CHAPTER - 2
CREATION OF ISRAEL AND INDIA’S STAND AT VARIOUS STAGES

Zionism and imperialism are the roots of the Palestine imbroglio. When after World War-II the process of Decolonization had started, it was only in Palestine a colonial settler state was established. The powers involved in the question mainly the UK, the USA, and the USSR not only failed to resolve the original contradiction but also actively confirmed it by supporting the Jewish colonization and expulsion of the Arabs from their own country, effecting the establishment of a Zionist state. This was the achievement of Zionism in the first half of the 20th century.1

2.1 India’s Attitude towards the Question of Palestine

Ever since the National Government of India began to send her accredited representatives to the United Nations conferences, they had been proclaiming not only the adherence of the country to the principles and purposes of the UN; embodied in the charter, but also the determination of her people to help strengthen the organization. On many issues her delegates have taken an independent stand in line with the declaration of their Government that “India was not prepared to fall in with the members of any bloc”.2 On the question of Palestine, this independent policy of India was very striking.

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Palestine proved to be a very complex problem for the United Nations. Arab nationalism began to assert itself; it demanded complete independence. The Jews of Europe had become intensely conscious of the necessity of having a national home. Even in the meetings of the U.N. Organization the future of Palestine raised many irreconcilable views. The Arab states were as one, and were firm in their view that Palestine should be converted into a free and united state at an early date. The Jews stood for the creation of a separate state of their own. Those who were in power in the United Nations could not afford to displease the Jews within the country and they therefore supported the proposals for partition.

The question of Palestine came up before the General Assembly in its third Session. In the U.N. the chief Indian delegate, Asif Ali, appealed to everyone concerned that peace should be the aim of all, in so far as Palestine was concerned. But peace could never be born except of justice. Justice alone could give birth to peace. The time had come when the conscious of humanity must be aroused to the fact that land should remain the sanctuary and shrine of peace for ever. It must be kept away from the tangles of power politics. Palestine had become the acid test of human conscience. The United Nations would find that upon its decision will depend the future of humanity; they should decide whether humanity was going to proceed by peaceful means or humanity was going to be torn to pieces. If a wrong decision came from this august Assembly, you might take it “from me that the whole world shall be cut in twain and there shall be no peace upon earth” said Asif Ali. Unfortunately,
Palestine threatened to become the baker’s oven from which the deluge of blood might once again rise. Do justice by Palestine. Do not be moved by economic interests. He further advised the U.N., not to think of constitutionality. It is the determination of their own, no one could possibly wipe that determination out; no…. not even the United Nations. They could wipe out Palestine, they could wipe out the Palestinians, but they could not wipe out the determination, the soul of the people. “We in India will not allow anything to happen which would mean a big war. That is why our first political interest lies in the maintenance of peace in the Mediterranean and therefore, in Palestine”.  

During the debate in the political committee, India reiterated her opposition to the partition of Palestine. Her delegate suggested that the General Assembly should adopt the proposal for a federal state, with autonomous Jewish and Arab areas. No solution of the problem, which was not based on the consent of the Arabs, could be satisfactory to India. Speaking in the Ad Hoc Committee on the Palestine Question, the Indian delegate, Mrs. Vijay Lakshmi Pandit stated that peace in Palestine and in the Middle East was of vital interest to India, on account of its close geographical link with the Middle East. In her view the problem of the displaced Jews in Europe was not one with which the committee should be concerned. Nor should it be linked to the issue of the future government of Palestine, with which it was totally unconcerned. Further it was a problem of international concern. It was a matter which the General

Assembly should take up at the earliest opportunity, and countries which could
withhold difficulty provide refuge for the displaced Jews of Europe should
come forward with offers\textsuperscript{4}. Mrs. Pandit Lakshmi thought that much of the
uneasiness among the Arabs of Palestine and in the other Arab states was
caused by the vigorous attempts which were still being made to connect the
two questions. It would simplify the problem before the committee, and it was
its clear duty to state unequivocally that while the United Nations held a grave
responsibility towards the displaced persons of Central Europe, the Committee
felt that the question should not be connected with that of future Government
of Palestine.

She further stated that Palestine was predominantly Arab country and in
any solution that prominence should not be altered to the disadvantage of the
Arabs. The Indian delegation would not support any solution which did not
give independence to Palestine and bring about the early termination of the
mandate for the charter clearly provided for the self determination of the people
and for the maintenance of fundamental freedoms. Since the very origin of the
Palestine question, Indians had consistently adhered to the view that the
independence of the people of Palestine could be ensured only by the
recognition of Palestine as a state.

However, as already stated, the U.N. could not resist the pressure which
the U.S. exercised through foul means. Palestine was destined to be partitioned

\textsuperscript{4} United Nations Official Records of the Second Session of the General Assembly, Ad Hoc
Committee on the Question of Palestine, Summary Records of Meetings September 25 to
November 25, 1947, p. 61
and inevitable happened. Even at the time of voting, India did not deviate in her opposition to any planning at dismemberment of the Holy land. What was calculated was to undermine to the prestige of the U.N. more than anything else and damage its cause, were the allegations openly made for the final vote was influenced by intrigue and undue pressure. “Scenes in the galleries of the General Assembly on Saturday night showed that Jewry was immensely pleased with the verdict. Well it may be, for the wandering Jew, for the first time returning home after that shoemaker’s curse long centuries ago”.

Weighing the merits of the issue, India could not agree with the view that, because many Jews were ill-treated by the Europeans, Palestine should provide a home for them. She felt that the Palestine problem must be separated from the Jewish refuge problem of Europe. Defending the stand taken by India Nehru in 1947 said:

To give the House an instance of how we acted, take the Palestine affair which has given rise and will give rise to a great deal of trouble. We took up a certain attitude in regard was roughly a federal state with autonomous parts. It was opposed to both the other attitudes which were before the United Nations. One was partition which now has been adopted; the other was a unitary state. We suggested a federal state with, naturally, an Arab majority in charge of the federal state but with autonomy for the other regions… the Jewish region.

After a great deal of thought the Government of India decided that this was not only a fair and equitable solution of the problem, but the only real solution of the problem. Any other solution would have meant fighting and conflict. Nevertheless our solution did not find favour with most people in the

5 National Herald, December 3, 1947, Lucknow, p.4.
United Nations. Some of the major powers were out for partition; they therefore, pressed for it and ultimately got it. Others were so keen on the unitary state idea and were so sure of preventing partition at any rate of preventing a two-thirds majority in favour of partition that they did not accept our suggestion. When during the last few days somehow partition suddenly became inevitable and votes veered round it, owing to the pressure of some of the great powers, it was realized that the Indian solution was probably the best and an attempt was made in last 48 hours to bring forward the Indian solution, not by India but by those powers who had wanted a unitary state. It was then too late. There were procedural difficulties and many of the persons who might have accepted this solution had already pledged themselves to partition. Nehru explained “And so ultimately partition was decided upon by a two-thirds majority, with a large number abstaining from voting, with the result that there is trouble in the Middle -East now and the possibility of a great deal of trouble in the future”.

With the termination of the mandate Palestine saw untold scenes of brutality. Law and order disappeared and the Security Council rushed to save Palestinians and Jews from being massacred. The Security Council adopted by eight votes, with three abstentions, a U.S. resolution calling for a three-power commission to supervise true negotiations in Palestine.

The Indian delegate Girija Shankar Vajpayee supporting in part the United States proposal for trusteeship said: “the problem of Palestine is one

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7 Nehru, Jawaharlal, *India’s Foreign Policy*, Selected Speeches, September 1945, April, 1961, Publications Division, Government of India, New Delhi, p. 126, (From Speech in the Constituent Assembly (Legislative) December 4, 1947).
undoubtedly of profound significance and interest to the people of Asia, because Palestine is part of Asia. He also said that we in India, who had only recently secured our freedom, feel that a just, prompt and peaceful solution of this problem was vital to peace in Asia, to peace in the world and to the self-respect of Asia. “The problem of Palestine is not only a political problem or a legal problem, fundamentally it is a human problem”, 8 said Vajpayee. He further said that India was against partition when the matter came before the General Assembly and is against partition now “because we were satisfied from our own experience that force by itself cannot solve the kind of problem which concerned us today”. 9 He further suggested that as a preliminary measure some temporary arrangement should be reached so that law and order in Palestine could be restored.

India and its national leaders resolutely opposed the Zionist ideology as a matter of principle, their antipathy towards Zionism was reflected in the official statement of the Indian National Congress and after independence in the attitude of the Government of India. It would be a gross mistake to presume that this policy was formulated to ingratiate the Indian Muslims or to appease the Arabs. The Indian National Movement led by Gandhi and his disciple, Nehru, cherished certain principles which were close to the heart of every conscious Indian. One of them was the separation of religion from nationalism. This is the origin of Gandhi’s aversion to Zionism. Zionism sought to instill a

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8 The Hindustan Times, April 25, 1948, Delhi, p.4.
sense of separateness in the Jews and expects from them to be loyal only to Israel irrespective of their citizenship. The ultimate destination of every Jew, according to Zionist doctrine is Israel. Gandhi’s rejection of Zionism was categorical since he refused to be pressurized into accepting it as a basis of nation-state. When his old associate from South Africa, Hermann Kallenbach who was a dedicated Zionist approached him in 1937 to entice him in approving the Zionist doctrine, Gandhi politely but firmly refused to accept Kallenbach’s arguments. Gandhi mirrored the feeling of India and what he said many years ago on the sinister effects of Zionist doctrine, still holds water and is imbibed in the official policy of the Government of India.

But Gandhi’s outlook was not the astray missing. He had a thorough study of the ramification of a transplanted society in Palestine and would not budge an inch from his earlier stand despite unceasing efforts by the apologists of Zionism including British Member of Parliament Sidney Silverman and the American author and his personal friend Luis Fisher. His replies to them were similar at what he had told to Kallenbach. On the eve of Palestine tragedy he was more convinced of the gravity of the wrongs done to Arabs and wrote a long article in August in 1947 in “Harijan” expressing his moral support to the helpless Palestinians who were being uprooted from their homes and fields.

Gandhi was hurt when he was told that the Zionist lobby had given a new twist to his convictions against Zionist antics, the International Zionist magnates especially in Britain and the United States came out with a starling classification of his pronouncements. They said that Gandhi was opposing the
Zionist moves because he wanted to please Indian Muslims. Some of whom were his close associates. He did not allow the lies to spread and came out with a strong statement. “I have said often, he wrote, “that I would not sell truth for the sake of India’s deliverance. Much less I would do so for winning Muslim friendship”.\textsuperscript{10} But the Zionist lobby was not silenced and even now its functionaries hold to the same erroneous views. This has harmed the Zionist themselves.

The way British withdrew from Palestine was not appreciated by the Indian Public and political leaders. When the last British soldier and civil officer left Palestine in 1948 the Indians were convinced that it was in tune with the enlightened policy of labour Government in Britain which was resolved to renounce British imperialism in all countries where the people had raised revolt against it. But the withdrawal from Palestine was different from India or Burma. “In the latter countries, power was transferred to representatives of the people and the continuity of the Governments of those countries was ensured. But Palestine was being left to anarchy and a sanguinary civil war”.\textsuperscript{11} This did not satisfy the Indian and they rightly thought that it was a colossal failure of British statesmanship and the Indian Daily the Hindustan Times editorially commented that “Britain is ultimately responsible for the present phase in Palestine. Since the British had completed their unholy mission of carving out a Jewish enclave in the heart of Arab lands, the paper further questioned that the integrity and sincerity of British intention by saying:

\textsuperscript{10} Jainsen, G.H., \textit{The Statesmen}, New Delhi, April 5, 1966.
\textsuperscript{11} The Hindustan Times, January 28, 1949, Delhi, p. 7
“unless it was intended to create a Jewish state, there was no justification for allowing during the earlier years of the mandate unrestricted immigration of Jews and unlimited alienation of the agricultural land by the poor Arab farmers”.12

None can deny the fact that British were solely responsible for the establishment of Israel. In the long and chequered history of the negotiations for the settlement of the Palestine problem, no British foreign Secretary ever spoke with so much frankness and such recognition of the realities of the situation as Bevin did in the House of Commons in January, 1949. He admitted that from 1919 to 1945 there was within successive United Kingdom Governments a conflict of policy and never any unanimity about dealing with the problems of the Middle East, and especially Palestine.

After referring to the tide of Arab nationalism which had been running very high, Bevin stated that the Arabs had a cause that had to be considered. Putting the Arab cause before the House, he said that the Arab population which had been occupying Palestine for some 20 centuries felt that to be turned out of their land to make way for another race was to them a profound injustice. That was and is the essence of Palestine problem and Britain, though Labour Government could not escape responsibility for creating it by her persistent attempts to implement the Balfour Declaration.

India, which was deeply interested in Palestine affairs could not remain a passive spectator if there was any steady deterioration of the situation in the

12 Ibid,
Middle East. After independence the attitude of the Indian Government and the Indian Public opinion in general was more in favour of the newly independent and emerging nations of Arab countries. This attitude was mainly due to (a) liberal leadership which all supported the Arab cause, (b) the secular character of the state which was more in keeping with the Arab approach in respect of their own domestic policies, (c) the age-old cultural ties of these regions with India. Many cultural currents which constituted composite culture of India have flowed in from the West Asian region. The impact of that culture in Indian national life was great and called for a homogeneity in outlook, (d) India always sympathized with the countries which had fallen a prey to the imperialist designs and was always prepared to help in clearing up the political cob-webs which these imperialists had woven around all such people, (e) India was follower and an advocate of the policy of non-alignment and she wanted to help these nations which were being dragged into the vortex of cold war and whose economy and political stability was being threatened by such moves. (f). For these reasons Indian went all out to support the Arab countries and through them to the Palestine Arabs, approvingly looked at the sentiment of Arab nationalism and actively supported them in international councils and the United Nations.

2.2 Palestine Question and the Perceptions of Gandhi and Nehru

Just like the West Asia policy, India’s response to the Palestine question also could be traced back from the post-World War I period. During the period, the Indian attitude was represented by the Congress. The Indian National
Congress (INC), while formulating the policies considered the domestic situation in India which, in a bigger way conditioned its perceptions, policies and the extent of its involvement in the Palestine question.\textsuperscript{13}

In the domestic context, it was a time when the INC was trying to keep the people of India united in a single state based on secular principles. At the same time the imperial design was to keep them divided by encouraging Muslim religious identity with a view to keeping Muslims away from the mainstream of national struggle. The INC leaders were fully aware of the British strategy. Hence, from the very beginning, the INC was firm in its belief that the question of minorities had to be settled within the framework of a pluralist order and not by partition.\textsuperscript{14}

It was natural that after Khilafat movement when there emerged the Palestine question; it became a major focus of attention for the Government of India. Unlike any other territorial, religious or ideological disputes remaining elsewhere, the issue of Palestine was different. This was a conflicting and contradictory situation of two communities each of which claimed the same territory as its own homeland.\textsuperscript{15} To the Zionists, the territory was Israel and to the Arabs, Palestine. Thus, the case of the Zionist and that of the Arabs stood against each other.

In spite of this, the strategic position of the region tempted the super powers to enter the scene and to resort their own peculiar postures which also


complicated the matter further. Meanwhile, the UN also found the problem as a hard nut to be cracked. However, for the majority of the developing nations, the West Asian crisis and the related Palestine refugee problem was a very significant and serious one. They perceived the confrontation between Zionist and Arab nationalism as a matter of extreme importance, since the majority of the Afro-Asian nations were committed to see the development of secular and progressive forces in the region.

2.2.1 Perceptions of Gandhi: Even before the emergence of the Palestine question, Gandhi had associated with the Jews. During his Satyagraha days in South Africa, Herman Kallenbach and H.S.L. Polak were his close associates. He was also very much sympathetic towards the Jews who he believed, were treated worse than the untouchables in India. However, his personal sympathy and affinity towards the Jews did not influence his views on the Palestine question. This is well expressed in his writings. In March 1921 he wrote:

> By no canons of ethics or war… can Palestine be given to the Jews”. At the same time, his argument was in favour of the Arab’s claim. This he said: “Muslim’s claim Palestine as an integral part of Jazirat-Al Arab. They are bound to retain its custody, as an injunction of the Prophet... The Jews cannot receive sovereign rights in a place which has been held for centuries by Muslim powers by right of religious conquest”.

Again, adhering to the moral and humanitarian dimension of the issue, he even advocated the Arab cause and said candidly, “Palestine belongs to the Arabs in the same sense the England belongs to the English or France to the French. It is wrong and inhuman to impose the Jews on the Arabs”.

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21 Ibid.,
Gandhi criticized the Jews for their dependence on British imperialism. He said: “The Palestine of biblical concept is not a geographical tract. It is in their hearts. But if they must look to Palestine of geography as their national home, it is wrong to enter it under the shadow of British gun”.  

Gandhi firmly believed that the Palestine question was having some moral connotations and so the same should be settled peacefully between the two parties and hoped that if the Arabs provide refuge to the Jews without the mediation of any Nation, it will be in their tradition of generosity”. Further, fully content of the moral strength and belief in Ahimsa, he said: “If I were a Jew, I should tell them. Don’t be so silly as to resort to terrorism, because you simply damage your own case which otherwise would be a proper case. Again, talking to an American journalist, he stressed that the solution to the problem lay in the total abandonment of “terrorism and other forms of violence” by Jews. From the observations and perceptions of Gandhi, it could be learnt that politically he was taking a pro-Arab stand on the Palestine question. This was mainly due to his high moral conviction and belief in non-violence.

2.2.2 Perception of Nehru: Towards the end of 1920s’ Nehru was the recognized spokesman of the INC on foreign affairs. Ever since the formation of the foreign department of the INC practically, every resolution of the Congress on foreign affairs was inspired, drafted and piloted by Nehru. In 1933 Nehru wrote on the plight of the Jews. “They had no Home or nation, and

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22 Ibid.,
24 The Essential Writings of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose, (Delhi, 1998), pp. 197-219.
everywhere they went they were treated as unwelcome and undesirable strangers… they were humiliated, reviled, tortured and massacred”.  

However, just like Gandhi, in his case also, the sympathy shown and maintained for the Jews did not influence his views on the Palestine problem. Hence, he was very much open to oppose the very creation of the Jewish national home. Nehru believed that Palestine “was not a wilderness or an empty uninhabited place. It was already somebody else’s home…”  

One of the basic features of Nehru’s approach to the Palestine question was that he always preferred to focus on the political dimension of the issue. He believed it as a question of national liberation of a big majority of the people. In his words, “the Arabs tried to gain their co-operation in the struggle for national freedom and democratic government. But they rejected these advances. They have preferred to take side with foreign ruling powers, and have thus helped it to keep back freedom from the majority of the people”.  

Above all, Nehru identified a similarity between the freedom struggle of India and the Palestinians on the ground that both were National Liberation movements against the British Imperialism. On the occasion of the Palestine day in September 1936, addressing the audience of Allahabad, he reminded the British policy of playing off one community against another in order to

26 Ibid.
27 Shimoni, Gideon, Gandhi, Satyagraha, and the Jews : A Formative Factor in India’s Policy Towards Israel, (Jerusalem, 1977). P. 77
consolidate its position.\textsuperscript{28} Hence, he believed that “Palestine is essentially an Arab country and must remain so, and the Arabs must not be crushed and suppressed in their homeland”.\textsuperscript{29}

Nehru was also fully conscious of the fact that the real issue in Palestine was not religion (as was popularly known) but Imperialism. He argued,\textsuperscript{30}

England pits Jewish religious nationalism against Arab Nationalism and makes it appear that her performance is necessary to act as an arbitrator and to keep the peace between the two”. Hence, he argued that “only on the stable foundation of Arab Jew co-operation and elimination of imperialism” the future of Palestine could be secured.

These specific views expressed and perceived by Nehru were, no doubt, the reaction and reflection of the general political background of Asia and particularly India. Therefore, it becomes quite natural that Nehru’s approach was meant to fight the imperialist intervention in the region.

Thus the views expressed by both Gandhi and Nehru were identical in character. They had preferred a federal state comprised of the interests of both Arabs and Jews. At the same time, they were not prepared to accept the victimization of one by the other. Both leaders had sympathy for the Jews. However, with regard to their claim, both leaders opposed it. These leaders were too much particular to see that the issue should be resolved by the parties concerned, away from the intervention of imperialist forces. Above all, Israel’s association with imperialist forces made the Indian National leaders suspicious of the Israeli motives.

\textsuperscript{28} Gandhis Works, The Collected works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol. 68, Publication Division, (New Delhi, 1958), p. 137
\textsuperscript{29} Young India, 23-3-1921 Gandhi Works, Vol.19, p. 472.
\textsuperscript{30} Harijan, 26.11.1938, Gandhi works, Vol. 68, p. 140.
Thus, when the national leaders like Gandhi and Nehru took such initiatives on the Palestine question, it got authenticity and official colour. India’s West Asia policy was thus a natural reflection of these views. Furthermore, it was imperative that independent India could not cut herself apart from these intellectual, ideological and moral legacies of the past. Hence, when the issue was taken up by the UN, India played a very significant role in favour of Palestine cause.

The question of Indian attitude towards the Palestine problem should be examined in the large perspective of Indo-Israel relations. In a democracy like India, it was but expected that there would be some people who would oppose government’s policy in this matter. There has been a strong criticism both in parliament and in the press against the pro-Arab attitude of India vis-à-vis the West Asian crisis. There have also been voices demanding an immediate establishment of diplomatic relations with Israel. Often a demand was made to turn the tables and switch on from our friendship with the Arabs to that of Israel.

Israelis were naturally eager to get as much Indian support as possible for rendering themselves acceptable in this part of the world. These were also bigger and more intricate issues involving considerations of international politics. The Arabs too were anxious for India’s continued support to their cause. The Indian support for the Arab represents not only the more conscience of the Afro-Asian community, but also the indication of the secular character of Arab nationalism. Indian understanding of the true nature of the Arab-Israeli conflict helps in
projecting the Arab struggle against Zionism as an integral part of the Afro-Asian struggle against the forces of imperialism, racism, and colonialism.

As for as India was concerned, her choice depended as much upon her legal and world issues of involving rights and wrongs of the case as upon considerations of her own national interest. Nehru had once said that for us in India national interest is interlinked with wider considerations of justice, truth and peace. Only what is right and true can be of real benefit to our national interests in the long run. What is morally wrong, could neither be politically beneficial nor economically attractive.

In fact, the governing considerations in Nehru’s policy were three:

First, India and other countries of Asia and Africa emerging into independence must no longer be used as pawns by other nations in their international game; they must be free to decide on their own policies and play their part in the maintenance of peace.31

The second was the urgent need to provide fair, equitable, social and economic policies for our young democracy. “There are many facts in Nehru’s personality, but none is as basic as his love for democracy”.32

‘The third consideration was the need for maintaining the territorial integrity of India.’33

These three viz, the preservation of India’s freedom policy, the provision of the external conditions for the nation’s social and economic development and

32 “We believe in passionately in the democratic method and we seek to enlarge the bonds of democracy both on the political and economic plane”, Inside America, (A Voyage of Discovery), 1950.
33 Appadoral, A.C., Essays in Indian Politics and Foreign Policy, (Delhi, 1971), p. 157
the maintenance of territorial integrity constitute Nehru’s conception of national interest, which in other words, every foreign minister had to take into account in formulating and implementing foreign policy.\textsuperscript{34}

### 2.3 Creation of Israel

Despite Arab opposition, the General Assembly adopted on 29 November 1947, by a vote of 33 to 13 with 10 abstentions, resolution for the partition of Palestine basically along the line suggested by the majority report. The Arabs opposed the proposal to partition of Palestine and questioned the legal competence of the UN to recommend the partition of their ancestral homeland. Their suggestion that the legal issue affecting the Palestine question, including the competence of the UN to recommend or to enforce any plan of partition, be referred to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) for an advisory opinion was turned down.

Late Zionists went ahead with proclaiming the State of Israel on 14\textsuperscript{th} May, 1948 when the British Mandate-lapsed. The British withdrew their forces without making any arrangement for maintaining law and order. The Arabs were determined to fight the division of their land and the Zionists equally determined to set up Zionist state in Palestine. The Palestine Commission appointed by the UN General Assembly in its resolution of 29 November 1947 to carry out the partition plan took a serious view of the deteriorating situation in Palestine. On 16 April 1948 a second special session of the General Assembly was convened to consider further the question of the future

\textsuperscript{34} Nehru’s Speachs in Constituent Assembly (Legislative), December 4, 1947.
government of Palestine. Discussion in this session revealed that a number of states had by now revised their opinion about the desirability of partition of Palestine. The UN General Assembly met on 14 May 1948, the last day of the British mandate and adopted resolution 186-S-2, which in effect annulled the earlier (dubious) partition ‘recommendation’ and appointed a ‘UN mediator’ to virtually run the country and try to reach a peaceful adjustment of the future situation of Palestine.

On May 1948, the Security Council accepted Israel’s application for admission to the United Nations. A week later, the General Assembly also passed a resolution GA Resolution 273(III)\textsuperscript{35} and granted Israel the membership in the United Nations. The Israeli representative had given assurance that Israel would observe the principles of the UN Charter and would implement its resolutions without invoking the claim of domestic jurisdiction. The UN General Assembly resolution admitting Israel had made specific reference to those assurances and to the fundamental resolutions. It said: “Nothing … the declaration by the State of Israel that it unreservedly accepts the obligations of the United Nations Charter and undertakes to honour them from the day when it becomes a member of the United Nations”.\textsuperscript{36}

2.4 India’s Recognition to Israel

India refused to recognize Israel in the beginning despite its request. Nehru clarified. “The Government of India has received a request from the state of Israel for recognition. We propose to take no action in this matter at

\textsuperscript{35} For details, see Appendix No. III

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid.,
In September 1950 India formally recognized Israel as a legal entity in the International community but was reluctant to enter into close relations with the Zionist state. Among the reasons given by India for the decision to recognize Israel was the assessment that continuing non-recognition was not only inconsistent with the overall relationship but even limits the effectiveness of the Government of India’s role as a possible intermediary between Israel and the Arab states. India acknowledged Israel’s right to exist, accepted an Israeli counsel in Bombay and recognized the desirability of solving the Arab-Israeli dispute, at the same time expressing its disapproval of Israeli military retaliations and Israel’s appropriation of additional Arab territory and its alteration of the flow of the river Jordan’s water.

When asked to explain India’s attitude of not exchanging diplomatic representatives with Israel, Nehru said in 1958:

“This altitude was adopted after a careful consideration of balance of factors. It is not the matter of high principle, but it is based on how we 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 feel that while recognizing Israel as an entity, we need not at this stage exchange diplomatic personnel.

Nehru’s assessment of the Zionist movement, as a child of imperialism, led the Indian National Congress to adopt a pro-Arab policy in the Arab-Jewish conflict. When Egyptian President Nasser nationalized the Suez Canal in July 1956, Nehru supported Nasser. Nehru’s socialistic spirit, India's traditional friendship with the Arab states, and nationalization itself being considered as a

37 Nehru’s Speachs in The Constituent Assembly (Legislative), December 4, 1947.
state’s internal matter, influenced India’s leadership to support Egypt's action. Nehru talked of India’s “great respect and regard for the sovereignty and dignity of Egypt”. In the wake of nationalization, Egypt was attacked by Israel, Britain and France which was denounced by India as a flagrant violation of the UN charter. Nehru even expressed his suspicion about the possibility of some form of consultation among the three countries prior to their invasion of Egypt.

Nehru observed:  

Without the least justification, Egypt was attacked not only by Israel but also by the UK and France. Whether there was any previous consultation among the aggression countries, I do not know. But it is obvious that their in, and the Anglo-French attack helped Israel’s aggressor and was itself helped by it”.  

India’s then Minister of External Affairs, reaffirmed India's continuation of its pro-Arab policy when he said in May 1969, “India had not established diplomatic policies against the Arabs, particularly the Palestinians. Until there was a revision of this policy it would be difficult for India to revise her policy.

Nehru remarked that the happenings in Palestine since the Balfour Declaration of 1917 represented a gross betrayal of the Arabs by British imperialism. He argued that the Jews had a right to look to Jerusalem as their holy land and to have free access to it, but pointed out that the Balfour Declaration went much beyond that and had envisaged the creation of Zionist state within an Arab community. He also pointed out that certain number of Jews could go and settle in Palestine in an atmosphere of peace and good will, but when they went with the objective of dominating the country, they could hardly expect to be welcomed by the Arabs. He considered the problem of Palestine as a nationalist one. It was a pity; therefore, that the Jews of Palestine

40 Ibid., p. 530
41 Ibid., p. 530.
instead of aligning themselves with that struggle had thought fit to take the side of British imperialism and to seek its protection against inhabitants of the country.\footnote{Nehru, Jawaharlal, \textit{Eighteen Months in India, 1946-37, Essays and Printings}, (Allahabad, 1938), pp. 191-193.}

The impact and imprint left by Nehru on India’s foreign policy was so appealing that the successive political leaderships were reluctant to make any initiatives for any change in its general drive and orientation. The fact remained the same in the case of India’s West Asia policy as well. Hence during the tenure of Lal Bahadur Shastri as Prime Minister, there was no significant change in the Government of India’s Israel policy. On the other hand, soon after his taking office, Shastri visited United Arab Republic (UAR) where he reiterated India’s support for the claims of Arabs to the Jordan waters and for the rights of Palestine refugees.

Besides India took more assertive posture in the Second NAM summit held in Cairo in October 1964 in which Shastri was personally present. The summit declared “The Conference condemns the imperialist policy pursued in the Middle East and in conformity with the character of the United Nations decides to”.

1. Endorse the full restoration of all the rights of the Arab people of Palestine to their homeland and their in alienated right to self determination.

2. Declare their full support to the Arab people of Palestine in their struggle for liberation from colonialism and racialism.\footnote{Nehru, Jawaharlal, \textit{Eighteen Months in India, 1946-37, Essays and Printings}, (Allahabad, 1938), pp. 191-193.}
As a champion of the causes of Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), Indian response to the newly convened summit was by providing an official welcome to a delegation from the newly formed PLO in November 1964. By this diplomatic move, India comes closer to the Arab states. Further, the Arab information office in New Delhi was upgraded in July 1965 and it was granted diplomatic status. All these developments had virtually taken away the possibilities of India and Israel coming closer, politically and diplomatically. Shastri’s tilt towards the Arabs won him criticism. Some critics even went to the extent of maintaining the view that when Nehru maintained a certain measure of judicious restraint on the Arab-Israeli question, Shastri overdid his predecessor by unconditionally endorsing the Arab passions and demands.44

Actually, Shastri’s tenure was too short to make any substantial assessment on his policy on Israel. However, within this short span of time, he had shown his tilt towards the Arabs, which was a normal continuation of the policy of Nehru. In the case of Nehru’s Israel policy, there was criticism that he was influenced by some Muslim leaders like Azad.45 But no such allegation could be raised against Shastri who followed the traditional policy which turned to be pro-Arab and was basically against the Israeli interests.

2.5 The War of June, 1967 and India’s Reaction

The crisis in West Asia which culminated in June war of 1967 was a profound one to assess India’s approach to Israel. On May 25, Mr. M.C. Chagla, outlined the basic Indian position in both the Houses of Parliament.46 His explanation on the position of India was covered by five significant aspects.47

1. The creation of Israel had given rise to tension between Israel and Arab countries.

2. Egypt’s sovereign right to demand withdrawal of the United Nations Emergency Force cannot be questioned.

3. India endorsed the reasons which compelled Egypt to demand the withdrawal of the United Nations Emergency Force from Egyptian soil.

4. The Gulf of Aqaba was the territorial Water of Egypt and she is entitled to the closure of the same to Israeli shipping.

5. India anticipated a threat of aggression from Israel.

Centered on her concern about India’s first official reaction to war of Israeli aggression was the killing of the Indian soldiers of the United Nations Emergency Forces (UNEF). Mrs. Indira Gandhi condemned the act and described it as ‘deliberate and without provocation’.48 Subsequently, a formal protest was lodged with Israel through the Indian Embassy in Moscow and compensation was demanded officially from Israel.

46 Debates Lok Sabha, IV, May 25,1966, pp.871-76
48 Debates Lok Sabha, IV, June 8, 1967, p. 926.
Indian government blamed Israel for escalating the situation into an armed conflict. Referring to the Indian soldiers in the United Nations emergency force who were killed by Israeli forces, Indira Gandhi condemned the killings as deliberate, unprovoked. The war also crystallized India’s West Asian policy into supporting the Palestinians cause. She identified herself closer with the Palestinians and openly supported them in their struggle against the Israeli government.49

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.50

The Indian government in conformity with its pro-Arab policy condemned the Israeli aggression. Looking at the crisis from global perspective, India’s the then Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi observed in the Lok Sabha on 6 June 1967.51

The world today witnesses a disastrous war in West Asia and the situation becomes grave by hour. If not stopped, this war is likely to expand into wider one drawing into its vortex other countries and developing perhaps in to a world war—. It is our solemn duty as a government to help in restoration of peace in the present perilous situation.


50 Khataybeh, Syed Zaki Hamid, *India’s Foreign Policy and the Arab World*, (Jaipur, 1993), pp. 51-52.

51 Foreign Affairs Record, December 1973, p. 503.
Expressing the same concern for West Asia, she said in the Rajya Sabha on 7th of June, 1967 as “The world is in grave peril. Our own national interests are bound up with peace and stability in West Asia.”52 In the United Nations, India stressed the need for lasting peace and wanted Israel to withdraw its armed forces to the positions held before the commencement of the hostilities. Speaking at the emergency session of the U.N. General Assembly on 21st June, 1967 Mr. Chagla remarked, “The foundation of a lasting peace in the region can be based only on a total immediate and unconditional withdrawal of Israel from the areas now under its occupation….”53 He argued that disputes cannot be settled through the armed conflict.54

Mrs. Indira Gandhi, while addressing the General Assembly on 15th October 1967 also stressed the need for solving the problem by “political means” based on the principles of security sovereignty and territorial integrity of all the states in the area.

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.55 It was also emphasized that the lasting solutions of many problems existing could be worked out only when the key issue of the refugee problem was dealt with and

52 Krishna Gopal and Kokila Krishna Gopal, No.41, pp. 145-146.
54 Ibid.
steps were taken to ensure the just rights of the Arab people of Palestine on the basis of paragraph II of resolution 194 (III).\textsuperscript{56}

During the Arab Israeli conflicts through 1967-69 India took side with the Arabs 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 United Nations, India urged for the immediate implementation of the Security Council resolution of Jerusalem.\textsuperscript{57}

India’s stand on June War was not shared by all political parties and public at large. Indo-Israeli relations though had touched very low ebb. Opposition leaders from Jan Sangh, the Swatantra party the Praja Socialist party and the Samyukta socialist party criticized the government’s stand. They advocated that by supporting the Arab unreservedly, India unnecessary would encourage the Arabs to adopt more hostile attitudes towards Israel, which would create more tension in the region. 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.\textsuperscript{58} Opposition members (excluding the Communists) who did not share government’s view on the issue were conditioned by Arab stand on India’s

\textsuperscript{56} For Details, See Appendix No. II.
\textsuperscript{57} India, External affairs, P.V. Narshima Rao’s speech at a function organized by all India Indo-Arab friendship association to condemn the Israeli aggression in Lebanon, (New Delhi, June 19,1982), Foreign affairs record 28(06) June 1982, pp. 163-164.
crisis in 1961, 1962 and 1965. When the Indian army took over Goa in December 1961, Israeli press accused India maintaining a double standard.\textsuperscript{59}

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 was also argued that India should adopt pro-American policy which would bring India and Israel together\textsuperscript{60} and that it was imprudent on the part of India to thrust all her weight behind the Arab cause when she got only lukewarm attitudes from the Arabs in 1962 and 1965. Opposition members Jan Sangh, the Swatantra Party, Praja Socialist, Samyukta Socialist Party, were astonished by India’s indifference towards Israel. It was argued that while some countries like USA, UK, Yugoslavia, Kenya and so on maintained good relations 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 interests. They viewed Israel as a force in the region and as the symbol of stability. While they think so, they conveniently forget that Israel was the greatest destabilizing factor in the region.

\textsuperscript{59} The Times of India 09 July 1982, New Delhi
\textsuperscript{60} Qayyum, Shah Abdul, \textit{The Arab-Israel Conflict}, Centre of West Asian Studies, (Aligarh, 1979), p. 100.
In 1973, war broke out again in West Asia. During the war, India supported the Arabs as they 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 Israeli aggression and the refusal to vacate the Territories occupied by armed forces”.\(^{61}\) Declaring India’s sympathies with the Arabs, it further said, that Arabs cause was based on justice and demanded immediate implementation by Israel of United Nations resolution 242 (1967) for peaceful solution of the problem.\(^{62}\)

On 6\(^{th}\) December 1973, Indian foreign minister Sardar 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...\(^{63}\) Mrs. Indira Gandhi also gave two reasons for India’s sympathy towards the Arabs. First India’s old and solid relations with Arabs required India to “stand by its friends in the time of their travail” and secondly Israel’s refusal to withdraw Arab lands occupied in 1967 war and its refusal to honour UN resolutions.

India’s policy towards the Arab Israel conflict was based on the principled opposition to 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

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\(^{61}\) Foreign Affairs Record, New Delhi, June 1967, p. 81.  
\(^{62}\) Ibid.  
\(^{63}\) Khataybeh, Syed Zaki Hamid, *India’s Foreign Policy and the Arab World*, op. cit., p. 50.
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.

India became more vociferous in her support to the Palestinian cause after the infatuation of direct Indo-Palestinian relations which has manifested strongly since the emergence of PLO in the international world in particular and Arab-Israel conflict in general. India reiterated her support for the Arabs and endorsed the Arab-sponsored UN resolution declaring Zionism as a form of racism and racial discrimination. Explaining her stand on the resolution of 10 November 1975, in the United Nations General Assembly, India maintained: “In its impact on the people in the Middle East suffering from the consequences of Zionist occupation and oppression, Zionism was certainly a form of racial discrimination. India gave identical example not only in the later meetings of the General Assembly but in the final communiqué of the Non-Aligned countries in Algeria in 1974 too. A section in it had been devoted to the similarities of racism and Israel’s actions in the Occupied Territories, and its flagrant violations of the human values for the people of Palestine. Addressing a meeting organized by the General Union of Palestinian Students in New Delhi on 10 August 1975, the Congress President D.K. Barooah, expressed the “total support” for the Palestinian struggle against Zionism. He said that Zionism had no bearing on the history of Palestine. Accordingly, it was based on a false promise and was “pernicious in its contents as it claimed supremacy for one race over another”.  

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64 International Herald Tribune, January 11, 1975, p.4  
65 Ibid., p. 5
India did not want to freeze the Palestinian problem and the Arab-Israel conflict into another period of neglect. It continued to harpoon the international community to gain some momentum towards the solution of basic problems like ensuring restoration of their national rights. Withdrawal from the Occupied lands remained another corner-stone in the structure of lasting peace. In the general debate of the United National General Assembly, India’s Foreign Minister stated: “If the catastrophe of another war in the Middle East is to be avoided, Israel should end its aggression and the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people should be restored to them”.  

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66 Hindustan Times, 11 August, 1975