Chapter 1

Introduction
India and West Asia: A Historical Perspective:

Our natural tendency to assume that what exists today has always been, can only afford us psychic solace, at the terrible cost of denying reality. The tendency to deny historical reality on our part would perhaps destroy our capacity to understand and react meaningfully to the present.

Hence, in a study dealing with Indo-Israel relations-present phase an attempt has been made to briefly survey overall India-West Asia relations with special emphasis on Palestine in historical perspective in order to relate the past to its present circumstances.

West Asia occupies a very significant position in the world politics particularly since the second half of the 20th century. Its geographical factor has great significance because no other region is as strategically located as West Asia\(^1\). It is a land bridge, which links three continents Asia, Africa and Europe. It is called the gateway of Asia-Africa and the back door of Europe. It commands three seas - the Mediterranean, the Red and the Arabian. It is a centre of international trade to different regions. It is also called the lifeline of Europe. Arab nationalism, Western imperialism and Zionism are the main factors that have conditioned the West Asian politics\(^2\). The creation of Israel and the subsequent three wars have made the region a cockpit of world politics.
In ancient times, Indians had experiences of contact with West Asian region. For a long time, Indian and Arab civilizations have interacted with each other and have drawn inspirations from each other. The Nile Delta civilization of Egypt, the Euphrates River civilization in Mesopotamia and the Indus valley civilization in India were not only contemporaneous, but were also in close contact with one another—each contributing in its own way to the enrichment of human life and culture for the other. History is strewn with the evidences of mutually advantageous relations between the two regions. For example, it was the Indian muslin, which the Egyptians used to wrap the mummies. Similarly, it was the Arab craftsmanship, which is believed to have produced figurines for the Indian temples and buildings.

Several evidences have been found from historical records that India had close relationship with West Asia in various fields. Such as Culture, commerce, religion, medicines and politics. During the time of King Solomon, son of King David, a port of Etzion-Gber was built at the head of the Gulf of Aqaba. It seems that from there he carried out trade with Arabia, Africa and India. Solomon also made voyage to the east every three years. The destination of his expedition was called Ophir, which was identified as Sopora near Bombay, from where they brought gold, precious stones, peacocks and almug trees. His fleet was
built by Hiram of Lebanon⁶. The argument has been strengthened by 
testifying some Hebrew words which are to be of Indian origin, like 
koph monkey (Sanskrit kapi) and Tukki peacock (Tamil togai)⁷.

Christian tradition also holds that St. Thomas, one of the twelve 
disciples of Jesus, who was a Jew, came to India and preached the 
gospel to the Indians before he died a martyr’s death at the hands of a 
king called in Christian tradition Misdeos. This could be possible 
because traveling from Palestine to India was not totally unknown⁸.

Christian faith from Palestine found a way to India, which is still 
evident today. Not only Christians but Jews also had settled in Kerala.
The king of the Cheras, Bhaskara Ravivarman, made the earliest 
reference to this community, in the 10th century charter by which a Jew 
named Joseph Rabban was given lands and privileges. However, there 
are other views which push the date back to the first century A.D. 
whatever might be the case, it is a fact that Jewish community has 
exists in India for many centuries. One branch was called as Beni 
Israel⁹. This community has lived for many centuries on the west coast 
of India

With the rise of Islam, Palestine came under the Muslim Arabs 
and the inhabitants embraced Islam. By the 7th century A.D., the whole 
of Palestine became a Muslim land¹⁰. The Arab conquest still expanded 
estward and by 712 AD, they reached Sind. They captured both sea
and land routes and Mediterranean sea virtually became an Arab lake. They carried on trade with India for some eight hundred years until the Europeans ousted them. In the north India, the Arabs came as conquerors, but in the south India they came as travelers and merchants. This made their relations with there Indian rulers peaceful and cordial. Though the Palestine did not occupy the hub of civilization in the Arab world, its importance could not be ruled out. The growth of the European maritime presence after 16th century adversely affected these contacts. The British East India Company came to India as merchants in the 17th century and became the ruler of the country. During this time, Palestine was under the Ottoman rule.

Indian National Congress and Zionist Congress:

During the colonial period, especially in the later part of the 19th century, few educated Indian from Bombay and Calcutta met in London while preparing for their Indian civil services examination or law. Later in India, these people formed Indian National Congress in 1885. Almost at the same period, elsewhere in Basle; the Zionist Congress was founded under the leadership of Theodore Herzl in 1897, which aimed for the creation of a homeland for the Jewish people in Palestine. These two organizations were totally opposed to each other in their aims and objectives. Since the Indian National Congress was anti-colonial and directed against the Western colonial powers, the
Zionist Congress was colonial in nature and sought the protection of the European colonial powers. The former organization fought for independence against the colonial rule while the latter constantly remained a movement of cooperation with the same powers for the creation of a state for Jews in Asia.\textsuperscript{14}

Zionists intensified their brutal and harsh activities against the Palestinians under the protection of Western powers. To India's Nationalist leaders the Arab struggle for the preservation of their legitimate rights and retention of their land was a matter of basic importance.

The aim behind the Indian National Movement was to expel alien rulers from their land while the Zionists were attempting to gain a foothold in another country from which the local inhabitants by force or persuasion would have to be evicted. In this aim, Zionists succeeded and Palestine, which under the Ottoman and British Authority was an Arab Majority area, was now being converted into a Jewish majority and an Arab minority under the authority of a Zionist state. The Zionists who captured Palestine were in collusion with Western colonialist movement.\textsuperscript{15}

**Indian National Congress and the Palestine Question:**

The Congress looked at the whole issue as a struggle between nationalist Arabs and Zionist colonization where the Zionist had the
support of the British imperial power. The fact placed them on the side of the Arabs. This was in consonance with their views way back in 1922, when the Congress supported the Turks because of its policy against the imperial forces\textsuperscript{16}. The Congress though expressed its sympathy to the Jews, deplored the way the Zionists were joining hands with the imperial powers. Therefore, in 1936, the Congress working committee sent its greeting to the Palestinian Arabs and observed September 27, 1936 as a Palestine day in order to show their solidarity with the Arabs of Palestine\textsuperscript{17}. In a meeting, which was held in Allahabad in support of the Arabs, Nehru appreciated the brave Arab people for putting up a valiant fight in the cause of National Independence. Expressing his sympathy with the Arabs he declared\textsuperscript{18}.

\begin{quote}
Our sympathies and good wishes must go out to the people of Palestine in this hour of their distress. The crushing of their movement is a blow to our nationalist struggle as well as to theirs. We hang together in this world struggle for freedom.
\end{quote}

Jawaharlal Nehru in his presidential address at the Faizpur Congress expressed:\textsuperscript{19}

\begin{quote}
The Arab struggle against British imperialism in Palestine is as much part of this great World conflict as India's struggle for freedom.
\end{quote}
There were many other organizations, which expressed sympathy towards the Arabs in Palestine. The Sind Congress Socialist Conference held at Karachi on July 18, 1936 sent its greetings to the Arabs in Palestine and hoped that they would keep up the fight till independent Palestine was achieved. Bihar Muslim Independent Party Conference held at Patna on September 12, 1936 criticized the British government's policy about Palestine. In a conference held by Muslims of U.P. on July 18, 1936 Nehru who also attended the conference in his message expressed his sympathy and solidarity with the Arabs. Not only this, as early as November 1923, the Palestine Arab delegations were allowed to visit and collect funds in India for the restoration of the Al-Aqsa mosque. In the 1930s, the Congress expressed its sympathy and support for the Palestinians in their struggle for independence against the British and applauded the bravery shown by the Arabs in their fight against the British. The committee also noted the Arabs and Jews should not fight each other but join their hands to have direct cooperation in establishing a democratic state in Palestine.

Congress in her resolution expressed:

While sympathizing with the plight of the Jews in Europe and elsewhere, the committee deplores that in Palestine the Jews have relied on British armed forces to advent their
claims and thus aligned themselves on the side of British imperialism. The committee trusts that Arabs and Jews will endeavor to find a basis for direct cooperation with a view to establish a free democratic state in Palestine with adequate protection of Jewish right.

The Indian National Congress sympathized with the Arabs and hailed them as nationalists. But it was not outrightly anti-Jews but anti-Zionist. Nehru who exerted enormous influence over the Indian National Congress met Jewish leaders in the late of 1930's regarding the persecution, which they faced in Germany. Not only had moved resolution in the All India Congress Committee, urging the British to facilitate Jewish immigration into India, he even arranged for setting of some Jewish refugees from Germany. His (Nehru's) approach to the whole problems was neither racial nor religious. This he clearly stated to the Indian Jews. He believed that the Arabs and Jews could live together and cooperate with each other for their mutual advantage.

India and its nationalist leaders resolutely opposed the Zionist philosophy as a matter of principle. Their antipathy towards Zionism was reflected in the official statements of the Indian National Congress and after independence in the attitude of the government of India. There were some who believed that Indian National Congress's reaction against Zionism was due to the pressures from the Muslim
leaders like Abul Kalam Azad. It would be a gross mistake to presume that this policy of Indian National Congress was formulated to ingratiate the Indian Muslims or to appease the Arabs. The Indian National Movement led by Mahatma Gandhi and his disciple Jawaharlal Nehru cherished certain principles, which were close to the heart of every conscious Indian. One of them was separation of the religion from nationalism. The foundations of a secular India are laid on this principle.

Again, in 1938 at the historic Tripura session, the British conspiracy to carry out partition in order to appease the wealthy British and American Zionists was condemned by a number of nationalist spokesmen. The Congress resolution deplored the British decision to carry out the partition scheme “in the teeth of the Arab opposition” and asked the local Jews who were being brought by the World Zionist Organization to settle in Palestine “not to seek the shelter of the British mandatory power and not to allow themselves to be exploited in the interest of British imperialism.

In her resolutions, the Congress stated:

The committee record their emphatic protest against the reign of terror that has been established in Palestine by British imperialism with a view to coerce the Arabs into accepting the proposed partition of
Palestine and assure them of the solidarity of
the Indian people with them in their struggle
for National freedom.

In another resolution

the working committee wishes to express their
condemnation of the ruthless policy now
being pursued by British imperialism in
Palestine, which must lead to grave
consequences, and reiterate their opinion that
the issue of the future government of
Palestine should be left to be decided on the
principles of self-determination.

The attitude of the Indian national Congress towards Palestine
question as a whole was influenced by its leaderships. The
Organization’s stand on the issue was almost symmetrical to Gandhi’s
and Nehru’s views. This is not without reason, since Congress’s
uncompromising stand against colonialism. The Palestinian Arabs were
placed under the colonial rule after the world war 1st. They were
struggling against the colonial power. This made the Palestinian Arabs
associate with the Congress and with other national movements in the
world. The Congress, thus, was brought closer to the Palestinians and
the former believed that by associating with the latter, they would be
able to kill two birds with one stone-the Muslim separatism and the
British. This could also be used as a lever to strengthen the Hindu-
Muslim unity, which could rock the very foundation of the British rule in India. The secularist approach of the Congress to politics be one of the major reasons for its opposition to Zionism. The Congress vehemently advocated secular politics. This made it see Zionism as a movement based on religion. It failed to consider it as national liberation ideology. Moreover, Zionism was seen as a tool to be used by colonial and imperial powers, which the Congress could not tolerate. For the Congress, colonialism and imperialism were anathema. Congress attitude towards Zionism was also influenced due to other reasons. To Indians, Zionism appeared to be a European movement and then suspected that, tenets of imperialism might be attached to it and that it might pose a serious threat to the ongoing liberation movement in India.

Though the Congress was not very much attracted by Zionism, its policies were not taking an absolutely one-sided stand. It tried its best to strike a balance between the two movements. It made its stand clear that it was not anti Jews. While condemning the imperial policy of the colonial power, it urged the Arabs and Jews to look for amicable solutions. The Congress did not forget to underline the point that the problem could be solved between the two people with cooperation. It appealed to the Jews not to seek the shelter of the British power and
not to allow themselves to be exploited by their design. By collaborating with the imperial power—the Zionists lost the sympathies of the Afro-Asian nations in general and India in particular and did more harm in their attempts to seek a place in the Asiatic nations.

Gandhi and the Palestine Question:

Indian Perceptions of Zionism, which was trying to create a Zionist entity in Palestine during India's independence movement greatly, shaped India's policy after independence. The most respected Indian leader, Mahatma Gandhi, who led the Indian masses against the colonial power since the beginning of the 20th century until the attainment of independence, had a close contact with the Jews when he was in South Africa. During his 21 years (1898-1914) stay in South Africa, Gandhi came very close to two prominent Jews—Henry S.L. Polak, a journalist and Hermann Kallenbach—a wealthy man. These two men however did not succeed and Ghandhi remained anti-Zionist throughout his life. Many a times Gandhi was asked by the Zionists his views on the Arab-Jewish question, and to favour the Jews. But he was firm on his idea. He said:

*My sympathies are all with the Jews. I have known them intimately in South Africa. Some of them became life long companions. Through these friends I came to learn much of their age long persecutions....But my...*
sympathy does not blind me to the requirements of justice. The cry for the national home of the Jews does not make much appeal to me. The sanction for it is sought in the Bible and in the tenacity with which the Jews have hankered after their return to Palestine. Why should they not, like other peoples of the earth make that country their home where they are born and where they earn their livelihood? Palestine belongs to Arabs in the same sense that England belongs to the English or France to the French. It is wrong and inhuman to impose the Jews on the Arabs. Surely it would be a crime against the humanity to reduce the proud Arabs so that Palestine can be restored to the Jews partly or wholly as their national home.

He further expressed his views on the concept of the Promised Land, which is in the Bible.\textsuperscript{33}

\textit{The Palestine of the biblical concept is not a geographical tract. It is in their hearts. But if they must look to the Palestine of geography as their home land, it is wrong to enter it under the shadow of British gun------.They can settle in Palestine only by the good will of the Arabs.}
Mahatma Gandhi's rejection of Zionist philosophy was categorical. Since he refused to be pressurized into accepting it as a basis of a 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 refused to accept Kallenbach's arguments. Gandhi stood firmly on his earlier stand despite unceasing efforts by the apologists of Zionism including the British Member of Parliament Sidney Silverman and American author and his friend, Louis Fisher. But Gandhi's replies to them were similar to what he had told to Kallenbach described on the earlier pages. His views were in the Harijan of November, 1938\textsuperscript{34}.

On the eve of the Palestine tragedy, he was more convinced of the grievous wrong done to the Arabs and wrote in August 1947 in Harijan expressing his moral support to the helpless Palestinians who were being uprooted from their homes and fields. "The Jews", he wrote\textsuperscript{35}, "have erred grievously in seeking to impose themselves on Palestine with the aid of America and Britain and now with the aid of naked terrorism. Why should they depend on American money or British arms for forcing themselves on an unwelcomed land?" Gandhi was hurt when he was told that the Zionist lobby has given a new twist to his convictions against the Zionist antics. The International Zionist
magnates especially in Britain and the United States came out with a startling clarification of his pronouncements.

They often repeated the argument that Gandhi was opposing the Zionist moves because he wanted to please the Indian Muslims some of whom are his close associates. Gandhi after knowing such perceptions of the Zionists came out with a stronger statement. "I have said often", he wrote, and "that I would not sell truth for the sake of India's deliverance. Much less would I do so for winning Muslim friendship"[^36].

The inherent danger in the Zionist Movement, for which Gandhi rejected the Zionist doctrine, is that the foundations of the Zionist enclave were laid on the assumption that the Jews the world over constitute a 'nation' and that by virtue of their religion alone they are the prospective citizens of Israel. Like Indians the Arabs are also the victims of an unpardonable conspiracy of division of their land on the basis of race and religion.

Gandhi was not alone in his condemnation of Zionism. The Indian National Congress held similar views and expressed them publicly whenever the issue came up. One of the main reasons of mutual understanding between the Indian leaders and the Arab Nationalists was their common aversion to the idea of religion being used as a means to achieve political ends. The Egyptian nationalist leader Saad Zaghlul and Gandhi had intellectually come very close to
each other because of their secular approach to national politics. It was because of this secular out-look, that Indian National leaders never reconciled to the transplantation of a Zionist State in Palestine. The Indian National Congress led by Jawaharlal Nehru condemned year after year in its annual sessions the sinister British moves of partitioning Palestine and handing over chunks of Arab territory to the Zionists. As early as 1937, the Indian national Congress expressed its strong disapproval of the partition of Palestine and the imperialist and Zionists machinations to strike terror in the Arab population. It condemned the “reign of terror unleashed with the view to coerce the Arabs in accepting the proposed partition”.

Jawaharlal Nehru and the Palestine Question:

Jawaharlal Nehru had a similar view as Gandhi on Palestine question. His knowledge of the Jewish history and their persecution did not have much influence on his Judgment of the issue. Indian great nationalist leader Gandhi categorically rejected the idea of a Jewish national home. Like him, Nehru too was against the demand for a Jewish national home. Jawaharlal Nehru wrote and spoke strongly about the deteriorating situation in Palestine. He firmly held that the Palestinian Arabs were struggling against a colonial power and its machinations.
To the Jewish victims of fascist terror and brutality”, he wrote, “we must extend all sympathy and help, but that does not and cannot mean that Arab interests in their country of Palestine can be ignored. Palestine is an Arab country and Arab interests must prevail there.

The notorious Balfour Declaration made public in 1917 embodied the Zionist principles of a national home on the territory of Palestine to the Jewry. Lord Balfour, the then British foreign secretary issued letter on November 2, 1917 addressed to Lord Rothschild, leader of the Zionist Movement, in which he mentioned:

“I have much pleasure in conveying to you”, Balfour wrote, “on behalf of His Majesty’s government, the following declaration of sympathy with the Jewish Zionist aspirations which has been submitted to, and, approved by the Cabinet:

His Majesty’s government view with favor the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavors to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country.
The declaration was received with indignation in Palestine and by the Arabs. Politically conscious people elsewhere protested against the British machinations of handing over a territory to a people who did not own it.

It should be noted that the Balfour declaration was issued on the eve of the British conquest of Palestine but finally it came into being with the help of Britishers in May 1948 when Israel declared herself as a sovereign state.

In 1923, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, the then president of the Indian National Congress asked India to make common cause with the struggle of Arabs when the Zionist Congress demanded the creation of a Jewish national home in Palestine.

Commenting on the Balfour declaration, Nehru, in a letter to his daughter, Indra Gandhi, in May 1933, wrote:  

But there was one drawback, one not unimportant fact seems to have been overlooked Palestine was not a wilderness, empty--- it was already somebody else's home. So that this generous gesture of the British government was really at the expense of the people who already lived in Palestine.
Nehru was also disturbed by the reports that responsible Zionist leaders had suggested that a strong Jewish national home would help Great Britain in guarding the road to India.\textsuperscript{42}

Pandit Nehru clearly understood British imperialist policies and felt that England was pitting the Jewish religious nationalism against Arab nationalism to make it appear that her presence is necessary to act as an arbitrator and to keep the peace between the two. One has to be conscious of the fact that Arab nationalism was secular in its character.

His stand was clear on the Palestine issue. In December 1920, he wrote in "independent", daily English published from Allahabad about then prevailing situation in Palestine and the consequences of the Balfour declaration:\textsuperscript{43}

*The Zionist immigration and the English occupation had two dangers; the country could hardly maintain the people already inhabiting Palestine. The coming in of new---people from all the ghettos of Europe would mean either the driving out of the old population or their reduction to economic serfdom. The second danger was political---Arabs in Palestine have to be left alone and strongly resent foreign domination.*

Nehru and Congress were entirely on the Arab side in their struggle against British rule as well as against the aims of the Zionist.
Despite its sympathies for the Jews regarding their persecution in Europe, Indian national Congress considered Palestine an Arab country and deplored the effort to establish themselves there under the cover of British armed might.

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 envisaged the creation of a Jewish State within an Arab community. He also pointed out that certain number of Jews could go and to settle in Palestine in an atmosphere of peace and good will, but when they went with the object 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 instead of aligning themselves with that struggle had thought it fit to take the side of British imperialism and to seek its protection against the inhabitants of the country.

The immigration of the Jews in Palestine in large number means driving out the native population. People living in Palestine professing different faith wanted to be left alone. They opposed the foreign domination. At Brussels Congress of Oppressed nationalities, Nehru
met Palestine leaders-Abdel-kader el -Husseini and Djomal Effendi, which gave him an insight into the Palestine affairs. This resulted in the formation of the League Against Imperialism, [LAI]. Its impact in India can be seen in 1928 when the INC for the first time passed a resolution in favor of Palestine Arabs.

The Congress policy on Palestine issue was consistent even after the Second World War. Earlier contacts between National Movement leaders from India and the Palestine led to the closer ties. After the war, when leaders of the world met at San Francisco in 1945 at the United nations conference on international organizations, Asian leaders conceived of the idea of convening a conference in Asia. The Asian leaders did not have much faith in the San Francisco conference. Since, they were still haunted by the collapse of the League of Nations.

The idea of Asian conference began to grow since 1946, and Nehru put his weight behind it. In 1946, the Indian council of world affairs took the responsibility of planning the conference. On the one side, there was a sea change in the British government’s attitude towards Indian national movement. The labour government announced in February 1947 the British decision to quit India not latter than June 1947. In the midst of these political changes, the first Asian conference was opened on 22 March 1947.
Various leaders and scholars attended the conference. Nehru had already prepared the groundwork along with the Indian council of world affairs. Invitations were sent to 32 countries including the Arabs and Jews in Palestine. However, six Arab countries—Syria, Lebanon, Transjordan, Saudi Arabia, Yemen and Iraq did not accept “individual invitations”. They had their own resentments over the invitation by saying that it was received too late. This excuse seems to be not convincing. The other more valid reason might be the inclusion of Zionists in the list. The Zionists responded to the invitation and came to the conference. The absence of the majority of the Arab state’s delegation left the Zionists with an open field to argue their cause freely and effectively. At the conference, the settlement (yishu) was represented by the Zionist delegations, which included intellectuals like Dr. Hugo Bergmann and Alfred Bonne.

In the inaugural speech of the conference Nehru, underlined the importance of the peace, which was also the responsibility of Asiatic nations. This peace according to him could come only “when nations are free and also when human beings everywhere have freedom and security and opportunity”. He touched upon nationalism in each country in Asia and freedom movement in the continent. Freedom which he envisaged was not confined to a particular people but should spread “over the whole human race".
On the second day of the conference, the issue of the Palestine came up. This had been a hot issue since the Balfour Declaration and the Arabs had antagonistic views over the issue. Dr. Bergmann argued for the Jews in Palestine in its historical perspective. He said that the Jews were “old Asian people” and now at last, after many years of wondering, returning and settling down in their “old-new home land.” According to him, Jews could learn the idea of tolerance and cooperation among different religious groups and races, which Europe could not give. Dr. Bergmann even went further by saying that Jews would not try to solve the problem by dispossessing the Palestinians, though it was exactly done by them in the following years. He envisaged to return the desert green, revive Hebrew language and literature and expressed his hope that the conference would be the beginning of a new chapter

The Egyptian representative challenged the argument put forth by Dr. Bergmann. She did not want the “British rule to be replaced by that of European Zionists.” She also welcomed Jews as settlers and stressed that the Arabs must live in Palestine. Since it belongs to them. Bergmann asked for the floor to refute the above statement, but was denied by Nehru who was presiding and, after a brief angry exchange, the Zionist delegation walked out. They were persuaded and requested by some Indian delegates to return. Nehru, in the speech referred to the
Palestine issue, while expressing his sympathy for the Jews because of their sufferings he clearly stated that:

*Palestine is essentially an Arab country and no decision can be made without the consent of the Arabs* and the issue would be settled between the two communities in cooperation *and not by any appeal to or reliance upon any outsiders*

The Asian relations conference was an important opportunity for the Zionists to express their views on Palestine issue and to advocate their purpose. As stated earlier, the absence of some of Arab states made their task easier. Through this conference, they sought to get a place among the Asiatic nations. They presented their case in such a way that it would be palatable for the Asian people. The Jewish delegation tried hard to convince other delegations by expressing their desire to learn from Asia, which Europe could not give them. But all was not well with them. The storm came from an Egyptian delegate in India remained firm on her stand on Palestine. The Jewish delegation could not get what they desired from the conference and failed in their attempt to draw India closer to their cause. Indian leadership was prudent enough not to pass their judgment through emotional influences. Therefore, the Zionist leadership had to accept that the host could not be taken for granted.
Nevertheless, it was not a complete failure. It was a mixture of failure and success. The Zionist side was presented and Palestine issues were discussed at length. They made appeal to certain sections of the Asian people that “the holy land is inseparable from the people of Israel”. Nevertheless, this had no impact on Indian leadership, which was steadfast in its commitment to Palestine cause.

United Nations and the Palestine Question:

The situation in Palestine was deteriorating since the beginning of the World War II. The movement launched by the Zionists to realize their national homeland was going in strength. This strength was vehemently opposed by the Arabs Higher Committee, which stood for the creation of Palestine state made up of Arabs and Jews, which went against the Biltmore programme of 1942: Palestine was to be a Jewish state.

The Biltmore program became the official policy of the World Zionist movement. The Mandatory authority in an attempt to solve the problem convened conference at London, which did not bear much fruits. Various suggestions and schemes were placed at the conference. All the attempts made by the British to solve the problems proved futile and on February 14, 1947, the British, frustrated in their attempt, “threw up their hands and handed the problem over to the United Nations.” The British government in February 1947 resolved to refer
the Palestine question to the United Nations. Within Palestine, the Zionist terror groups were engaged in spreading violence followed by a sharp increase in illegal immigration. Consequently, on April 2, 1947 Britain urged for holding a special session of the General Assembly for the purpose of appointing a special committee “to make recommendations—concerning the future government of Palestine”.

The United Nations in May 1947 appointed a United Nations Special Committee on Palestine, UNSCOP, in response to the British government’s proposal to investigate the issue and bring its recommendations before the world organization. The UNSCOP submitted its recommendations by the time; India had already gained its independence. India was also the member of the 11-member UNSCOP, which produced two reports—one majority and the other was the minority report. The United Nations approved the majority report, which recommended the partition of Palestine into a Jewish state and an Arab state, on 29 November 1947. While the minority report which recommended an independent Palestine as a federal state with Jerusalem as its capital was rejected by the General Assembly of the United Nations.

India’s Stand at United Nations:

The minority report was presented by Yugoslavia, Iran and India. India did not want that outsiders should take part in solving a
problem of a nation. Nehru argued that "Palestine is essentially an Arab country and no decision can be made without the consent of the Arabs"\textsuperscript{56}.

Sir Abdur Rahman, the representative of India and the member of UNSCOP in a special note observed:\textsuperscript{57}

\begin{quote}
If the right of self-determination of peoples as envisaged by President Wilson, (and on which the first four paragraphs of Article 22 of the convenient of the League of Nations were based) is to be the determining factor and if imperialistic designs are to be countenanced no longer, there is no escape from the conclusion that independence should be granted to Palestine forthwith, subject to such intern arrangements for the transfer of power as may seem to be desirable. The people of Palestine have now admittedly reached a stage where their recognition as an independent nation can no longer be delayed. They are in no way less advanced than the people of the other free and independent Asiatic countries.
\end{quote}

India disagreed with the partition plan and along with Iran and Yugoslavia; it offered the minority plan of creation of Palestine as a federal state. Nehru on December 4, 1947 explained India’s position in the constituent Assembly in reply to a cut motion:\textsuperscript{58}
We took up a certain attitude in regard to it (Palestine), which was roughly a federal state with autonomous parts of it. It was opposed to both the other attitudes, which were before the United Nations. One was partition which has now been adopted, the other was a unitary state; we suggested a federal state with naturally an Arab majority in charge of federal state but with autonomy for the other regions—the Jewish regions. After a great deal of throughout, we 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.

The Arab League and the Arab Higher Committee rejected the UNSCOP report, which was published on September 08, 1947, but the Jewish agency accepted the report in principle with certain reservations. In spite of Arab rejection, the United Nations went ahead and adopted the partition plans on November 29, 1947 by a vote of 33 to 13 with 10 abstentions.

The UN partition resolution was followed by unrest and chaos. By the end of November, both Zionists and Arabs were preparing to take over the control of Palestine after the British withdrawal. There were sporadic clashes, and casualties were high on both sides. The thirteen member legislative committee of the Yishu-the people’s
administration, after a long debate on boundary issue read out the text in Tel Aviv on Friday, May 14, 1948\textsuperscript{60} declaring the birth of the state of ISRAEL.\textsuperscript{61}

\textit{We, the members of the national council, representing the Jewish people in Palestine and the Zionist movement of the world, met together in solemn assembly by virtue of the national and historic right of the Jewish people and the resolution of the General Assembly of the United Nations, hereby proclaim the establishment of the Jewish state in Palestine, to be called Israel.}

Both the great Indian leaders Nehru and Gandhi rejected the Zionist claim to Palestine when the Israeli state became a reality; Nehru viewed Israel as an imperialist creation and another sectarian state like Pakistan. The BJP and its predecessors in the Hindu nationalist movement saw Israel in a different light, as a fellow struggler against Muslim militancy\textsuperscript{62}

The Arabs and Zionists were already prepared for war prior to the withdrawal of the mandatory authority. The Arab Liberation Army from Syria had already infiltrated into Palestine to work with Palestinian Arabs. Jews were also operating under their terrorist organizations-The Haganah, the Irgun Zvi leumi and the Stern Gang. They mercilessly unleashed their terror tactics, many villages were
looted, inhabitants killed, and thousands fled. But the unconcerted and half hearted efforts from the Arabs was not much against the well-trained terrorist occupiers of Israel and the war ended in favour of the Zionists state. She gained more territory of the Arab land, which was not officially allotted to them. Thus, the first Arab-Israeli war of 1948-49 ended. Four Armistice agreements were signed by Israel with Egypt on February 24, 1949, with Lebanon on March 23, 1949, with Jordon on April 3, 1949 and with Syria on July 20, 1949.

India followed a consistent policy. Her sympathy towards the Palestinian people persisted. The creation of the state of Israel, which brought the Jews and Arabs in a hot war, made many Palestinians refugees. Thousands of them fled Palestine, taking shelter else, where, becoming refugees and those in Palestine too had no better position. They become refugees in their own land. India wanted the problem to be solved amicably. She supported the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, UNRWA, which worked for Palestinian refugees. She argued that this problem was due to the creation of the Jewish state, so it was the duty of Israel to create a climate of confidence in which refugees could return home safely with dignity and honour and thereby could fully exercise the right to self-determination.
India's recognition to Israel:

The Zionist state almost after a year of independence applied for membership in the United Nations. The United Nations Security Council accepted Israeli's application for admission to the United Nations on March 04, 1949. A week later the General Assembly passed a resolution, thereby granting membership to Israel. The Indian delegates voted against the admission of Israel into the United Nations, stating that India could not recognize a state, which was created by force not by negotiations.

Though India maintained a consistent policy towards the then crisis in West Asia, there were certain groups of people who did not see to eye with the government. The Hindu Mahasabha represented it. In its working committee resolution, the aspirations of this group could be thus seen:

*The discriminatory policy of the Nehru government in refusing recognition of the new state of Israel, the people of which, after years of courageous and tenacious struggle against powerful international forces, has recovered their freedom and have established a progressive state on modern democratic lines. While Israel had been admitted as a member of the United Nations Organization--the with holding of recognition by the*
government of India has been creating misunderstanding and hampering the growth of mutual goodwill and friendship which is so vital for stabilizing India’s position in the Middle East---steps be immediately taken for recognition of Israel and building up intimate relationship with the people of the state.

Since the UNSCOP could not impose the partition until all the sides accepted the plan—either politically or militarily, it advised that the Mandate should end by 1st of August 1948. However, the British terminated their Mandate on the night of 14-15 of May 1948. The Zionists declared the creation of a new independent state of Israel on 14 May 1948.

After claiming the independence, Israel made repeated appeals to the United Nations for granting its membership to Israel. On 4 of May, 1949 the United Nations Security Council accepted Israel’s application for the membership to the United Nations. A week later, the General Assembly passed a resolution, granting Israel membership.

The then Prime Minister of India ordered the delegation to vote against a resolution, since “India could not recognize an Israel which had been achieved through the force of arms and not through negotiations.”
The negative voting of India against Israel’s admission to the United Nations at best be interpreted as a continuation of India’s policy on the issue that it did not support the occupation of Palestine by the Zionists. As stated earlier India’s leaning towards the Palestinian cause was a matter of principle, which she was fighting for. It was not absolutely due to her uncompromising attitude towards Zionism, but India was more motivated by her desire to demonstrate publicity to the Arabs that she standing by their cause, which was just and humane.

Nehru continued to resist the recognition of Israel but on 17 September 1950, India formally recognized the state of Israel as a legal entity in the international community. The question of recognition came up as early as part the second half of 1948. The provisional government of Israel approached the government of India for recognition and its foreign minister Mr. M. Moshe Shertok sent telegram to India concerning the matter. The prime minister openly announced that he wanted to defer the matter because the new state, which was recently formed, had to be seen and watched. He added, “Normally we should have to be satisfied and know exactly what the international position is before taking any step”.

On 06 December 1949, Nehru made, in the constituent assembly, an announcement. He said:
Israel is now a member of the United Nations and its recognition by other member states cannot be indefinitely deferred. The government of India would like to act in this matter, which has been the subject of this controversy among nations with whom we have friendly relations, that would avoid misunderstanding or ill-feeling and a hope that satisfactory decision will be possible in the near future.

A year after recognition Israel was permitted to open a consulate in Bombay but attempts to move this office to New Delhi and to raise the same to a consulate general have failed because of Indian government opposition.

India's refusal to move any nearer to the Jewish state has often been criticized by Israelis and by pro-Zionist Americans. It has been denounced as an act of cowardice, of hypocrisy and of cynicism, as a betrayal of non-alignment and of India's proffered claim to consider issues on their merits. But in adopting an aloof attitude to Israel, that is precisely what India did at that time: she had considered the issue on its merits and had concluded that in principle.
REFERENCES


11. Allen, Richard, No. 4, p. 70.


15. Patriot, New Delhi, May 15, 1966


17. Prasad, Bimla, the origin of Indian foreign policy: The INC and world affairs 1885-1947 (Calcutta-1962), p. 131. Also, Resolution, Congress Working Committee, Wardha-1936


20. Najma Heptulla, No.18, p. 149.


27. Congress Working Committee-Delhi, September 22 to October 2, 1938, pp. 497.

28. Chawla Sandeep, No. 21, p. 51.


30. Prasad Bimla, No. 17, p. 132.


34. Jansen G H, The Statesman, New Delhi, April 5, 1966

35. Ibid

36. Ibid


44. Nehru Jawaharlal, Eighteen months in India 1936-37, being Further Essays and writings (Allahabad-1938), pp. 133-137.


52. Ibid, p. 194.


Afghanistan, Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkey Abstained: 1, Siam


60. Ibid, pp. 34-35.

61. Mehrish, B.N., India’s Recognition policy towards the new nations (Delhi-1972), p. 74.


68. Ibid, p. 49-50.


72. Singh, Surjit, “Indo-Israel relations; A study of some aspects of India’s foreign policy” in No.61, p. 570.

