two years after establishing the diplomatic relations.

The pronouncements of the Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres in May 1993, in Delhi stressed the commonality of approach of the two countries on several issues. A number of agreements were signed between India and Israel during his visit, including those to promote scientific and cultural exchange, transfer of technology, promotion of tourism and business, joint industrial ventures etc.
The main sectors of cooperation between these two states are agriculture, trade, science and technology, defense and security. The Israelis are offering India a collaborative role in more advanced “water tower” solar technology, which is even more effective. Agriculture is considered one of the important areas of cooperation between the two states. Farmers are being sent to Israel to know the Israeli techniques regarding the agriculture production and so on. Indo-Israeli Research Development Farmers (ISRDF) was inaugurated in the Indian Agriculture Research Institute, at Pusa in New Delhi.

The area of cooperation between the two states is trade and commerce. Though there were limited points of contacts between India and Israel prior to diplomatic relations. But after developing ties, trade relations between these countries have grown. The two governments have assisted in creating a friendly environment for the development of business. Thus, the impact of the establishment of diplomatic relations had been most immediately noticeable in economic affairs.

Diplomatic relations between India and Israel and the normalization of bilateral ties also enabled the two countries to develop their military cooperation as a joint strategic interest. The Israel defense industries cannot depend on Israeli market alone and about quarters of its production has to be exported. Therefore, Israel’s military relationship with India presents an attractive and challenging opportunity for Israel and provides a market for its defense industry.

No greater evidence for India’s tie-up with Israel can be offered than the
continuing defense deals with Israel. As the Indian daily newspaper, the Times of India on September 1, 2007, reported that since 2000 India’s purchasing of weaponry and military gadgets from Israel have exceeded 7 billion dollars making Israel the second largest arms supplier to India (after Russia), India is becoming the major financial backer of Israel besides the USA.

India’s counter-terrorism policy holds a special significance for India. Ever since the thawing of relations between the two countries, the growth in partnership between the two countries has been on defense cooperation and counter-terrorism. The two countries agreed on a structured dialogue to broaden and strengthen relations in political, economic and security spheres. They decided to set up a joint ministerial commission to have regular dialogue on security and counter-terrorism and on substantial cooperation on information technology. Under the pretext of helping India to combat terrorism, the underlying game plan is to sell arms to India while keeping tension alive on the other side of the border. Israel does prolific business with friends and foes alike as far as the selling of the arms are concerned. India had paid over 7 billion dollars of the tax payer’s money in purchasing Israeli arms to combat terrorism. Since the US invasion of Iraq in 1993, Israel has accelerated the destruction of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) and has been trying to impose on the Palestinian weak and pliant regimes ready to submit to its dictates. Infighting within the Palestinian ranks between Hamas and Al-Fatah has boosted this design of Israel. Frequent military excursions into Lebanon and Syria are also not ruled out.
Ever since Ariel Sharon became Prime Minister, Israel accelerated the Jewish settlements in the West Bank and Gaza. The Likud coalition under the Sharon made it clear by its deeds that it would never be reconciled to a truly independent Palestinian state. The reaction of Indian government at that time towards the growing crisis in Palestine was predictable. Jaswant Singh was among the first to ring up Israeli foreign minister Shimon Peres to express solidarity with Israel’s so-called fight against terrorism after some suicide attacks had taken place in Israel. Just after Jaswant Singh’s telephonic conversation with Peres, Arafat’s residence and offices were attacked by Israeli forces. This evoked no protest from the Government of India.

Three reasons could explain this new-found Indo-Israeli collusion. The BJP led NDA had developed an extraordinarily close strategic and diplomatic partnership with Israel. For long the RSS ideologues had been ardent admirers of Israel’s military jingoism. Israel has become India’s second largest weapon supplier, selling military technology worth two billion dollars a year. It now coordinates political strategy and intelligence with India and possibly has a hand in some nuclear activities, sharing common interests against such adversaries as Pakistan and Islamic terrorism. Under NDA, New Delhi “broke free” from all the earlier constraints, including the earlier close ties with the Palestinian movement, in pursuing its close friendship with Israel. Unfortunately, despite the left support extended to the present UPA Government, it has resolutely continued ever since 2003 the same policy.
A dangerous sign of the new position is the insistence on the part of both the Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and the Congress President Mrs. Sonia Gandhi that all foreign policy decisions are taken on the basis of “national interests”, that is to say, the decisions are not made on the merits of the case. Since the national interest is deemed to flourish best when a nation can bask in the US’s favour, it is hardly surprising that our national interest always tilts in favour of Israel. There has thus been no condemnation of the wanton acts of violence by Israel where the number of Arabs killed, whether in Palestine or Lebanon, always maintains a ratio of over ten to one, with Israeli victims. Nor has India said anything on continuous starling of Gaza strip at which even European human rights organisation have protested.

India’s location, size, human and economic resources and India’s stature as growing economic, political and military power make it inevitable that India gets drawn into the west Asian quagmire. It makes it inevitable for India to take decisions, and decisions that are not based on emotional or moral quotients. These will have to be decisions based on the empirical and analytical understanding of the situation in the region. On a practical note, for India to invest in the kind of coercive apparatus and technology that Israel advocates would be bad economics. The techniques used by Israel, whether of fencing, or building walls, or gang wars, or any other technique would not only be expensive, it does not guarantee any permanent or full proof solution. All the techniques employed by the Israeli counter-terrorism agencies, have only limited applicability and limited success rates because the counter-terrorism
techniques employed by Israel are reputed for the military effectiveness. The violence that the state apparatus of Israel uses in other states, has only led to further violence and chaos in the region. It is important for India not to be identified with the kind of state that Israel represents: a state where the coercive apparatus has more powers than the civilian authority.