CHAPTER - 2
INDIA AND THE PALESTINIAN ISSUE
CHAPTER- 2

INDIA AND THE PALESTINIAN ISSUE

Importance of West Asia

The term “Near East” and “Middle East” have had different connotations at various times and places. The old and for centuries the prevailing term had been that of “Near East”, taken from the geographical viewpoint of the Western European countries, particularly those bordering on the Atlantic and the Western Mediterranean Sea, such as Great Britain, Portugal, Spain, Holland, France and Italian city states dealing commercially and politically with the Near East.

In fact the term Middle East reminds us of the days when Western Europe, especially Great Britain, dominated the world scene. In the words of J.K. Banerji “such expressions as Middle East, Far East and Near East were naturally in reference to Western Europe." But today, the Middle East is being described more and more in Asian countries as West Asia. In the words of Wint and Calvocoressi “Today Nehru is setting the fashion of calling it West Asia in its most restricted sense it includes the Arab lands of Asia together with Egypt”.

West Asia as a Region of Politics Since Camp David:

Geopolitically, it a region of contemporary world politics, and is composed of that part of geographic Asia falling West to the Indian Sub-Continent, South to the USSR, East of the Mediterranean Sea and North-West to the Arabian Sea and almost the whole of the Northern part of geographic
India and the Palestinian Issue

Africa. Politically it consists of 22 sovereign states namely Afghanistan, Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, Yemen, Arab Republic and Peoples Democratic Republic of Yemen. Palestine will be the 23rd state if it emerges.3

Geo-Strategic Value of West Asia:

Of pivotal geo-strategic significance is the fact that the Epicentric sea-lane separating the African Rimland from the Eurasean and connecting the Atlantic with the Indian Ocean, and thus the two hemispheres and the four Continents, is flanked considerably by West Asia. The Mediterranean Sea to its 60% and the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf to their 100% are best Asian lakes. This makes West Asia strategically vitally important for powers with global canvass, especially in a politics charged with bipolarity, when it is in geographic contiguity with one of the two superpowers and faces from across the sea West Europe, the most advanced sector of world politics.4

The strategic value of the region and the endemic occurrence of crises there, as regards both the global setting and local physical characteristics, is the result of that determining force, which Napoleon in his two fold capacity as statesmen and strategist called geography “the mother of politics”.5

The geo-strategic concept of the Middle East was articulated by both Peter The Great and Napoleon in almost similar terms, when they proclaimed that whoever controls The Middle East can rule the world. Even President Eisinhower pointed out that if the Mediterranean Sea should be closed to the United States, the latter would be close to war. Previously, the United States
Government hinted out that the independence of the Middle East nations was essential to American security. By the aegis of 1940 the center of the old world had become in the words of Roosevelt, “The new world center of gravity” because, the Mediterranean Sea as a bridge between the Pacific and the Atlantic became for the United States almost as requisite as the Panama Canal and the Caribbean Sea.

Thus, to a large extent the countries of the Middle East exercise control over trade, transportation and communications in time of peace as well as war. Naturally, therefore, the political orientation of the people of the Middle East is a matter of utmost concern to the powers, which seek to establish world hegemony. According to most of the renowned historians “History is also geography in motion”. The geographical factor in Middle Eastern history is of great purport since no other region is as strategically located as the middle land, where the three Continents meet and amalgamate along the Middle Sea and the Mediterranean Sea, which connects the three Oceans.

The geographical and geo-strategical legacy of the Middle East has been shared by every nation of that area from the early epoch when the Trojan War was fought for the control of the Dardanelles and where the first “Suez Canal” was built.

It is not only the land link between Asia, Europe and Africa through which run the routes via the Suez Canal and the Persian Gulf that connects the Mediterranean Sea with the Indian Ocean but it is also the crossroads of many of the major international airlines and the locale of a large proportion of the world oil supplies. According to J.K. Banerji, “Besides being the meeting
India and the Palestinian Issue

place of three Continents and lying athwart vital land, sea and air communication the importance of Middle East has increased because of its possession of about more than half (nearly 60%) of the world’s known oil reserves. In an age where petroleum has become the very lifeline of civilizations, there is greater concern and contest going on among the major power alignments to protect their vitally important oil resources in the Middle East.

**Importance of West Asia on Account of oil:**

The oil age has turned the Middle East into that “inter Continental and “inter Oceanic center of air communications without which a round the world and all wealthier air route is possible”. The invention of atom bomb has further led to the increase in demand for the liquid fuel; indeed the prize on air transport is higher than the ships. Thus the latest addition of air power to the old issue of land and sea communications has further heightened the geo-strategic uniqueness of the Middle East as a new center now studded with American and British air bases around the Mediterranean Sea from the Atlantic to the Indian Ocean. It is possible to fly over most of the three Continental expansions from these bases a position, which has the particular aspect of immediate closeness to the Russian neighbour and his oil potentials.

It is also obvious that whoever controls the still untapped oil fields of the Middle East will have the power to make peace or war. King Ibn-Saud expressed this idea before President Roosevelt, when they met in 1945. American oil geologists have described the Middle East as the “Center and the heart of the internal oil production, the world’s greatest reserves of oil vast
India and the Palestinian Issue

beyond imagination, with unparallel abundance". The “potential biggest development of natural resources ever undertaken by American investments”, includes the vast network of pipelines from Arab land’s to the Mediterranean Sea. Ibn- Saud’s statement to Roosevelt is but a re-statement of Clemenceau’s characterization of oil as “the powerful last world in matters of peace and war”.

Importance of West Asia for Super Power:

West Asia had been a cradle of attraction for the major powers like UK, France, Russia and USA. But soon after the World War II it became a center of rivalry between the two major powers as per their interests and requirements.

During the 18th and the 19th century the United States took only sporadic interest and got slightly involved in the Mediterranean Sea, Syria and Saudi Arabia for its economic interest. Not only this, the United States reputation was of only missionary appeal and social work, trade continued but not at large scale. The United States did not announce war against, Ottoman Empire nor did it support the Treaty of ‘Sevres’ and ‘Laussane’ of 1920 and 1923 respectively. Moreover the United States President Mr. Wilson had already approved the Balfour Declaration of 1917 that gave boost to the Zionist Movement, which henceforth struggled Arab resistance to make Palestine a Jewish state.

Furthermore, the post war challenges and the feeble position provided difficulty for Great Britain to sustain its economic and military commitment to the Arab countries. It was the growing power of Soviet Union, which
challenged this weakness and forced the United States to assume its responsibility in the area. The United States realized its responsibility and role assigned to it as a guardian of Western interests in the Arab world and subsequently to build up a deterrence against it 'Soviet Union'.

The United States Interests in the Arab World are as follows:

1. The petroleum in West Asia is a major source of power for the West European economy and is an essential source of global defence. Therefore United States always keeps an eye on it and likes to exploit this resource as much as possible.

2. To keep an upper hand on Jewish interest.

The oil in West Asia became apparent and of significant wealth especially since 1945 when its value was realized during the war period. Inspite of the lack of adequate transportation, refining and production facilities by 1996, the crude output of Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arab and Bahrain was estimated to be 194,000,000 barrels.

At the same time Soviet Union became a major actor in West Asia. This region has a strategic juxtaposition with Soviet Union and Soviet Union took interest in her since long time back specially in Northern frontier area and warm water stream. After the World War II, Soviet policy towards West Asia became blimpish due to the United States interest in the region. For instance after the arrival of Shah of Iran during the early fifties, United States interests found their expression by exploiting out oil whereas Soviet Union always sought to use Afghanistan, Iran, Baltics and Transcaucasian for its defence and political purpose.
During the initial period the soviet interests were strategic and defensive but during the later stage it flourished on two grounds mainly political and strategic.

1. As far as USSR's strategic interest is concerned it promoted its influence in the region to provide a corridor for direct challenge to United States navy in Indian Ocean and to keep a watch on United States activities of submarines in the West Asian region and in the Diego Garcia (Indian Ocean).

Another aspect of strategic interest of USSR in West Asia was to keep away West i.e. the United States and its allies from exploiting fabulous amount of oil. According to him this precious asset should not go into the hands of its enemy (i.e. Western Europe, United States and its allies) but to its friends (Eastern Europe). The Communist Soviet Union has always been active in denying the use of oil by Britain, United States or any other anti-Soviet regime.

Secondly as far as political interest is concerned the former USSR very diplomatically projected a picture of new perception of Western colonization in the Arab world and later on tried to gain favour of Arabs, the Third world countries and the Socialist countries. The Soviet stated that inspite of being Communist they were not against Pan Arabism and Arab cause specially sponsored by Egyptian President Gamal Abdul Nasser. It got good relations with Syria, Algeria, Iraq and Libya including Egypt. Economic and military aids were promoted by USSR. Moreover the other side of the political interest was to play a card through the fervour of Arab nationalism to keep off United States and its Zionist moves in West Asia. Automatically Soviet Union carved
India and the Palestinian Issue

out a clear image among Socialist Arab regime as particularly in Iraq and in Syria.

Apparently, the United States policy characterized on the above grounds except its oil interest and United States foreign policy towards West Asia is based on following three major interests.

1. To exploit fabulous amount of Petroleum of West Asia.

2. To keep off Soviet influence and to oppose Communist tendencies.

3. To buff up a permanent ally 'Israel' to maintain Jewish lobby in Congress for keeping an eye over the Arabs resurgence and activities.

Importance of West Asia Due to Suez Canal:

One of the important international waterways of the Middle East is the modern Suez Canal, which was completed in the year 1869. The Suez Canal base has no equal, and in view of many strategists, can have no counterpart in arrangements for the defence of the free world. The base would lose much of its importance as the world's most highly developed military position if it comes under the control of a minor power deficient in military science. Furthermore, the adjoining maritime canal is of immense value, even in matters of defence. The Suez Canal passes a large amount of petroleum so much necessary for the military establishment of the NATO nations and supplies and equipment required not only for the Canal Zone base but also for East Africa, Persian Gulf area, in parts of South Asia and in the antipodean Commonwealth. Hence, the problem of control of the Suez Canal involves the security interest of the entire free world.
India and the Palestinian Issue

This accounts for the great power rivalry in the area and interest in the Arab-Israel conflict. In a world divided into warning camps, the relatively weaker nations of the Middle East occupy a peculiarly strategic and exposed position. Both power alignments are vying with each other in order to win friendship and to establish control over the Arab states and to ensure the protection of regular flow of oil and free passage of the Suez Canal, which is the shortest route to India. The polarization of the global conflict and the proximity of the Soviet Union, which fringes, the North to the area of conflict has clearly lent greater urgency to the problem. Although the present conflict has ideological overtones, it remains basically the conflict of national interests of the great powers. The clash of interests among the world powers, whether regarding oil, communications or world hegemony increases the local conflicts and tensions. The challenge of Arab nationalism and Arab-Israeli conflict, conversely intensify the conflict among the big powers.

In the words of Morrison:

"At the first sight the Middle East presents a confusing picture of unrest and tension. Its problems are so complicated and so charged with emotional feelings that there is a strong temptation to abandon hope for any solution".\(^\text{14}\)

Yet the understanding and tackling of these problems is of immense importance not only for the stability, progress and prosperity of the area itself, but also for the peace of the world. Every Middle East problem has its international facet and every event in this region is liable to worldwide repercussions. The expert military opinion predicted that the Middle East might well witness the next round in the struggle between the Western powers and the Soviet group, as well as between Western democracy and Communism.
Lastly, Israel the child of imperialist strategy, has introduced into the Middle East scene as the explosive factor of racial antagonism between the Arabs and the Jews. Apparently this irreconcilable conflict between Israel and her Arab neighbours influences and sharpens the big power rivalry in the area.

Thus the geo-strategic uniqueness of the Middle East is based on the twin pillars, one of which represents the old center of world communications and the other, the newly developed natural power-oil vital for peace or war. "Together strategic position and petroleum resources make of the Middle East an area whose attitude and outlook may well exercise a decisive influence on the shape of things to come".  

Palestinian Issue:

Palestine lies between the Mediterranean in the West, Lebanon in the North, Syria and the Jordan River in the East and the Red Sea and Sinai in the South and South-West.

Palestine as a geographical and cultural unit has occupied a prominent place in human annals at all periods in history. In terms of cultural origins, it was among the most ancient center of civilization. With regards to modern political phenomena, it is the seat of one of the youngest nation states. This being a small country attracts a great deal of attention because of its old history and association. For it is a holy land for Jews, Christians and the Muslims.

It is this geographical position, which has made, Palestine, throughout history a passage and a stepping stone for a large number of countries and succeeding civilizations. The prominence of Palestine prevailed until the Arab conquest (from the Arabian Peninsula) in the 17th century A.D., which formed
a decisive turning point in the history of Arab. Since the middle of the 17th century until the middle of the 20th century, Palestine lived for thirteenth successive and uninterrupted centuries, as part of the Arab nations, its language, culture and destiny.¹⁸

Moreover the unique historical and culture position of Palestine gives it a very special political significance both at the Arab and international level. On one hand, it forms the heart of the Arab world for it connects it with Asia and Africa and acts as a major link in the unification process of the Arab nations. Secondly it forms a major meeting and a take off point on the bridge that stretches across the three Continents of Africa, Asia and Europe. In the words of Hoskins “It is the bridge across which have passed the caravans of trade, the armies of war and the influences of contrasting cultures”.¹⁹ Due to its unique geographical position it had been subjected continually to the ambitions and plans of world imperialism.

Why and how did the Palestine Problem Arise:

The Palestine issue has once again focused world attention on the unresolved conflict between the Arab nationalism and Zionism which has dominated the course of events in that area for the past 50 years.²⁰ This conflict has affected the peace and security of the Arab world, has claimed countless innocent lives, caused bloodshed, hatred enmity and drew the world to the brink of war, ever since the establishing of the state of Israel, and the subsequent uprooting of the innocent people from their own land has resulted in several important varied and complex dimensions.²¹
Acc. to Hurewitz: Palestine as a modern geographic and political unit was the creation of World War II and its peace settlement.²²

Before the break-up of the Ottoman Turkish Empire, Palestine had been a heaven of peace, where the followers of different religion lived in peace and harmony. All of them enjoyed complete freedom of religion, freedom of speech, freedom of trade irrespective of religious affiliation and or racial origins. There was no discrimination against the Jews. It is both relevant and interesting to recall that there was no “Jewish problem” in any part of the far-flung Turkish Empire, much less in Palestine.²³ This conflict had its origin from the Balfour Declaration of 2nd November, 1917, whereby the British Government promised to create a ‘National Home’ for the Jews in Palestine.²⁴

The demand for the homeland did not come from the Jewish community within Palestine or the Ottoman Empire, but from the Zionist Movement from abroad and which went hand in hand with imperialists. The British war cabinet, for instance received a not from Weizman.

“In submitting our Resolution we had entrusted our national and Zionist destiny to the Foreign office and the imperial war cabinet, in the hope that the problem would be considered in the light of imperial interests and the principles for which the entente stands”. A Jewish state under the guardianship of the British according to Winston Churchill would be in harmony with the interests of the British Empire. That is how and why the ‘Imperialist serpent’ got itself smuggled into the “Garden of Peace i.e. Palestine” under the apparel of a mandatory power, and since then there has been no end to the toil troubles and suffering of the Palestinian-Arab Muslims and Christians.
India and the Palestinian Issue

The Palestine issue is neither religious nor racial. It is a struggle against the foreign rule and exploitation meted out to the Palestinians the children of the soil, against settler-colonialism. It is a conflict between nationalism, the Jewish nationalism, which is religious and the Palestine nationalism, which is secular and democratic. Probably it is due to this reason, which has made the peaceful settlement of the conflict all the more difficult.25

History of Palestine: - The Palestine conflict had its origin from the Balfour Declaration of 2nd November 1917 whereby the British Government promised to create a national home for the Jews in Palestine. Before the Balfour Declaration there was no Palestine problem. The European Jews mooted the idea of Jewish state. In the beginning of the 19th century, Jewish interests in Palestine were basically religious and humanitarian. Anyhow, in the latter part of the 19th century, some European Jews evinced a political interest in Palestine. However, it was Theodore Herzl, who expounded the concept of a Jewish state and later he provided political Zionism with its most effective leadership.26 The first Zionist Congress in 1897 passed a Resolution favouring a Jewish home in Palestine. It was in 1903 when Herzl sought the aid of the British Government in acquiring a Homeland. Dr. Chaim Weizmann led the Zionist effort to achieve Zionist goal and it was in 1917 that the British govt. rewarded him with the Balfour Declaration.27

The Reality behind the Balfour Declaration:

Prior to World War I, Palestine was under the Turkish occupation as a part of the Ottoman Empire. In return for a British promise of complete national independence for the Arabs, the Palestinians helped in overthrowing
the Turkish hegemony. The Ottoman Empire had as its basis the religious sanctions of Islam. But the Arabs rose against its tyranny and tutelage because they wanted independence in return, for the help in the war against the Turks of the Arab armies. Britain promised that once the Turkish occupies were driven out, all Palestine plus Iraq, Transjordan and most of the Syria would be free and independent. Simultaneously, unknown to the Arabs, Britain and France secretly agreed to carve up Syria, Lebanon and Iraq and parcel out these territories among themselves as virtual colonies. Once the Turks had been defeated Palestine was to be governed by some unspecified international regime. Yet hardly was the ink dry on this agreement when the British Government began a series of maneuvers in League with Dr. Chaim Weizmann’s Zionist Federation, designed to gain Jewish support for the allies in the war against Germany. The result was the Balfour Declaration of November 2, 1917 in which the British fully sympathized with the Jewish Zionist aspiration and declared that it was their intentions to establish a Jewish national home in Palestine and second, the granting to Britain by the League of Nations of the mandate over Palestine in 1922. The Balfour Declaration was made to win the goodwill of the International Jewry and was welcomed by the Jews. This was not, however a promise that Palestine was to become a national home of the Jews. It also agreed to facilitate growth of the Jewish community through immigration. The declaration also included an important safeguarding clause, which promised, Nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of the existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine. This Provision was self-contradictory and nullified the declaration. Furthermore, Britain had no authority then to barter away Palestine as it was still under the
control of the Turks. A Jew named Arthur Koestler, characterized this declaration as document in which “one nation promised to a second nation the country of a third”. 28 Palestine was not only a barren land. It was already somebody else’s home. So that this generous gesture of the British was really at the expense of these people living there including Arabs, non-Arab Muslims, Christians and in fact everybody who was not a Jew protested strongly at the declaration. These people felt insecure, they felt alien in their own land because under the mandate Palestine was ruled like a British Colony. The Arabs were not even allowed to participate in their own land and the British were providing the Jews with a helping hand at the expense of the Palestinians.

It was a time when the British were increasing their hold in India and Africa with the protection of all vital roads leading to them. At that time competition within the world colonialist movement was increasing. New areas, which were suitable for colonization, began to appear in the Arab East because of the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. At the same time, the early signs of the rise of national liberation in Asia and Africa began to appear on the horizon.

British imperialism, after a thorough survey of the situation arrived at a conclusion which emphasized the utmost importance that Palestine represented in the new conditions and the new role which it could play because of its position in the future of British imperialism.

The British motivation behind this important decision was a curious mixture of stark self-interest and an acute desire to do good to the Jews at some one else’s expense. This declaration, which was motivated by the purely imperialist interests of Britain, had two fold objectives.
India and the Palestinian Issue

1. Firstly Palestine was considered to be of great importance for the protection of the Sinai and Suez Canal that is the road to India and Africa a very important route for British imperialism at that time. Moreover, Palestine constituted for the British point where the three Continents meet, and a vital center for controlling the Western and Eastern coasts of the Mediterranean Sea, the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean. It also formed the springboard from which any further expansionist plans (into Syria, Jordan, Iraq and the Arabian Peninsula) could be launched following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire.

2. Secondly the military necessity to counter French imperialist ambitions in Greater Syria. Britain was also moved by the desire to keep Russia and America in the World War by pacifying the Jews.

Colonel Richard Mienertrehagen wrote to Lloyd George in (March 25, 1919.) “We are very wise in allowing the Jews to establish their national home in Palestine.... we cannot befriend both Jews and Arabs. My proposal is based on befriending the people who are more likely to be loyal friends the Jews”.

Although the Balfour Declaration had no legal binding, but it undoubtedly strengthened the Zionist cause and the Balfour Declaration has been rightly characterized as the “Original foundation stone of the Jewish state now constituted in Palestine”. 29

Palestine after World War I:

After the dismemberment of the Turkish Empire in April 1920 the Principal allied gave the mandatory responsibility to Britain. The League of Nations ratified the mandate in 1922 and the USA not being a member of the League extended recognition till December 1924. 30 But since Great Britain had
made contradictory promises to Jews and the Arabs, through vague undertakings the question of Palestine posed a great problem. The British efforts to carry out the provisions of the Balfour Declaration met with stiff Arab opposition from the very beginning. Their argument was that the Arabs were not responsible for the oppression of the Jews in Europe. Besides Palestine, with its limited resources could not cope up with large scale Jewish immigration. Finally, the creation of the Jewish state in Palestine would most certainly exterminate its Arab national and cultural entity.

Under the mandate Palestine was ruled like a British colony. Jewish and British officials occupied all senior posts and the Arabs were not allowed to participate in the administration of the country. Moreover, the British decision to throw open the gates of Palestine to Jewish immigration resulted in the increase in percentage of the Jewish population from 7% in 1918 to 33% in 1947. At the same time the proportion of Arabs dropped from 93% to 67%. The immigrant Jews were also helped to seize Arabs land at the expense of Arabs. Thus the percentage of Jewish owned land rose steadily from less than 2% in 1918 to 6% by 1947. The British also allowed the formation of Zionist military squads. A number of terrorist Organizations of the Zionists were helped to set up. On the other hand, the Arabs had been totally disarmed. Many Arab youths were condemned to death and executed for carrying arms and ammunition. This inflamed the political minded urban Arabs and the result was the Arab-Jewish riots of 1921 and 1929.³¹

In 1929, the British appointed two Commissions. These Commissions urged strict restrictions on Jewish immigration, land purchases and warned against the exclusion of Arab labour from Zionist agricultural settlements and
industries, which embittered Arab-Jewish relations. By the end of the twenties the Palestine problem had taken serious shape but it still did not appear utterly intractable. After all, in 1927, there were more Jews leaving the national home than entering it, and net immigration stood at 3,503. But the rise of Hitler in Germany extinguished all hopes of peace in Palestine. This influx further increased when Hitler started the policy of killing the Jews in Germany. By the end of 1934 the number of Jews in Palestine had reached 300,000. This was intolerable for the Arabs and they resorted to non-cooperation with Britain.

Another Commission appointed in 1936 suggested that to ensure peace the mandate should be put to an end and the country should be divided into two separate Jewish and Arab states, with Britain having control over several enclaves in order to ensure uninterrupted access for all the holy places. To put the plan into action Britain in 1938 invited both Jews and the Arabs to discuss a mutually acceptable solution. But the conference ended in failure.

By the end of 1934-45 wars, the Palestine-Arabs found themselves facing a powerful front composed of vested interests in Britain, America and the Zionist international, all aiming at transforming Palestine into a Jewish state. In 1946 a mixed Anglo-American Commission was sent to Palestine 'to study the question'. The Commission recommended that Palestine be thrown open to Jewish immigration and that 100,000 more Jews be admitted at once. But these recommendations failed to satisfy the Jews as well as the Arabs.

Opinion shared by different Countries:

Those countries which were in power in the United States, afraid of displeasing the Jews within the country, were in support of partition and a
viable Jewish state with complete autonomy in regard to economic and immigration policies. The USSR agreed with the principle of granting independence to Palestine without delay, but supported the creation of a separate Jewish state. India, along with Arab states, opposed partition, and suggested a federal Palestine instead of a unitary state. In March 1947, having become weary of anti-British agitation and terrorist activities of the Zionists the British Government decided to take the question of the Palestine before the United Nations in the hope that they could succeed where it could not.

The Problem of Palestine and the United Nations:

No sooner the problem was referred to the United Nations. The Palestinian crises began to move rapidly towards its tragic ending. The United Nations after having considered the issue established a special committee on Palestine (UNSCOP), “to ascertain and record facts and to investigate all questions and issues relevant to the problem of Palestine” 35. The Committee in its session held between April 28 and May 15, 1947 presented a report containing two proposals, a majority plan recommended by the representatives of Canada, Czechoslovakia, Guatemala, Netherlands, Peru, Sweden and Uruguay, which proposed that Palestine should be divided into an Arab State a Jewish State and an international city of Jerusalem. 36 The three to be linked in an economic union. The representatives from India, Iran and Yugoslavia, proposed a minority plan which suggested that an independent federal state of Palestine should be created this state would comprise an Arab state and a Jewish state and Jerusalem would be its capital. There would thus be a single Palestinian nationality and citizenship. 37
The Partition Plan:

At its regular session, after an intense long debate, the General Assembly, on 29 November 1947, adopted a Resolution 181(II) approving with minor changes the plan of partition with Economic union as proposed by the majority in the special committee on Palestine. The partition plan provided for the termination of the mandate, the progressive withdrawal of British armed forces and the delineation of boundaries between the two states and Jerusalem. It called for the creation of Arabs and Jewish state not latter than 1st October 1948. Palestine was to be divided into 8 parts three parts were allotted to the Jewish state and three to the Arab state, the seventh, the town of Jaffa was to form an Arab enclave within Jewish territory, and the international regime for Jerusalem, the eight division, would be administered by the United Nations Trusteeship Council.

The Plan also set out the steps to be taken prior to independence, dealing with citizenship, transit, the economic union and a declaration to be made by the provisional government of each proposed state regarding access to holy places and religious and minority rights. By Resolution 181(II) the assembly also set up the United Nations Palestine Commission to carry out its recommendations and requested the Security Council to take the necessary measures to implement the partition plan.

The Jewish agency accepted the Resolution despite its dissatisfaction over such matters as Jewish immigration from Europe and the territorial limits set on the proposed Jewish state. The plan was not accepted by the Palestinian-Arabs and Arab states, on the grounds that it violated the provisions of the
United Nations Charter, which granted people the right to decide their own destiny. They said that the Assembly had endorsed the plan under circumstances unworthy of the United Nations and that the Arabs of Palestine would oppose any scheme which provide partition of the country or which gave preferential rights and status to a minority. Hence, civil war broke out in Palestine and a number of British soldiers were killed. As violence and disorder were increasing in the country a Truce Commission composed of representatives of those members of the Security Council, which, have Consular offices in Jerusalem, was established on 24 Feb 1948. Thus Belgium, France and the United States (Syria being exempted as it was directly involved in the issue) formed the United Nations Truce Commission.

In an effort to achieve a political solution acceptable to Arabs and Jews the General Assembly on 27th May 1948 appointed a United Nations mediator, Count Folke Bernadotte of Sweden, to use his good offices with the local and community authorities in Palestine for a political settlement of this difficult problem.

The importance of a mediator became increasingly clear as the conflict grew in intensity when the Jewish agency accepted the Partition plan and insisted upon the implementation of the plan without modification whereas the Arab High Committee rejected any solution on partition and insisted that the only acceptable solution was the formation of one independent state for the whole of Palestine.38

The big Powers were too preoccupied with their own bloc politics to pay heed to the cries for truth and justice. When the partition Resolution was
passed, the total population of Palestine was estimated to be 2,115,000 of this 2/3rd were Muslims and Christian Arabs; 1/3rd was Jews and 35,000 others. Jewish land ownership in the whole of Palestine had risen to 6%.

Nevertheless, the proposed Jewish state was allotted 56.47% of the area of the country and the Arab state only 42.88% of the area and the International Zone of Jerusalem about 0.65 percent. How, in effect Israel had grabbed even a larger slice of territory and went on adding to it periodically.

Meanwhile Britain declared its intention to withdraw from Palestine on May 15, 1948 and from the port of Haifa in August 1948 when the mandate would expire. The partition decision and the announcement of the British intention were a signal to Zionist terrorist gangs to start a systematic policy of arson, massacre and pillage.

By May 15, 1948 when Britain withdraws from Palestine, the Zionist had already occupied most of the towns and had seized lands which were not included even in the iniquitous partition Resolution then followed the proclamation of the state of Israel.

**Formation of Israel State:**

The creation of the state Israel in May 1948 and its subsequent admission to the United Nations aggravated rather than resolve the basic conflict underlying the Palestine problem. A million or more of the Palestinian-Arabs were evicted from their ancestral home land just as Hitler tyranny had uprooted many Jews from their homes, Israeli's forcibly occupied large areas that had been originally assigned to the Palestinians by the United Nations
Resolutions of November 29, 1947 and resolved to retain them on the plea of security. Partition also inducted a new ingredient in the situation.\cite{note39}

The partition plan immediately led to armed confrontation between the new born state of Israel and the neighbouring Arab countries. Arab forces entered Palestine with the avowed purpose of filling 'the vacuum created by the termination of the 'Mandate' but it met with stiff resistance put up by the Israeli army which resulted in the first Arab-Israeli war.\cite{note40}

In such a desperate situation the Arab states decided to intervene and defend themselves. The aim of their action was to stop the continuing flight of the Arabs from Israeli territory, prevent Israel from overrunning the rest of Palestine and to check Zionist acts of terrorism. The next day regular troops of the Arab state entered to assist the Palestinian-Arab. The Arab forces consisting of units from Transjordan, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq and Egypt and a token force from Saudi Arabia were actually not much larger than the Israeli army. But what eventually gave the Israelis an upper hand in the battle field was the superior Organization, resourcefulness and unity of purpose. The Arabs on the other hand, entered the fray without a joint command or coordinated field action. For a brief moment at the start of the war, the Arabs gained the upper hand. The Western powers than called for a truce, which was accepted by both sides. The truce went into effect on (11 June to 7 July 1948) and was supervised by the United Nations mediator with the assistance of a group of international military observers. Which came to be known as the United Nations Truce Supervisions Organization (UNTSO)? Despite the efforts of mediator, no agreement could be reached on an extension of the truce and fighting broke out again on 8 July.
The Israeli made good use of the interval to stock up with modern weapons from the Soviet bloc where as they had been denied any such provisions by the West. The result was that the condition of the Palestinian Arabs became worse than ever. They lost about half of the area allotted to them under the United Nations partition scheme and were left with an area roughly 100 miles long and 40 miles wide which we know today as the 'West Bank' comprising the old city of Jerusalem, the Judean Hills and the Jordan Valley. This area being totally unviable as an independent state was attached to Transjordan, which became the king of Jordan and the Gaza strip went under Egyptian control. It was in this climate of military defeat and political demoralization that the various Arab state concluded armistice agreements with Israel. A precarious peace was established in West Asia. But the causes of conflict remained intact, while the Israeli jealously guarded their exploits and looked upon the Arabs passionately nursed the desire to avenge the injustice done to their Palestine brethren.

The New Delhi Weekly Mainstream of June 17 said in the Course of an editorial entitled “Abiding Peace”. The very first thing that has to be understood in relation to the West Asian crises is that the conflict is not between ‘tiny Israel’ and the Arab nations ‘surrounding’ it. Like South Korea and Taiwan, Israel is a bastion of imperialism. The very purpose of its creation in the teeth of opposition from the people of Palestine was to establish a firm foothold in West Asia from which the Anglo-Saxon Powers could subvert and destroy Arab Movements and regimes opposed to imperialist domination and exploitation.
Ramification of Israel State:

Since the end of the World War II the West Asian region has been a center of sanguinary conflicts of increasing intensity. All these conflicts, center on the problem of millions of Palestinian people driven off their native land to create the state of Israel.

No doubt that the Jewish people have a long and tortured history of suffering, persecution including campaigns of extermination at the hands of the states and peoples who vow in the name of Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, the idea that the solution to the Jewish problem would lie in creating the state of Israel has been among the most troublesome.43

The nature and scope of the Arab-Israeli conflict over the last two decade is reflected in the legacy left behind by the destructive birth of Israel.

1. This brutal war has driven nearly around one million Arabs out of their homeland. This plight was partly due to the fear of Jewish retaliation and partly due to the urging of the Arab political leaders to vacate probable battle areas. The refugees fled to the surrounding Arab countries or to the Arab occupied parts of Palestine. In the spring of 1949 the number of Arab displaced persons eligible for relief was officially estimated at 940,000.44 As the war began there were around 1,320,000 Arabs and 640,000 Jew in Palestine. The creation of Israel resulted in the displacement of nearly 70 percent of the Arab population, which the Israeli government refused to readmit.45

All this resulted in the birth of what might be termed as ‘Arab Zionism’, which is as passionately dedicated to its ultimate goal, namely returns to the
homeland, as the Jewish Zionism of the earlier decades. Like, the Zionist the Arab refugees also refused to be settled anywhere except Palestine.

This catastrophic refugee problem has indeed remained the biggest source of Arab-Israeli tensions. No doubt, the United Nations Relief and work agency has done a commendable job to relieve the sufferings of the homeless Palestinians. But as far as lasting solution of the problem is concerned the Arabs contend that the refugees have the right to return to their homeland or in case they don’t opt to return them in that case they should receive compensation as laid down by the United Nations Resolution of 11th December 1948. They also insist on activating the United Nations Conciliation Commission set up in the year 1949 to implement this Resolution. The Israel case is that it cannot repatriate the refugees from security point of view and because of its own growing population and that in any case the issue cannot be considered until a peace settlement is concluded. With regards to compensation, Israel notified the United Nations Conciliation Commission in March 1956 that it would not take up this issue until the Arab States ended the economic boycott.

Secondly the war led to an increase in cruelties and violation of International law. Jewish settlements were better defended than the Arab villages. “Scores of Arab villages deemed uninhabited, had been razed [by the Jews] as insurance against their owner’s return”. The Jews slaughtered all the Arab civilian population in the villages of Deir Yasin in April 1948.

Thirdly in importance to the refugee problem was the Arab fear of Zionist expansion. The armistice agreement of 1949 left Israel in actual control
India and the Palestinian Issue

of the entire territory given to it by the United Nations Resolution added with
sizeable portion of areas originally assigned to the proposed Arab states and a
part of the city of Jerusalem which was to be placed under United Nations
supervision. Moreover, the Arabs fear regarding Israel being an intrinsically an
expansionist state. In May 1948, the Jewish population was less than a million.
Over the next twelve years Israel took a million Jews from abroad. The
philosophy of Zionism implies that Israel is the perspective home of the entire
world Jewry numbering some twelve million people.47 Nahum Goldman the
President of the Twenty-sixth World Zionist Congress, stated in 1964 that the
job of the Zionist movement was ‘to make use of the Jewish state as a means of
securing the future of the Jewish people throughout the world’.

Moreover, the Arabs fear of Israeli expansion was further enhanced by
the latter close links with the Western powers. Israel’s conflict with Britain
and France in the Suez war of 1956 further confirmed the Arab suspicion that
Israel was the outpost of the West in the Arab East.

The policy of mistrust and hostility followed by the Arabs towards Israel
was governed by these considerations. The Arabs refused to extend recognition
to Israeli. They even barred economic intercourse with Israel and banned the
passage of Israeli ships through the Suez Canal on grounds of continued
belligerency. Arab leaders also talked of their determination to revoke the
partition of Palestine. That such loose talks were primarily destined to
domestic consumption which was evident from the fact that the Israeli
themselves never took it at its face value. Nasser, a responsible Arab statesman
said that a settlement is possible, provided the refugee problem and the
expansionist threat could be tackled satisfactorily.
Fourthly by the Middle of the sixties, failure to resolve any of the outstanding issues together with Israel’s unilateral decision to divert the water of the Jordan River once again revitalized the danger of an armed confrontation. The Arab leaders working under the pressure of Arab public opinion blessed the creation of a Palestine liberation Organization in order to revive the political entity of Palestine out of its scattered fragments. The more extremist among the Palestinians were attracted by the rival Organization called Al Falah (victory) and Al-Asifah (Storm). It rekindled the hope of rejuvenating Palestine to its rightful owners. As Palestinian commandos set out to operate along the Arab-Israeli border, Israel reacted with sharp reprisals. The stage was thus ready for the second round of the Arab Israeli conflict.48

Nehru’s Policy towards the Issue of Palestine:

The advent of India’s pro-West Asia policy and the Indian-response to the Palestinian issue can be traced back to the post-world war I period. During this period India was under the British imperialism and the Indian national leaders like the leaders of most of countries of West Asia were busy in their common struggle against imperialism, hence it resulted in a doing feeling of affinity and solidarity among these people.

Right from the beginning, various pressures have been exerted on India to influence its policy towards West Asia in general and the Arab-Israeli conflict in particular. But India has displayed a sense of continuity and consistency in its support of the Arabs a heritage that everyone should cherish.49
The Indian National Congress and its most eminent mentors Mahatma Gandhi and Nehru voiced India’s concern for Palestine. Nehru was equally conscious of British imperialist designs for maintaining colonialism in the Arab countries. To intensify India’s struggle for independence, he became the spokesmen for the Independence of the Arab countries too. According to Nehru the Balfour Declaration of 1917 was a betrayal of Arabs by the British.

From the 1920s onwards Nehru utilized the Foreign Department of the Indian National Congress as an agency to oppose British rule in India and abroad including that in West Asia. Though Jawaharlal Nehru was sympathetic towards the Jews he believed that the Arabs were fighting British imperialism in Palestine. Moreover he was of the opinion that the Jews should not rely on British support but should reach an agreement with the Arabs to safeguard their position in an independent Arab country. To Nehru, the British appeared to be exploiting, the differences between the Jews and the Arabs in the same way as they were promoting communal tensions in India.

According to Nehru’s point of view Palestine “attracts a great deal of attention because of its old history and associations,” and also because of its being a holy place for the Jews, Christians and the Muslims. The root cause of all problems in Palestine according to him, lie in the “British policy which has created a special minority problem here that of the Jews, and the Jews side with the British and oppose the freedom of Palestine, as they fear that this would mean Arab rule. The two pull different ways and conflicts necessarily occur. On the Arab
India and the Palestinian Issue

side are numbers, on the other side great financial resources and the worldwide Organization of Jewry. So England pits Jewish religious nationalism and makes it appear that their presence is necessary to act as an arbitrator and to keep the peace between the two. It is the same old game, which we have seen in other countries under imperialist domination.\(^5^1\)

According to Nehru, the Palestinian issue should not be viewed in isolation but should be considered as a part of international phenomenon. In his Presidential Address at the AICC session at Faizpur on 27 December 1936, Nehru said, “The Arab struggle against British imperialism in Palestine is as much part of this great world conflict as India’s struggle for freedom.\(^5^2\)

In 1936, the All India Congress Committee conveyed its greetings and sympathy to the Arabs in their struggle for freedom.\(^5^3\) The Indian National Congress observed September 27, 1936, as Palestine day by holding meetings and demonstrations throughout the country supporting the Arab cause.\(^5^4\) Speaking on the occasion, Nehru observed that in Palestine the problem consist of the Arabs and the Jews but it was never a religious problem as some of the Indian Muslims thought it to be. It was a problem of growing nationalism desiring freedom from the clutches of imperialism. He even appreciated the Arabs for putting up a valiant fight in the cause of national independence. Expressing his heartiest sympathy with the Arabs Nehru declared, “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".\(^5^5\) Nehru in his message to the provincial conference held at Allahabad on July 18, 1936 further remarked, "and even on the narrow grounds of self interest we in India should support and sympathize with the Arabs. I trust that Arab struggle in Palestine will help us to see our struggle in a proper perspective and make us forget our internal divisions in the face of common adversity".\(^5^6\)

It was perhaps the Muslim League, which tried to add a religious tinge to the Palestinian affair. But Nehru always decried the attempts made by various Organizations to give the Palestinian issue a communal touch. According to Nehru the problem of Palestine was a nationalist one, for the Arabs were fighting against imperialist control. It was therefore a pity that instead of aligning themselves with that struggles against imperialism, Nehru pointed out that the Jews of Palestine had taken the side of British imperialism and desired its protection against the natives of the country.

No doubt Nehru was sensitive towards the plight and sufferings of the Jews. But inspite of siding with the Arabs on the Palestine issue, he maintained that few could withhold their deep sympathy from the Jews who had undergone centuries of oppression and who were undergoing a very severe trial in Germany. Yet, he made it very clear that no one could sympathize with the Zionist movement aiming at the establishment of a Jewish national home in Palestine under the protection of British imperialism. Nehru regarded the Balfour Declaration as a gross betrayed of Arabs by British imperialism. Admitting that the Jews had right to visit Jerusalem as a holy place, he stated
India and the Palestinian Issue

that Palestine was a holy land for the Jews, Muslims and Christians as well who had been the sons of the soil for the last thirteen hundred years or more. It was possible for some Jews to go to Palestine and settle there in a friendly manner but if they desired to go there with the object of dominating the country and establishing their stronghold there, they should not expect to be welcomed with open arms by the Arabs. In an emotional letter written to Albert Einstein on July 11, 1947, Nehru recognized the achievements made by the Jews and the miseries they had to face through ages of persecution. Yet, he tries to reason out with Albert Einstein that the Jewish approach towards Arabs in Palestine was wrong and that an amicable solution should be found to the problem without the use of force.

Nehru while raising the issue of Palestine admits: "(it) is extraordinarily difficult and intricate. Where rights come into conflict it is not an easy matter to decide. With all our sympathy for the Jews we must and do feel that the rights futures of the Arabs are involved in this question: you have yourself framed the question: 'Can Jewish need, no matter how acute, be met without the infringement of the vital rights of others? Your answer to this question is in the affirmative ....I do not myself see how this problem can be resolved by violence and conflict on one side or the other...... I do earnestly hope that some kind of an agreement might be arrived at between the Arabs and the Jews....I know that the Jews have done a wonderful piece of work in Palestine and have raised the standards of the people there, but one question troubles me. After all these remarkable achievements, why have they failed to gain the goodwill of the Arabs? Why do they want to compel the Arabs to
submit against their will certain demands? The way of approach has been one, which does not lead to a settlement, but rather to the continuation of the conflict. I have no doubt that the fault is not confined to one party that all have erred. I think also that the chief difficulty has been the continuation of British rule in Palestine. We know to our cost that when a third party dominates, it is exceedingly difficult for others to settle their differences even when that third party has good intentions and third parties seldom have such intentions.  

India after independence consistently supported the cause of Palestine in the United Nations and was against the partition of Palestine from the very beginning. Later on when India was elected to represent Asia on the 11 members United Nations Special Committee on Palestine Nehru while addressing the constituent assembly in 1947 said, “To give the House and instance of how we acted, take the Palestine affair which has given rise to a great deal of trouble. We took up a certain attitude in regard to it, which was really a federal state with autonomous parts. It was opposed to both the other attitude, which was before the United Nations. One was partition which 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 region the Jewish regions”. For Nehru this was “not only a fair and equitable solution”. Any other solution would have meant fighting and conflict. Though India’s proposal was included in the Palestine Committee, it did not find favour with most people in the United Nations. When partition of Palestine became inevitable, it was realized
that the Indian solution was probably the best but it was too late to realize. Partition of Palestine thus brought permanent trouble in the West Asia, which at present is extremely explosive with the possibility for a great deal of trouble in the future. Had Nehru's plan been accepted the problem perhaps might have been solved much earlier.

The Existence of Israel is a Reality:

Nehru was well aware of the complications of the creation of the State of Israel brought to the region. He declared in 1958 that ever since Israel came into existence, it has been a source of constant irritation for the Arabs countries. This is because "the Arab countries looked upon Israel as an outpost from which their freedom might at any time be threatened". However the fears of the Arab countries were not without foundation and India fully sympathized with them. Israel reliance on force since its commencement to 1945 and its refusal to respect the United Nations Resolution as well as the Security Council's Resolution on the right of the Palestinian refugees' fully aroused Arabs suspicion about its expansionist propensities. Once partition had taken place and the question of recognition of Israel came up. Nehru said, "Any action that we may take must be guided not only by idealistic considerations but also a realistic appraised of the solution. Our general policy in the past has been favourable to the Arabs, and at the same time, not hostile to the Jews. That policy continues for the present, we have said that we are not recognizing Israel. But this is not an irrevocable decision and the matter will no doubt be considered afresh in view of the subsequent developments, including the find decision of the
Ideologically, Nehru knew from its own experience that partition did not solve basic problems rather it accentuated them. Therefore, on the question of Israel’s admission to the United Nations, India’s first reaction was to abstain. But later, on as a part of the policy of cooperation with the Arab states, Nehru ordered the Indian delegation to vote against since “India could not recognize an Israel which had been achieved through the force of arms and not through negotiations”.

However the Government of India recognized it on 17 September 1950 on account of it’s being a reality but did so ‘de facto’ and not ‘de jure’ because Israel had followed a wrong policy against the Arabs particularly against the Palestinians. Secondly the criterion that religion should become the basis for nationality was unacceptable and thirdly Zionism is considered a product of Western imperialism and not a part of the general Asian liberation movement and under present political circumstances Israel has had to maintain close relations with certain Europe state. Nehru at the same time assured the Arab countries that India would continue to support the cause of the Palestinian refugees, and that recognition did not means endorsement of Israeli position on its frontiers. It was pointed out that India’s continuing non-recognition of Israel was not only inconsistent with its overall relationships but limited the effectiveness of the Government of India’s role as a possible intermediary between Israel and the Arab states.

Israel was again disappointed when it was not invited to the Bandung Conference. Contrary to which the Arab states occupied Center stage at
the non-aligned bloc with Nasser, Nehru and Tito as its major heroes. At
Bandung, Nehru urged the Arabs not to rule out negotiations as a means
of setting the Palestine issue and joined other Asian-African states, in
calling for implementation of the United Nations Resolutions on
Palestine.

In the later years, India also backed the Arab case for an equitable
distribution of the Jordan River waters. These measures combined with
New Delhi’s reluctance to establish diplomatic relations with Israel,
indicated India’s concern for the Arabs. The Israelis not being able to
evoke a firm response from Nehru on the issue of establishing
diplomatic relations were extremely critical of his attitude. David Ben
Gurion, the first Prime Minister of Israel, commented: “I cannot
understand how Nehru fits his behaviour to Israel with Mahatma
Gandhi’s philosophy of universal friendship. Nehru gave definite
promises to the Director General of our Foreign Ministry eight years ago
that he would soon establish diplomatic relations with Israel, but so far
he has not kept his words”.

The Israelis seemed to have achieved a break through when, in
1953, Jawaharlal Nehru allowed an Israeli consult to function in
Bombay. But further Israeli hopes were shattered when despite repeated
requests and unofficial delegations to India; Nehru refused to establish
diplomatic ties with Israel. According to Nehru “This attitude was
adopted after a careful consideration of the balance of factors. It is not
a matter of high principles, but it is based on how we could best serve
and be helpful in that area. We would like the problem between Israel
India and the Palestinian Issue

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. As I said, it is not a matter of principle, and it is not a matter on which two opinions cannot be held. That in the balance is the decision we arrived at, and we think it is a correct decision.  

Even the permission of letting an Israeli Consul function at Bombay was in all probability given to facilitate the migration of Indian Jews desirous of going to Israel because after having thrown out the Palestinian-Arabs, a pressing need was felt for cheap labour in Israel both for farming and semi-skilled jobs. The Indian Jews perfectly fitted this requirement.

Jawaharlal Nehru's inclination towards the Socialists, changes in West Asian regimes pressure from the United States and the Soviet Union and studied endeavours so as not to make the British unhappy were other factors which might have contributed towards Nehru's softness towards Israel in the initial phase.

However, the Status quo has been maintained with Israel from 1953 onwards till today. The Palestinian movement has also seen a lot of ups and down-from the time the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) came into being to the current days of Intifada in the occupied territories. However, Nehru's involvement with the Palestinian question did not end with 1953, but became more comprehensive after his friendship with Nasser and emergence of other issues linked with Palestinian refugees and Arab nationalism.
Even after Nehru’s death, India was not indifferent towards the PLO’s efforts for peaceful settlement. The PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat had been conferred with the 1988 Jawaharlal Nehru Award for International understanding. Announcing this in September 1989 the Ministry of External Affairs said:

India has always been sympathetic to the cause of Palestinian people and has been steadfast in its support to Yasser Arafat and the People of Palestine. In honouring Yasser Arafat in the name of Jawaharlal Nehru, “we underline our commitment to support the right of every people to freedom, justice and peace”.  

Above all India’s Arab policy bore the imprint of the personality of Nehru. His unflagging commitment to enlargement of freedom, to de-colonization and to ever-increasing cooperation among nations influenced the entire spectrum of Independent India’s relation with the Arab world. It also earned for India a measure of respect, which outweighed transitory disagreements.

The Crux of the Middle East turbulence, since the World War II, has been the Palestinian problem. The human tragedy imposed upon the Palestinians by the creation of Israel has been unprecedented in the world history. The People of Palestine were reduced to the status of refugees and derived out from their homes. They were illegitimately punished for the crimes that Hitler committed on the Jews. According to Professor Arnold J. Toynbee, “the tragedy of recent Jewish history is that, instead of learning through suffering, the Jews should have done, to others, the Arabs what had been done
India and the Palestinian Issue

to them by others, the Nazis. A grave injustice was and is being done to the Palestinians”. Since then those helpless people of Palestine have been running from pillar to post in search of their homeland.

Palestinian issue has dominated India’s West Asian policy partly on humanitarian concern and partly due to the political and ideological affinities, since the Palestinian revolution has, in course of prolong struggle against imperialism and Zionism, acquired secular and Socialist dialectics.

Indian leaders like Mahatma Gandhi and Nehru have expressed their warm sympathy and support to the cause of Palestine. Nehru was equally conscious of British imperialist in the Arab countries. The Balfour Declaration of 1917 was a betrayal of Arabs by the British. According to Nehru the Arab struggle against British imperialism in Palestine was as much a part of this great world conflict as was India’s struggle for freedom.

Jawaharlal Nehru was convinced that the Palestinian problem was created by the British and would never be solved by them. Though he expressed deep sympathy for the Jews when they were being prosecuted and hounded out of various countries of Europe and acknowledged their considerable contribution to the country since they entered the land of Palestine. Nevertheless, he believed Palestine essentially to be an Arab country and regarded it basically a national struggle for the independence of the Arabs.

Nehru was very vocal on this issue of Palestine and rightly felt that if the third party withdraws from Palestine it might be easier for the Parties concerned to settle their own problems themselves however difficult they might be and a further elaborated his points to make it clear (1) that you cannot solve
this problem by trying to crush the Arab people (2) that it evil not be settled by British imperialism but by the two main parties coming together and agreeing to terms. 67

Nehru even rejected the partition plan of Palestine and suggested that a federal state with autonomy for the other region would have been the better and lasting solution. According to him this was not only a fair and equitable solution of the problem, but also the only real solution of the problem, any other solution would have meant fighting and conflict. Though India’s proposal was included in the Palestine Committee, it did not find favour with most people in the United Nations. When partition of Palestine became inevitable, it was realized that the Indian solution was probably the best, but it was too late. 68

Partition of Palestine thus brought permanent trouble in the West Asia, and the Palestinian situation has been and still remains one of the most volatile problems in the world. It threatens at any moment to cause open warfare between the nations of the Middle East. With the introduction of weapons of mass destruction into the area, such a conflict would kill millions of innocent people. Such a struggle might very well draw other nations around the world into the fray, sparking a new world war. Therefore a lasting peace settlement in the area should become a top priority for the leaders of the world. Had Nehru’s plan been accepted, the problem perhaps might have been solved much earlier.

Now the present situation is that Israel has become a powerful state and the United States helping her and backing her up I.R. Menon Tripunithura (Kerala) writing in the Hindu of June 16, turned the spotlight on Israel, in
defiance of would opinion. He said: Israel has declared that it will settle the
Israel-Arab question only in discussion directly with the Arab States and not by
the intervention of any third party. It has this ignored and flouted the United
Nations and its function as a world Organization.

Israel has also declared that it is determined to get away with the spoils
of war and is bent upon dictating terms from a position of strength. In that case,
events will leads to a treaty imposed on Arab states in the spirit of the
Versailles Treaty imposed by the Allies on a defeated Germany. If this
happens, the allies of Israel will be sowing seed for the emergence of another
Hitler in the Middle East and thereby for a World War III. In would be better if
the world takes notice of these facts in time and averts a future calamity.

The sad fact is that both the United States and Israel are so out of touch
with Arab Actualities, so enamoured of cliches about Islamic terror and Arab
radicalism and anti-Semitism, that they seem to have missed the fact that Arabs
wants peace, that Palestinians also want to lead a decent life of independence
and democracy as much as the common Israeli or American does.
REFERENCES:


2. Wint Grey and Peter Calvocoressi; Middle East Crises, (Pengium Book, Aylesbury, 1957), p.16.


4. Leonard Binder; The Middle East Crises, Background and Issues (The University of Chicago, 1967), pp.11-14.

5. Ernest Jackh; Background of the Middle East, (Cornell University Press, New York, 1952), p.11.

6. Ibid., p.18.

7. Ibid., pp.18-19.


10. Ibid., pp.17-20.


15. Halford L. Hoskin; n.13, p.2.


17. Halford L. Hoskin; n.15, p.98.


19. Halford L. Hoskin; n.17, p.98.


21. S.A.H. Haqqi; n.3, p.1


28. S.A.H. Haqqi; n. 25, pp.5-6.

29. Ibid., p.6.

30. Ibid., p.7.


32. S.A.H. Haqqi; n. 28, p.9.

33. Ibid., p.9.

34. G.S. Bhargwa; n. 31, p.17


37. Ibid.


40. M.S. Agwani; n. 24, p.1.


42. M.S. Agwani; n. 40, p.20.
43. P.N. Haksar; India's Foreign Policy and its Problems, (Patriot Publishers New Delhi, 1989), pp. 243-244.


45. According to Kenneth W. Bibby; New Star in the Near East (New York, 1950), "Even the activities of the British foreign office in respect to the Arab World were reported in detail to the government at Tel-Aviv". p.70.

46. Of this number 5 million lives in United States, 3 million in the Soviet Union, over 2 millions in Israel, and the rest are scattered all over the World.

47. Nasser told William H. Stringer of the Christian Science Monitor (22\textsuperscript{nd} January, 1959): 'I have never said we should drive Israel into the sea. But these questions return of Arab refugees to their homes and Israel's threat to expand must be settled satisfactorily'.

48. M.S.Agwani; n. 42, pp.16-17.


56. Ibid.,

57. S. Gopal; n.50, pp.364-66.

58. Ibid., pp. 274-75.


60. The Hindu (Delhi), 12 May 1948.


62. General Assembly Official Records, Session 3, Plenary meeting 207, p.330,


India and the Palestinian Issue


68 Ibid., pp. 274-75.