CHAPTER THREE:

EGYPT AND THE KASHMIR QUESTION

This chapter and the following one are concerned with two cases studies that give a deep image of how the relations have been exercised during both hard and normal times and how friendship of the two nations survived the time of misunderstanding. This chapter deals with Egyptian policy towards Kashmir from 1950 till 1957. Egypt was aware of the sensitivity of Kashmir and the ideological background of it, which was based on the division of one nation based on communal lines. This was very hard for a normal Egyptian to accept as also for Egyptian politicians. Moreover, Egypt fought the same idea using its army to prevent the partition of Palestine on religious lines. The second case reflects the nature of the close friendship that tied both India and Egypt in post-1952 revolution. This friendship surpassed the narrow politics of religion or even the narrow politics of the so-called “national interest” by envisaging the common suffering under imperialism in the past, common challenges at present and the common destiny in future. The second case study proves that the Suez crisis was a battle for Egypt to fight it alone but it was a battle for India and Egypt to fight it together and behind them was the support of the Afro-Asian world. Moreover, the two cases belong to different phases of Indo-Egyptian relations. The case study of Kashmir represented the nature of Indo-Egyptian relations during the few years that were left for the rule of monarchy in Egypt and the case of Suez represented the nature of unique relations during the rule of the revolutionary and secular Egypt under Nasser.

Pakistan was created on 14 August 1947 and the next day saw the birth of the Indian Union. This was how British liked to end their rule of the Indian subcontinent by dividing it into two states. The colonial rule over India for many centuries gave the two newly independent states many problems. The partition of the Indian subcontinent doubled the negative impact of the inherited problems and created new ones. One of these problems that poisoned the bilateral relations between them was Kashmir. Further, this problem occupied many diplomatic, economic and military
capacities of the two countries. Moreover, Kashmir issue complicated the relations between both India and Pakistan on one hand and the other Arab and Islamic countries on the other. The local rift in South and West Asia was exploited carefully to manipulate different countries in both regions. Egypt vis-à-vis India and Pakistan was not an exception. Since 1947, Kashmir became one of the main factors, if not the main factor, that shaped both internal and external policies of Pakistan and India.

India and Pakistan were, and still, are so sensitive towards the policies of other countries regarding Kashmir. This created a dilemma for Egyptian diplomacy in handling Egypt’s relations with India on one side and with Pakistan on the other. Traditionally, Egyptian national movement was in full sympathy with the liberation movement in India. Both Indian and Egyptian national movements as seen earlier kept very close relations and discussed common struggle against British imperialism.

On the other side, Egypt was considering itself as the leader of the Islamic world. It had the qualifications of this role. Historically, Egypt played the crucial role in defending the Muslim world against the dangers of Crusades and Mongols. Egypt also revolted against Ottoman domination over the Arab world. It hosted in its land Al Azhar, the oldest Islamic university in the world and the unchallengeable Islamic spiritual authority among Muslims. These qualifications of a role encouraged King Farouk, the then king of Egypt and Sudan, to aspire to claim one day being the Caliph of Muslims.

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2 This role will necessitate the king to show his sympathy with any Islamic cause everywhere. The same attitude has been even inherited with the secular Nasser but as a part of his three circles of foreign policy, that Egypt should operate within. Those circles are the Arab circle, the African circle and the Islamic circle. Later, he added the Asian circle, which in practice was the non-aligned circle. However, Nasser limited Islamic circle to economic and cultural cooperation. He was against any role for religion in politics. This was evident in his clash with the Muslim Brotherhood who was calling for the establishment of an Islamic state. Nasser, like other nationalist leaders and Muhammed Ali Pasha, the founder of Modern Egypt, believed that the state could not be but secular. Saad Zaghloul Pasha declared it once “Religion for God and Home for all” and this failed the British communal policy in Egypt.
The position of Caliph has its own price; the least was that Egypt should support each Islamic cause or show its sympathy with it. This was the case with Egypt’s foreign policy in the years between 1947 and 1952. Now, the dilemma was how Egypt can balance its relations between its traditional comrades in the struggle against British colonialism, namely India, on one hand, and do justice for its self-assuming Islamic role while dealing with the newly branded Islamic state Pakistan on the other. Keeping this balance was getting tougher when it came to the bilateral disputes such as Kashmir and Hyderabad.

Moreover, Egypt badly needed the support of both India and Pakistan for Egyptian and Arab causes such as the Egyptian question and the Palestinian question. Egypt’s options were so limited; it could not denounce its Islamic role by supporting India against Pakistan in issues like Kashmir. It could not also support Pakistan without risking losing India’s friendship and its support for both Egyptian and Arab causes and even going beyond that by siding with the opponents of Egypt. The only option, which was left for Egypt was to be strictly neutral in dealing with any Indo-Pakistani conflict and to develop a kind of balanced friendly relations with both countries. This was not an easy task for the Egyptian diplomacy to handle. The sensitivity of both India and Pakistan regarding Kashmir, the multi-conflicting roles of Egypt, and the harsh needs of real politick sometimes created diplomatic crises between Egypt on the one hand, and India / or Pakistan on the other. This chapter will study the diplomatic crisis that took place in the years of 1950-1951 as a case study to support this argument.

False Representation

The literature of Indo-Arab relations does not provide clear and precise image of Egypt’s policy towards Kashmir problem. Few examples could be presented here to show how the literature dealt with the issue of Egyptian position vis-à-vis Kashmir. Manorma Shukla did not refer to any Egyptian position vis-à-vis Kashmir before
Ayub Syed reflected how Indians saw the Arab position on Kashmir. According to Syed,

Arab friends of India appreciate the situation. This was evident at the Afro-Asian Islamic Conference held at Bandung. In this Conference both Pakistan and China attempted to isolate India by introducing the issues of self-determination and the rights of Muslim minorities. Arab delegates representing the U.A.R, Iraq, Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco, frustrated their efforts to malign India. The Iraqi delegate who presided over the political committee openly chided the Pakistani delegate when he tried to raise the Kashmir issue during the discussion on self-determination. This right, the Iraqi delegate held, is given to peoples who are struggling under the colonial regime. When Pakistan again brought up the issue of Muslim minorities with special reference to Indian Muslims the Committee refused to include specific references and adopted a resolution which said that not only should minorities in non-Islamic States be given equal rights and protection to their cultural heritage but the Muslim countries should treat their non-Muslim minorities as equal citizens. But the Pakistani leaders who lack a basic political approach to world problems and attach supreme importance to opportunist alliances, military pacts with the West and political jugglery with China, cannot deceive Afro-Asian public opinion which sees through the game. It has no code of conduct, no ethics, no moral and no ideological report.

It is to be noted here that Syed did not refer to any Egyptian position towards Kashmir before and after Bandung. He also generalized the Iraqi position to be considered as an Arab collective position. This generalization could not be accepted because it is based on the rule “He who is not with me is against me” which is not necessarily true. Other reason is that Arabs did not follow the same political line and therefore their political positions were varied accordingly. An example of that was Iraq and Egypt, while Iraq was a member of Baghdad Pact Egypt opposed it fiercely. This difference dominated the Arab politics until 1958 when a new nationalist regime took over at Baghdad. Moreover, Iraq's opposition for the right of self-determination was inspired by the fears of Iraq from the national aspiration of its Kurdish population.

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5 Iraq opposed the same idea of self-determination as a tool to solve the Indo-Pakistani conflict in Casablanca Summit of the Arab heads of States after Jordan insisted on adopting such resolution. Gupta argued that it was the Kurdish factor behind Iraq’s position. Hari Ram Gupta, *India-Pakistan war 1965* (Delhi: 1967) vol.2 p.317.
Syed’s accusation of China of helping Pakistan to raise the issue of self-determination and minorities rights at Bandung is not accepted because India brought China to Bandung. Moreover, China itself had its own minority’s problems at its Western part. A huge Muslim minority was living on Xinjiang (West China) and historically known as “Eastern Turkistan”. The representatives of these regions addressed many non-aligned countries including Egypt asking them to raise their cause at Bandung. Obviously, it was not in favour of China to raise the issue of minorities at Bandung. Moreover, the conferees of Bandung agreed that they would avoid discussing any controversial issue such as Kashmir and Pukhtunistan in order to avoid disorder during the conference. It seems that the views of Ayub Syed were influenced by the sad experience of Sino-Indian conflict of 1962.

Saeeduddin Ahmed Dar argued that Egypt’s policy towards Kashmir was strict and silent neutrality in 1948. He also stated that Cairo supported the efforts of the UN during the years 1948-1950 to solve the conflict including the resolution that called for self-determination in Kashmir. According to Dar, India refused an Egyptian offer to mediate on the conflict and resented the statements of Abdul Wahab Azam that was pro-Pakistan in Kashmir and the support of Al Azhar for Pakistan. He admitted the failure of Pakistan’s Government to earn the support of the Egyptian Government in the case of Kashmir but it secured a partial support among Egyptian press and elite. The revolutionary Egypt continued its strict policy of neutrality except a single statement by Anwar Al Sadat who expressed his belief that the wisdom of Nehru that contributed to the solution of the Korean crisis would help in solving the Kashmir question.6

Farajallah7 asserted the assumption of Dar that Egypt supported the resolution of UN regarding Kashmir in 1948. His evidence was that both Syria and Egypt adopted a similar foreign policy at the time. Syria was a member at the Security Council at the time of passing the resolution and supported it. Later, Egypt approved this resolution when it approved the reports of UNCIP that called for ceasefire and a free plebiscite to enable the Kashmiri people deciding their destiny. Farajallah pointed out that

Egypt’s position, which supported the self-determination, was not contrary to India’s position itself at that time. He also admitted the difficulty of identifying Egypt’s position on how this plebiscite could be conducted. He assumed that Egyptian position became much closer to India’s position in Kashmir because of the Egyptian adoption of non-aligned policy and Nasser’s belief in secularism. Farajallah considered the Egyptian abstention of voting for the Irish resolution in 1962 that reminded the two conflicting parties of the Security Council resolution of 17 January 1948 and the resolution of the UNCIP on 13 August 1948 and 5 January 1949 as an evidence of the validity of his assumption. This abstention shocked Pakistan.

Moreover, there were also some mistakes in writing the history of Egypt’s position towards Kashmir. The lack of clear and precise image of Egypt position was a natural result of the devotion of latter to maintain silence on the Kashmiri issue and to avoid declaring its position without an urgent need. This was also because of the sensitivity of the issue for both India and Pakistan. The mistakes also resulted from the fact that India has a tendency to give the impression that Egypt’s position was pro-India while Pakistan was trying to give the opposite impression. India and Pakistan tried to give an impression to each other that they have the support of many countries. Each of them thought that this could affect the strategic calculations of the other party as well as utilizing such impression in the propaganda of each South Asian country against the other.

However, the false propaganda as well as the doubts of the two countries of Egyptian position combined to produce an imaginative position of Egypt in the minds of both Indians and Pakistanis, which did not exist in reality. India doubted every Egyptian position, which did not favor it and consequently the position could be interpreted easily in terms of Egypt being a Muslim country as if Pakistan decided to align with it. The bitterness of India’s partition on communal lines and the psychological implications of it could justify such interpretation. Some Indian writers called this feeling as “the disillusionment with Arabs”, according to Jain,

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9 Farajallah , n.7, pp.87-88
A vast majority of the Arab countries sided with Pakistan at the time of the Indo-Pakistan war in September 1965 ... President Nasser was neutral, though he was helpful in that he helped to tone down an essentially pro-Pakistan resolution that the Arab Heads of State adopted at their Casablanca summit that winter.¹⁰

On the other side, Pakistan considered the close friendship between India and Egypt in the era of Nasser as evidence that Nasser hates Pakistan and Islam. The Pakistani Newspaper “Dawn” wrote that, “Nasser’s hatred of Pakistan and love of Baharat and its Nehru is an attitude of mind not warranted by facts but conditioned by intense bias and blind prejudice the source of which may well be examined by psychiatrists”.¹¹

Such Pakistani tendency made it easy for Islamabad to believe that everything referred to Egypt’s support for India in Kashmir is correct. Pakistan was the victim of its evil thinking. The tension in Egyptian-Pakistani relations was the result of Pakistan’s joining Baghdad pact. Egypt opposed Baghdad pact and considered it as an agent of imperialism in the region. Egypt resented Pakistan’s efforts to encourage some Arab states to join Baghdad pact. However, this tension had been reduced because Pakistan supported both Egyptian and Arab causes at the United Nations. Pakistan’s position during the First London Conference was an exception to this rule. Pakistani delegate supported the American proposal, which had been rejected by Egypt, India and Russia. Egyptian leadership saw Pakistan’s move as a stab in the back of Egypt. Later, Nasser refused to receive the PM of Pakistan and dismissed Pakistan’s offer to join the UN peacekeeping forces that was supervising the withdrawal of Israeli-Anglo-French troops from the Egyptian Sinai peninsula.

The Atmosphere of the Crisis 1950-1951

Egypt’s official and declared policy towards the Kashmiri problem has been one of complete neutrality for the sake of maintaining the friendship of Pakistan and India. However, Egypt-in fact—was sympathetic to the viewpoint of Pakistan with regard to the dispute. However, a closer look revealed that in factual practice Egypt did not


allow its sympathy with Pakistan to shape its policy towards Kashmir dispute because Cairo believed that declaring such sympathy will risk its friendship with India and would not resolve the problem. This sympathy led Egypt to recommend Syria to raise the issue of Hyderabad on the Security Council. This has been done on the request of Pakistan and because Syria was the only Arab member at the Security Council. Again, this sympathy motivated the coordination between the representative of Egypt and Syria to the United Nations when the latter was examining the problem of Kashmir in 1948.

Syria’s representative expressed his sympathy with the viewpoint of Pakistan on Kashmir. India felt bad and reacted heatedly. India considered Syria’s position as an evidence of the deviation of Arab States of their neutrality towards the conflict between India and Pakistan. The Indian anger expressed itself in India’s recognition of Israel in September 17, 1950 and even in taking a pro-British position on the issue of Suez base (see chapter Four). The Indian recognition of Israel was the last straw that broke the camel’s back. It turned up a large part of the embarrassment that Egyptians were feeling when contemplating talk about Kashmir. As a result, Egypt decided to adopt a positive approach towards the problem of Kashmir by offering to mediate between India and Pakistan for a solution. India dismissed Egypt’s offer by expressing its gratitude to Egypt while demanding it to stick for its position of strict neutrality on the Kashmiri dispute. India argued that Egypt has no sufficient knowledge of Kashmir problem. It was also argued that it is undesirable to force an Islamic mediation between India and Pakistan and that Egypt does not have a prominent figure with an international respect to impose a general acceptance of its plans.

Moreover, some members inside the Egyptian elite were against Egypt’s offer of mediation. They argued that such mediation would jeopardize Egypt’s ties with Pakistan or India and will not result in a fruitful outcome. However, Egypt was disappointed with India’s rejection for its offer of mediation. According to the Charge D’Affaires of Egyptian embassy in Pakistan, India’s rejection could not be justified

because India requested that mediation. It seems that India’s request for such mediation at an early stage was a tactical diplomatic move to neutralize the Arab and Islamic countries because their position at that time could influence the outcome of the dispute, which was in a crucial phase.

However, the available data at the archive of Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Cairo, suggests that India’s refusal of Egyptian mediation because of the lack of sufficient knowledge of the problem on the side of Egypt has no basis. This data proves that Egyptian diplomacy had a clear picture of the different dimensions of Kashmiri problem.

The second Indian excuse that Egypt does not have a prominent figure with an international respect to impose a general acceptance of his mediation outcome has no basis too. During this era, Egypt had distinguished figures with international repute. One of them was Abdul Rahman Bey Azzam, the General Secretary of the Arab league. Abdul Rahman Bey Azzam was highly respected by India and Pakistan. Both Indian and Pakistani leadership were in close contact with Azzam Bey. For example, Nehru used to visit him on his way to and from Europe. The fact that India objected the mediation of Egypt because the latter is a Muslim country is evidence that the Islamic factor was influential in shaping India’s foreign policy. It was amusing that India, which was playing the role of mediator in the Korean crisis, was dismissing another mediator to help in resolving Kashmir dispute. There was also the possibility that India saw Egypt’s mediation as a favour for Pakistan. Abdel Wahab Azzam, Egyptian ambassador to Pakistan, argued that Egypt’s offer of mediation will satisfy Pakistan, and will be seen as an evidence of India’s inflexibility if the latter will dismiss Egypt’s offer.

However, these developments did not mean that Egypt has taken a decision to change its overall policy towards Kashmir, which was strict neutrality. It was extremely sensitive and tough task for the Egyptian diplomacy to handle its friendly relations

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14 Khetab [letter] (Secret) from Abdel Wahab Azzam, Egyptian ambassador to Pakistan to the Under-Secretary of Ministry of Foreign Affairs (EEMFA), 31 July 1951, Malaf [File] no.233/7/1 vol.1, Mahfaza no.361, EAEMFASG, Cairo.
with the two conflicting neighbours and to adjust to the conflicting roles and multi-
identity of Egypt. Farouk as the King of Egypt and Sudan, and an aspirant to be the 
Caliph of Muslims had to support every Islamic cause on the earth. The King saw 
Hyderabad as an Islamic cause. The Nizam maintained very friendly relations with 
Egypt, especially at the cultural level. The fact that Princess Hadice Hayriye Ayshe 
Dürüşhsevar, the only daughter of Abdülmecid II, the last Caliph of Muslims, was 
the wife of Azam Jah, son of the Nizam of Hyderabad increased the political 
importance of the cause. Moreover, Pakistan’s propaganda and the sympathy of 
Muslim Brotherhood with the Nizam of Hyderabad on the eve of losing huge parts of 
Palestine gave Hyderabad and Kashmir an Islamic appeal among Egyptian and even 
Arab masses. The tradition of Egyptian newspapers to give lengthy coverage of what 
was going on in India was also a factor. With Syria and Egypt, showing their 
sympathy to the Nizam of Hyderabad, India reacted by recognizing Israel but did not 
go beyond recognition by establishing diplomatic relations. The recognition was done 
to serve two purposes, one was to pressurize Arabs to keep themselves away of 
Pakistan and stick to their neutrality vis-à-vis Indo-Pakistani conflict. The second 
purpose was to respond to the huge pressures, which had been exercised upon Nehru 
by Jews from Israel, USA and UK to force him to recognize Israel.15 

However, India did not establish diplomatic relations with Israel as this early stage 
because this was going to push Arab states to have closer relations with Pakistan and 
this might be developed into a kind of strategic alliance. This was a dream for 
Pakistan to catch with. If this did happen, it was going to be a fatal strategic mistake 
on the side of India.16 On the other side, Egypt was disappointed with India’s 
recognition of Israel while felt grateful for Pakistan’s strong support to both Arab and 
Islamic causes. 

In spite of that, Egypt needed India’s support to achieve its national aspirations 
because India enjoyed a high moral esteem at both UN and South Asia, and Egypt 
was not willing to sacrifice that. However, time was not suitable for Egypt to alienate 

15, P.R Kumaraswamy,“India’s Recognition of Israel, September 1950”, Middle Eastern Studies 
16 See two different views in this issue in Kumaraswamy, n.6, pp.124-138; El Sayed Mekkawi, 
“Image of India in the Arab World: Shapes and Shades”, India Quarterly (New Delhi), vol.62, no.4, 
either India or Pakistan, which Egypt need them to support its struggle for freedom. Moreover, also an economic factor played an important role in shaping Egypt’s policy towards India. India was one of the important markets for Egyptian cotton. Egypt also was importing both manufactured and raw jute from India. India was manipulating the jute industry inspite of the fact that Pakistan was producing huge quantities of the raw jute but most of the jute factories existed in India (especially in West Bengal). Without Indian jute, Egyptian cotton and rice could remain captive in its fields. Cotton and rice were the only source of foreign currency for Egypt at the time. In spite of these political and economic constraints, Egypt did not ignore what has been seen as a threat for Egyptian and Arab interests as in the case of the recognition of Israel. Egyptian diplomacy manoeuvred politically. It offered its mediation between the two conflicting countries; it asserted its friendship and cooperation with Pakistan; and it declared maintaining its general strategy of being strictly neutral towards Indo-Pakistani conflict. On the other side, India has been playing a similar strategic game. While India was implementing its own strategy of supporting Arab causes to neutralize Islamic and Arab world in its dispute with Pakistan and to prevent the emergence of Pakistani Arab Islamic Front against India, it was also exercising pressure whenever it noted the emergence and/or growth of detente between Pakistan and Egypt.

The Outbreak of the Crisis and its Components

In this context, the last days of 1950 and early 1951 witnessed the outbreak of diplomatic crisis between Egypt and India. The crisis was the result of the growing Pakistani publicity over Kashmir in Egypt and the support of some Al-Azhar scholars for the right of Kashmiri people for self-determination. The main elements of the crisis, and in parallel to other elements of making it, were some statements, which were attributed to Abdel Wahab Azzam, the Egyptian ambassador to Pakistan. The content of these statements was in line with the Pakistani viewpoint in Kashmir.

17 Especially, the then Eastern part of Pakistan (Eastern Bengal), which has been known as Bangladesh since 1971.
It seems that the occurrence of these developments simultaneously drove Asaf A.A. Fyzee, India’s ambassador in Egypt to leave his calm and take action. He wrote to the Egyptian Foreign Minister, in November 8, 1950, bringing to his notice that a professor of Indian origin, residing in Pakistan at the time, was pretending to be a professor at Al Azhar University. The ambassador pointed out that Hassan Alazami’s activism and propaganda were anti-India in either Egypt or Pakistan. India’s ambassador stated that Hassan had come to Egypt last month for the same purpose. His visit was a part of a campaign, which the Working Committee of the Islamic Conference decided to wage in various countries of the Islamic world to collect signatures on a document entitled "Kashmir."

In the end of his letter, Fyzee requested from the Egyptian Foreign Ministry to put Alazami and his activities under surveillance. He also requested the Egyptian government to deny him any facilities and consider him persona non grata. He asserted also that such person should not be allowed to affect the good relations between Egypt and India. Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (EMFA) informed the Egyptian Ministry of Interior about the issue and Indian demands and requested this Ministry to “take whatever it sees as a necessary action”. It is clear that EMFA took action, as it wanted to avoid any disturbance for Indo-Egyptian relations.

The Friends of Kashmir

Meanwhile, an Egyptian society , which named itself as “The Friends of Kashmir”, issued a resolution that asked the UN to give Kashmir back to Pakistan and to hold an immediate, free and neutral plebiscite at Kashmir without any pressures from the

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18 Professor Hassan Alazami was the General Secretary of the Islamic World Conference, whose headquarters was in Pakistan. He was known also as the backbone of the Arabic College, Karachi University. He also was ex-professor at one of the Egyptian universities.

19 A Letter no. D.O.No.c/p1-1/50KP (Secret) from Asaf A.A. Fyzee, Ambassador of India to Egypt, to Ibrahim Farag, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Egypt, 8 November 1950, Malaf No.139/142/9, Mahfaza no.1573,EAEMFASG,Cairo.

20 This is a polite language between the different departments of Egyptian bureaucracy when it asks for a request to be considered positively. The negative response is “to be kept”, which means freezing the issue. See a letter from the Undersecretary of EEMFA to the undersecretary of Ministry of Interior, 20 November 1950, Malaf 139/142/9, Mahfaza no.1573, EAMFASG, Cairo.
Indian forces which exist there. Sheikh Mohamed Abdel Latif Deraz, the director of Al Azhar Religious Institutes, signed this resolution. In another statement, Sheikh Deraz criticized the UN and the Security Council for their positions towards Islamic and Arab causes, including Kashmir. He assumed that neither the Security Council nor the UN would be just with any Islamic country.

These statements did not pass without the notice of the Indian embassy at Cairo. India’s ambassador wrote to the Egyptian Foreign Minister that the statement of the society of “The Friends of Kashmir” show a very deep interest in the political developments in India. He also pointed out that such statements give the impression that the majority of the religious scholars of Al Azhar completely support Pakistan on Kashmir. India’s ambassador considered these statements as a violation of Egypt’s position of strict neutrality towards Indo-Pakistani conflict. Finally, he asked the Egyptian authorities to request from Al Azhar to avoid issuing such statements that might honeycomb Indo-Egyptian relations.

EMFA informed His Highness the Grand Sheikh of Al Azhar of the objections raised by the Indian Embassy against the statements of “The Friends of Kashmir”. EMFA used a very polite and diplomatic language to express its request. Ibrahim Farg, the then In Charge Foreign Minister of Egypt, wrote that,

It is important for EMFA that the Royal Government will always fulfil the requirements of its commitment for following the policy of strict neutrality towards this acanthous problem in order to maintain the cordiality that ties Egypt with both conflicting countries. The hope is standing upon the wisdom of clergy, and on top of them the clergy of Al Zhar Al Sahrif [The Noble Azhar] to avoid discussing political debates, which will push their government into trouble that will be better in the current circumstances to keep away from it.

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21 London Times, 3 November 1950.
22 A letter no. D.O.No.C/PL-1/50 II (Secret) from Asaf A.A. Fyzee, the Ambassador of India to Ibrahim Farag, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Egypt, 8 November 1950, Malaf No.139/142/9, Mahfaza no.1573, EAMFASG, Cairo.
23 ibid.
24 The letter of the Egyptian Foreign Minister to His Highness the Grand Sheikh of Al Azhar, 20 November 1950, Malaf 139/142/9, Mahfaza no.1573, EAMFASG, Cairo.
However, the appeal of EMFA for the clergy did not meet listening ears. After few days, nineteen of the Ulama of Al Azhar issued a declaration of Jihad to liberate Kashmir. The declaration considered that Indian presence in Kashmir represents a danger against Islam. It also stated that it is the duty of every Muslim to sacrifice the last drop of his blood to protect Islam from the forthcoming catastrophe. The declaration draws the similarity between Palestine and Kashmir, describing them as “tragedies”. Among the signatories of the declaration were Sheikh Ahmed Hassan Al Baqori, the then deputy director of Al Azhar Religious Institutes, Sheikh Huessin Darwish, Sheikh Mohamed Taher Al Zankloni, Sheikh Ali Rif’i and others. This declaration was the toughest language, which Egyptians expressed in the Kashmiri conflict and the strongest signal of sympathy with Pakistan in its conflict with India. However, this declaration addressed Egyptians as well as the rest of Muslims. Some of those Ulama were known to be members of the Muslim Brotherhood that were sympathetic with Pakistan on ideological ground.

The Indian ambassador did comment on this declaration because he was busy in handling the growing crisis over the statements of Egyptian ambassador in Pakistan. Fyzee sent the secretary of his embassy to EMFA along with the excerpt from the Dawn, where the declaration news item appeared. He commented on the paper of the excerpt that Indian public opinion is panic-stricken of the irresponsible and undiplomatic statements that have been poured by the Egyptian ambassador in Pakistan. The Secretary of the Indian Embassy demanded that EMFA had to call off its ambassador from Pakistan in order to continue its friendship with India; and that his opinions are not representing the views of the Egyptian government. He also added that this issue needs clarification.

It is clear that the secretary of the Indian embassy did not mention the declaration of the Ulama and directed his whole attention to the statements of the Ambassador Abdel Wahab Azzam. Generally, Fyzee expressed later India’s opinion in the

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25 The text of declaration has been published in the Dawn, 30 November 1950.
26 Later, Sheikh Baqori became the Minister of Waqf after the revolution of 1952.
27 The memorandum of Asia Division, EMFA, Cairo, 22 January 1952, Malaf 139/142/9, Mahfaza no.1573, EAMFASG, Cairo.
statements of Al Azhar Ulama in an interview with Al Masri newspaper. Fyzee stated that,

India has felt a little uncomfortable because of some of the statements attributed to a group of Al Azhar scholars; and because of the activism of the society, which named itself the "Friends of Kashmir". This activism appears to attract the attention of some eminent persons, and this encouraged me to explore the position of the Egyptian government regarding these developments; and Egyptian government gave me repeated assurances that the position of Egypt towards Kashmir is careful neutrality.  

The controversy of Abdul Wahab Bey Azzam

While the Indian ambassador to Egypt saw the activities of Hassan Alazami as having the potential to affect (negatively) the "good relations between India and Egypt," and while he considered the statements of "the Friends of Kashmir" and the scholars from Al-Azhar as a tool that would "undermine the relations" between India and Egypt, his reaction to the statements of Abdel Wahab Bey Azzam was the most violent in language and action as we shall see.

The crisis started on October 13, 1950, when a statement, which had been attributed to Abdul Wahab Bey Azzam, has been distributed by the Pakistani News Agency "APP" and published in different Pakistani newspapers. 29 He gave this statement to this agency before travelling to Karachi. According to the Pakistani newspapers, Azzam Bey stated that the referendum is the only democratic and peaceful means to resolve the conflict. He added that it would be in the interest of world peace that the United Nations conducts this referendum without further delay. He added that the desire of the Kashmiri people must be respected. Azzam Pasha, as the newspaper quoted him, expressed his confidence that Indian government would eventually be forced to give the people of Kashmir the right to determine their own future.

28 Al Masri (Cairo), 6 January 1951.
Azzam’s statement attracted the criticism of the India government. India’s ambassador to Egypt wrote to Egypt’s Foreign Minister describing Azzam’s statement as “offensive” because it implies that the Indian government did not accept to give the people of Kashmir the right to determine their own future, which is not true. Fyzee added that on the contrary, the Indian government and its Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru always accepted that Kashmir belonged to the people of Kashmir. 

For the convenience of the EMFA, Fyzee has enclosed along with his letter a sample of the refutation statement, which he wanted Egypt to issue. Fyzee attempted to moderate the tone of his language by thanking Egypt’s Foreign Minister for his super cordiality in treating India’s ambassador and Indian problems. He also expressed his deep interest in increasing cooperation between India and Egypt in the political, economic and cultural issues.

For its part, EMFA explored Azzam’s opinion on the statement, which Dawn attributed to him on 15 October 1950. EMFA reminded him that,

The Egyptian leadership has a sincere desire that the Royal Government will always adhere to its commitment in following the policy of strict neutrality towards this problem [Kashmir] in order to maintain the friendship and cordiality that ties Egypt with the two conflicting states.

Azzam Bey denied what Dawn attributed to him. He stated that what he told the reporter was that, “I hope that the two countries have to agree to resolve the Kashmir problem in accordance with the resolutions of the United Nations”. He also stressed his commitment to the policy of the Egyptian government in being neutral towards Kashmir. He gave evidence of his commitment by giving the example of his refusal to make any statements about the Kashmiri cause after his arrival in Karachi, he told reporters," I have no instructions in this case "and, when the journalists asked his personal view, he said, "I hope to study the issue first before giving my opinion".

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30 A Letter No. D.O.No.C/PL-1/50 II (Secret) from Asaf A.A. Fyzee, Ambassador of India to Ibrahim Farag, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Egypt, 8 November 1950, Malaf No.139/142/9, Mahfaza no.1573, EAMFASG, Cairo.
31 ibid.
32 The memorandum of Asia Division; the memorandum of EMFA, Cairo, 9 January 1951, Malaf 139/142/9, Mahfaza no.1573, EAMFASG, Cairo.
also accused the news reporter who published the statement of being “inaccurate and provocative”.

The undersecretary of EMFA informed verbally India’s ambassador to Egypt of the reply of Azzam Bey, but India’s ambassador was not convinced with the reply of Azzam. He expressed his lack of belief in the context of another letter to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, where he argued that it was difficult to understand what has been suggested that the statement of Azzam Bey was concocted, because this statement has appeared frequently in the “Dawn”. He also pointed out that such statement could not be got rid of by Azzam’s denial of it.

Now, India’s ambassador got more disappointed because he received a new statement, which *Dawn* published on 7 November 1950 and attributed to Azzam Bey. In this statement, Azzam was asked whether the Egyptian press had addressed the issue of Kashmir. Azzam replied that it was given wide publicity. He stated that based on the published articles in the Egyptian press, it could be concluded that the rights of Pakistan in Kashmir are very clear. The Indian Ambassador was so resentful of the new statement to the extent that he wrote to the Egyptian Foreign Minister that this statement is the most disgusting because it implies that the Egyptian government may have determined its position with regard to Kashmir. He added that such statements could corrupt the "good relations" between India and Egypt. Fyzee demanded Egypt’s Foreign Minister to act taking appropriate steps to calm the concerns of friendly India.

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33 Efada 42 (Secret) from Egypt’s ambassador (Pakistan) to Egypt’s Minister of Foreign Affairs, 7 December 1951, Malaf 139/142/9, Mahfaza no.1573, EAMFASG, Cairo.

34 The memorandum of EMFA on the statements of Azzam Bey, 7 January 1951, Malaf 139/142/9, Mahfaza no.1573, EAMFASG, Cairo.

35 A secret letter no. C/PL.I/50(II), From ASAF A.A. Fyzee, Ambassador of India to Ibrahim Farag, Minister of foreign Affairs, Egypt, n.d, Malaf 139/142/9, Mahfaza no.1573, EAMFASG. This letter has no date and the researcher overweighs that the letter has been written in the first few days of January 1951.

36 *Dawn*, November 7, 1950.

37 A secret letter no. C/PL.I/50(II), From ASAF A.A. Fyzee, Ambassador of India to Ibrahim Farag, Minister of foreign Affairs, Egypt, Malaf 139/142/9, Mahfaza no.1573, EAMFASG, Cairo. This letter has no date and the researcher overweighs that the letter has been written in the first few days of January 1951.

38 Ibid.

39 Ibid.
What is more, India’s ambassador identified the steps, which Egypt should take. These steps including that EMFA order its ambassador to Pakistan not to discuss Kashmir question, and Egyptian Government to issue a communique officially denying the statements attributed to Azzam Bey. Fyzee considered these steps as necessary to the immediate restoration of confidence between his country and Egypt.40

The tone of the note stimulated the Egyptian Foreign Minister. He considered the note as an unacceptable offence and an attempt to dictate things, which should not take place among friendly countries. He added that the burr of the letter could not be justified after Egypt asserted to India its commitment to absolute neutrality regarding Indo-Pakistani conflict as well as and the falsity of the so-called Azzam’s statements.41

Based on the foregoing, the Minister of Foreign Affairs requested from his undersecretary to bring to the attention of India’s ambassador the unsuitability of the tone of his letter and its violation of the familiar traditions between the friendly states. He also asked him to make it clear that Egypt’s position is absolute neutrality with regard to Indo-Pakistani conflict and the fact that Azzam denied the statements, which the Pakistani newspapers attributed to him.42

In the meantime, EMFA wrote to Azzam Bey to inquire about the veracity of the second statement, which *Dawn* attributed to him in the issue of 7 November 1950. On 6 January 1951, Azzam Bey telegraphed to EMFA stating that he was restless to show the neutrality of Egypt in all his statements but local newspapers was trying to show that Islamic countries, especially Egypt are pro-Pakistan, even by publishing fabricated statements. Azzam Bey asserted that he had always refuted such statements. He also pointed out that EMFA could disavow any statement which any newspaper may attribute to him; and which collides with the absolute neutrality of Egypt. On the following day, the Minister of Foreign Affairs requested from his

40 The memorandum of Asia Division on the statements of Azzam Bey, EMFA, Cairo, 9 January 1951, Malaf 139/142/9, Mahfaza no.1573, EAMFASG, Cairo.
41 The handwriting note by Egypt’s Foreign Minister on the margin of India’s ambassador secret letter no. C./PL.1/50 (P).
42 The memorandum of Asia Division on the statements of Azzam Bey, EMFA, Cairo, 9 January 1951, Malaf 139/142/9, Mahfaza no.1573, EAMFASG, Cairo.
undersecretary to inform the Ambassador of India orally the content of Azzam’s
cable. 43

EMFA was engaged in responding to successive protests which India’s ambassador
raised and pursuing its contacts with its ambassador in Pakistan either to issue
instructions or receive clarification on the crisis of the statements attributed to him,
the heaviest Indian reaction came in the form of an attempt to exert pressure on Egypt
in the most sensitive issue for Egyptian national aspiration. The issue was the
freedom of Egypt. Nehru, while in Cairo on January 4th, 1951, said: “The defence of
the democracies was at the moment a more pressing question than the evacuation of
British troops from Egypt.” 44 The statement of Nehru disappointed Egypt. India’s
ambassador tried to mitigate the impact that Nehru’s statement left in the hearts of the
Egyptians. Fyzee reinterpreted Nehru’s statement in an interview to Al Masri
newspaper in January 6, 1951. Fyzee said that,

The Indian Embassy in Cairo paid attention to the comments of the Egyptian press on the statement of Nehru on the issue of evacuation ...
... The prevailing view in Indian circles is that the statement does not mean in any way that India oppose the evacuation of British forces from Egypt in the event of peace, or even in case of possible war; but what has been meant by the statement of the PM of India is that in the event of a world war, the warring forces would spread in the territory of different nations with common interests, but this action must not be inconsistent with the basic principles of the sovereignty of these nations. 45

However, Nehru’s statement was reflecting India’s strategic perception that does not encourage the liquidation of British military bases in South Asia, Southeast Asia and
West Asia, whether out of its fear of Russian and/or Chinese threat; and India believes
that UK is the only friend who could be counted on if there is any threat from the side
of these two powers. 46 Murti noted that the British strategic outlook on Suez Canal
influenced India’s outlook. He pointed out that, “... Strategical considerations weigh

43 Cryptographic cable no.2/18 from Egypt’s ambassador (Pakistan) to Egypt’s Foreign Minister, received by EMFA on 6th January, 1951, Malaf 139/142/9, Mahfaza no.1573, EAMFASG, Cairo.
45 Al Masri, 6 January 1951.
46 Efada no. 248 from Egypt’s ambassador (India) to the undersecretary of EMFA, Cairo, 3 August 1956, Malaf 30/45/15 vol.3, Mahfaza 1501, EAMFASG, and Cairo.
considerably in India’s relations with Western Asia. The protection and defence of the Suez and the effort to keep it open as a means of communication to the Indian Empire had ever been the cardinal principle of British policy in Western Asia. The withdrawal of British power from most countries of the Far East has left India to cope with the problems of Suez in view of her own defence and security.”

It seems that at this point, India saw –basing its judgment on the controversial statements of Azzam Pasha – that Egypt is aligned with Pakistan on the subject of Kashmir and therefore its fears that an Islamic power might take over Suez Canal has been nourished properly to produce Nehru’s statement. However, the statement served India to achieve different purposes; one of these purposes was to pressurize Egypt to keep itself away of Pakistan, the second purpose was earning India the friendship of Britain, and asserting two of the strategic goals of India; one of these goals is to prevent the emergence of any alliance between Pakistan and a West Asian country or more, and the second goal is to keep the Suez Canal open permanently.

Surprisingly, Fyzee contradicted himself through mitigating the impact of Nehru’s statement among Egyptians but implicated himself personally in a campaign of criticism against Azzam.

In reply to a query by Al Masri newspaper on his evaluation of Egypt’s position on Kashmir, Fyzee praised the neutral stance of Egypt, which was tinged with Egyptian regret for the occurrence of misunderstanding between India and Pakistan. He also paid tribute to Egypt for its hopes that the two countries will succeed in resolving their differences. Fyzee eulogized Egypt for its unwillingness to mediate in the conflict. He assured that this position of neutrality on the part of Egypt had ensured it the friendship of India. Then, India’s ambassador criticized Azzam Bey for his statements, which amounted to a call for Jihad and caused India "a major shock" as it was contrary to the assurances of Nahas Bey, Mohammed Salahuddin Bey, the then Foreign Minister, Ibrahim Farg, the Acting Foreign Minister.

47 S.N.Murti, “India and West Asia”, in Verinder Grover (ed.), West Asia and India’s Foreign Policy (New Delhi, 1992), p.15.
48 Ibrahim Farg was the Acting Foreign Minister because Mohammed Galaluddin Bey, the Foreign Minister was in the UN to present the case of the Egyptian question.
Fyzee repeated his demands, which has been mentioned in his letter to Egypt’s Foreign Minister. He also accused Egypt – indirectly - of disturbing the calm that should prevail Indo-Pakistan relations. Fyzee concluded his interview by threatening Egypt “His country may find no way but to take a decisive stance in this matter, and that it might have been better for Egypt to maintain friendship with India (!!)”

On the morning of 7 January 1951, India’s ambassador paid a visit to the Indian press delegation at the Hotel of Gazira Palace, Cairo. The Press delegation was on a visit to Egypt. While Fyzee was leaving the hotel, he stopped in the lobby with an Egyptian journalist. There was in the lobby some of the staff of the Ministry of Education and an official from Press division, EMFA, who came to accompany the Indian delegation. Fyzee started to speak loudly, addressing the audience, where he accused Egypt of political hypocrisy and aligning with Pakistan against India. He also described the Egyptian foreign policy as confused.

It is amazing that the criticisms of the Indian ambassador coincided with the assurances of the senior officials of EMFA on the neutrality of Egypt about the conflict between India and Pakistan, and the attempts of these officials to alleviate the crisis that was revolving around the statements of Azzam Bey. While the threat of India’s ambassador to take a decisive stand was published on the pages of Al Masri at 6th January, 1951, the same issue of this newspaper quoted Abdul Rahman Bey, the Undersecretary of EMFA, saying, in his reply for a question by journalists about the truth of what Fyzee demanded from the EMFA, and whether India had the right to object to the statements made by some Egyptian ambassadors? In his answers to those questions, Abdul Rahman Bey asserted that what some newspapers described as a “protest” was an exaggeration. He added that the Indian ambassador came to EMFA to inquire about the truth of some statements, which were attributed to Azzam and whether these statements reflects the opinion of Egypt or not. Abdul Rahman Bey added that, “Egypt stands of the two big countries the position of equal friendship and it is a matter of concern for Egypt that the two Eastern countries should be tied

49 Al Masri, 6 January 1951. The two practices refer to the wonder of Al Masri newspaper of Fyzee’s statement.
50 Moustafa Al Daib witnessed the instance and reported it to Press Division, EMFA, A memorandum dated 7 January 1951, Malaf 139/142/9, Mahfaza no.1573, EAMFASG.
through close contacts and inextricably intertwined relations, because differences between them benefit only other entities".\textsuperscript{51}

On the following day (January 7, 1951), while the Indian ambassador was accusing Egypt and its ambassador to Pakistan at Al Gazira Palace Hotel, EMFA issued an official communiqué declaring its position on the Indo-Pakistani relations, where it emphasized Egypt's commitment to "complete neutrality" towards the conflict between India and Pakistan and that Egypt wished to maintain the friendship and brotherhood of both countries, and wished them success in reaching a satisfactory solution to their differences. The Egyptian communiqué asserted that statements, which had been attributed to Abdel Wahab Azzam, which contradicted with the neutrality of Egypt, are "untrue".\textsuperscript{52}

In the light of the flood of criticism that had rained down by the Indian ambassador, this was seen as amounting to threatening Egypt. The Indian ambassador ignored assurances of Egyptian neutrality, Abdel Rahman Haqi Pasha; the undersecretary of EMFA summoned India's ambassador who attended the EMFA in the morning of 8th January 1951. Haqi Pasha brought to his attention the statement that appeared in \textit{Al Masri} newspapers, stressing that the last few lines, where Fyzee said "His country may find no way but to take a decisive stance in this matter, and that it might have been better for Egypt to maintain friendship with India", carries the meaning of the threat which is not accepted by Egypt. Haqi Pasha told him also that the Minister of Foreign Affairs is so resentful with this phrase and the memorandum, which he submitted to EMFA. Haqi added that this memorandum was a form of dictation upon the Egyptian government on what to do or not. He added that this was unacceptable. Fyzee defended himself by denying saying this "phrase", which was published by \textit{Al Masri}. He also explained that his memorandum was not intended to dictate anything to the Egyptian government, but its purpose was to draw attention to how these statements could damage the friendly relations between Egypt and India.

\textsuperscript{51} \textit{Al Masri}, 6/1/1951
\textsuperscript{52} The text of the official communiqué on Egypt's policy towards Indo-Pakistani relations, EMFA, Malaf 139/142/9, Mahfaza no.1573, EAMFASG.
Here Haqi Pasha told Fyzee “If *Al Masri* newspaper misrepresented your statements, it is not away for *Dawn* newspaper to misrepresent the statements of the Ambassador of Egypt in Karachi. So, there was no need to conclude results on the basis of those statements before making sure that it is true”. Moreover, Haqi Pasha has confirmed the non-validity of the statements attributed to the Egyptian ambassador to Pakistan, which the latter categorically denied. Here, Fyzee expressed his deep pleasure of the communiqué of the Acting Foreign Minister, which ended the matter and suggested if EMFA could send to Indian embassy a letter in this regard to be forwarded to New Delhi to set the Indian government at ease. Haqi Pasha agreed to the idea.

On the other side, Abdel Wahab Azzam did not leave the statement of Fyzee to *Al Masri* pass without commenting on it. Azzam wrote to the undersecretary of EMFA on 9 January 1951, accusing his Indian counterpart of being inaccurate in claiming that the enthusiasm of Azzam to Kashmir reached the point of calling for Jihad. Azzam wondered, “I do not know from where he quoted such news, while nothing like that or similar to it has been published here, and nobody talk even about it”. Azzam recommended his ministry to ask Fyzee to verify his news before making the Egyptian government occupied with it. He also suggested that India’s ambassador should be asked to identify the sources of his news. 53

Soon, after three days, Azzam criticized again his Indian counterpart again for saying in his interview with *Al Masri* that “the denial of Dr. Abdel Wahab Azzam is not enough, it is easy to say, and it is so easy to refute”. Azzam described this statement as “inappropriate and a violation of diplomatic norms”. Azzam wrote to Haqi Pasha on 12\textsuperscript{th} January, 1951, that, 

There is no doubt that it is inappropriate for the Ambassador of India to say this about an Egyptian ambassador. If it is easy for His Excellency to say and refute what he says, this is not easy for the ambassadors of Egypt. I think that the ambassador [of

53 Efada 2 (Secret) from Abdel Wahab Azzam, Egypt’s ambassador (Pakistan) to the undersecretary of EMFA, Cairo, dated 9 January 1951, Malaf 139/142/9, Mahfaza 1573, EAMFASG, Cairo.
India] has crossed his limits in such talk. He also made our government busy with
these issues, and that it was better for him not to engage our government with it. 54

Although, EMFA shared its ambassador to Pakistan his views, but it was not willing
to escalate matters or exhuming them again after the flames of the crisis have been
dampened in a meeting between the undersecretary of EMFA and Fyzee on 8 January
1951. Soon, EMFA sent a letter to the Embassy of India in Cairo, which ended the

In his reply to the letter of the Egyptian Foreign Minister, India’s ambassador
expressed his happiness to know that the policy of the Egyptian government regarding
Kashmir dispute is complete neutrality. He also welcomed strongly the moderate
coverage of Kashmir issue by Egyptian Press. Fyzee hoped that Pakistan’s press
would refrain from publishing untrue statements, which agitate public opinion. 55
Fyzee’s letter was the concluding chapter of the diplomatic crisis that took place
between India and Egypt in late 1950 and early 1951. As it was seen earlier, the crisis
just reflected the strategic game in South Asia and its impact on the relations between
the two conflicting countries (India and Pakistan) on one hand and Egypt on the other.
The visible factors that led to the crisis and interacted together were the statement that
had been attributed to Azzam Bey, the statements of Al Azhar scholars, and the
Pakistani propaganda in Egypt.

The Anatomy of the Crisis: Motivations and Goals

After drawing the picture of the crisis, the research needs to investigate this crisis by
finding out whether the statements, which were attributed to Azzam Pasha, were true
or fabricated; and to find out what was the main factor behind the outbreak of the

54 Efada 3 from Abdel Wahab Azzam, Egypt’s ambassador (Pakistan) to the undersecretary of
EMFA, Cairo, dated 12 January 1951, Malaf 139/142/9, Mahfaza 1573, EAMFASG, Cairo.
55 A letter no. C/PL/50 (P) from Asaf A.A. Fyzee Ambassador of India, Cairo, to Ibrahim Farag,
Minister of Foreign Affairs, Egypt, 10 January 1951, Malaf 139/142/9, Mahfaza 1573, EAMFASG,
Cairo.
Indian perspective, Azzam was the first suspect in the crisis of the statements that were considered a departure from the strict and careful neutrality of Egypt regarding the conflict between India and Pakistan. Azzam considered that the fabrication of these statements has been motivated by the eagerness of the Pakistani newspapers to publish any information or statements, which may indicate that Egypt is supporting Pakistan on Kashmir. According to Abdel Wahab Azzam, this will explain why Pakistani press was insisting repeatedly on asking him many questions regarding Kashmir; he also believed that the Pakistani press had been disappointed and saddened for his failing to talk about Kashmir.56

Some Pakistani newspapers quoted Azzam Pasha as saying that “Kashmir for Egypt is like the valley of Nile”. This happened during a party, which has been organized by the Society of Ulama and the statement was published and attributed to Azzam on 1 January 1951. Azzam refuted giving such statement and considered it fabricated one. He listed different reasons that could lead to such fabricated statements. One of the reasons was that all speeches were in Arabic and most of the audience do not know Arabic. Other reason was that people used to mix between Abdel Wahab Azzam and Omar Al Amiri, the Plenipotentiary Minister of Syria. Omar was a member of Muslim Brotherhood and so enthusiastic in his speeches. People used to mix between Azzam and Al Amiri because they were the only two diplomatic representatives who were tarbooshed. A third reason was that the Pakistani newspapers were keen to publish anything, which may prove that Egypt is on the side of Pakistan concerning Kashmir without investigating the veracity of this news.57 This foregoing matter means that the audience may misunderstand what Azzam said or perhaps the statements were true but made by Omar Al Amiri but the audience attributed it to Azzam mistakenly.58 The other alternative is to assume that the first and second statements have been made by Azzam himself and are not fabricated. This assumption could be based on the fact that EMFA contacted the Pakistani News Agency to find out whether Azzam gave such statement or not. This statement was given on 13 October 1950 and published in the Dawn of 15 October 1950. However, the agency asserted that Azzam Bey give this

56 Efada No. 2 from Abdel Wahab Azzam , Egypt’s ambassador (Pakistan ) to the undersecretary of EMFA , Cairo , 12 January 1951, Malaf 139/142/9 , Mahfaza 1573 , EAMFASG, Cairo.
57 ibid.
58 The memorandum of the Press Division, EMFA, Cairo, 16 November 1950, Malaf 139/142/9, Mahfaza 1573, EAMFASG, Cairo.
statement exclusively to its correspondent at Cairo and the statement were not published in any Egyptian newspaper.\textsuperscript{59}

This communication between EMFA and APP explains why EMFA wrote to Azzam to ask his opinion on what has been attributed to him; and to remind him that the “Egyptian leadership has a sincere desire that the Royal Government will always adhere to its commitment in following the policy of strict neutrality towards this problem [Kashmir]”.\textsuperscript{60} This indicated assertion that Egypt’s policy was genuine “neutrality” and not pretending to be neutral. What were the causes behind this crisis, and whether Azzam’s statements or other reasons caused this diplomatic crisis? Fortunately, Abdel Wahab Azzam realized the motives of “hullabaloo”\textsuperscript{61} and gave an answer for this question. He argued that the real motivation behind the crisis was the concern of India of the ongoing rapprochement between Egypt and Pakistan, which made India nervous. This encouraged India’s ambassador to Egypt to raise this “hullabaloo” without verifying the news, which he received.\textsuperscript{62}

Taken as a whole, the diplomatic crisis, which was initiated by India’s ambassador in Cairo, did not succeed in achieving its strategic goal, namely keeping Egypt away of Pakistan, but it secured one of India’s tactical goals, specifically Egypt’s neutrality regarding Kashmir. In this context, Mahmmud Fawzi, the then Permanent Representative of Egypt in the United Nations, had talks with Zafarullah Khan, the Foreign Minister of Pakistan, at the end of December 1950. They reached a conclusion that the overwhelming of international circumstances at the time; as well as the proximity of the Conference of Commonwealth, which some countries promised to use its influence at the conference to solve Kashmir problem would make it difficult for the Security Council to discuss Kashmir. They expected that the discussion of Kashmir at the Security Council would be postponed till January, 1951. Zafarullah regretted such delay as Egypt would not be a member at the Security

\textsuperscript{59} The memorandum of Press Division, EMFA, Cairo, 16 November 1950, Malaf 139/142/9, Mahfaza 1573, EAMFASG, Cairo.
\textsuperscript{60} The memorandum of Asia Division and the memorandum of EMFA, Cairo, 9 January 1951, Malaf 139/142/9, Mahfaza no.1573, EAMFASG, Cairo.
\textsuperscript{61} Azzam used this word to refer to the “crisis”, resulted of India’s reaction.
\textsuperscript{62} Efada No.2 (Secret) from the Ambassador of Egypt in Pakistan to the undersecretary of EMFA, dated 9 January 1951. Choudhury pointed out that India used to be sensitive towards any country, which gets close to Pakistan, see G.W. Choudhury, Pakistan’s relations with India, 1947-1966, Pall Mall press, (London, 1969), p. 229.
Council during January 1950. Fawzi expressed his thanks to Pakistan for its recent and continuous support for Egyptian cause as well as Arab and Islamic causes.  

Soon after the diplomatic crisis over Azzam's statements was blown over, the Egyptian Foreign Minister Mohamed Salah El Din declared in mid-January 1950 that Egypt and Pakistan exchange support. He also asserted that Egypt works for the good of its friend Pakistan, and Pakistan works for the good of its friend Egypt.

In 1957, Egypt found itself in a difficult position because Pakistan decided to raise the question of Kashmir at the UN. Egypt was aware of the motivations behind the Pakistani move. Egypt was of the opinion that Western powers who lost the political battle during Suez Crisis (See Chapter four), wanted to take revenge from India by letting Pakistan win over India in Kashmir. In the context of this analysis, Pakistan's move was seen as an attack against India and non-aligned countries. At this stage, Kashmir question became a part of the cold war politics. In fact, Western powers were not willing to have the Kashmiri problem solved. Sustaining the problem provided the West an able ally such as Pakistan. The West used Pakistan as a tool to manipulate India and pressureize it when it needed.

When the intentions of Pakistan to raise the issue at UN became clear, India approached Egypt for explaining its position and seeking Cairo's support. On February 1957, Mr. C.S. Jha, the Under-Secretary of Indian Ministry of External Affairs, called upon Mustafa Kamel. He explained India's position on Kashmir. Jha argued that the motivations of West in raising the issue of Kashmir now at the UN were to weaken India and divert her attention from economic development and playing its role as non-aligned country in world politics; to pressurize India to join the Western bloc; to find a way to send international forces to Kashmir as this would enable West to control India, China and Russia; to create differences among the members of the Afro-Asian bloc at the UN by raising Kashmir, defame the reputation of India internationally by showing that its call for principals that were not followed

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63 Letter No.151 ( Secret ) from the Permanent Representative of Egypt de United Nations to the Acting Foreign Minister , dated 22/12/1950 , Malaf 139 /142/9 , Mahfaza 1573 , EAMFASG,Cairo.
64 A personal letter from Haji Abdus Sattar to Dr. Salah El Din Bey dated 15 /1/1951, Malaf 139/142/9, Mahfaza 1573, EAMFASG, Cairo.
65 Secret Efada no.48 from Mustafa Kamel , Egypt's ambassador (New Delhi) to the under-Secretary ,EMFA ,22 February 1957, Malaf no.37/53/2 vol.2, Mahfaza 1427, EAMFASG, Cairo.
by India itself which will weaken the influence of India as non-aligned actor upon the world public opinion; to take revenge on India for its firm support for Cairo during Suez crisis and to convince it not to repeat this support or extend it to any Arab country that will resist the Western imperial policies; to destroy the international position of Nehru and reduce the value of his opinions because this will facilitate the implementation of the Western colonial plans in Asia and Africa. Jha also argued that the West, especially Britain, was searching for a victory that will restore the confidence of their people in the current leaders of West. Moreover, he informed Kamel that Indo-British relations were at its worse. Jha demanded the support of Egypt as a part of the continuing and close cooperation and solidarity between the two peoples. He argued that the success of Western plans against India would harm India, Egypt and their friends. Kamel assured Jha that both Egyptian Government and people appreciated the support of India for Egypt in different causes. He brought to his attention that Egyptian press made clear that Egypt was supporting India and that the colonial plans of West against India are well known. 66

On the other side, Malik Fairoz Khan, the then PM of Pakistan requested Nasser to use his influence to convince Soviets not to vote against any resolution that might be adopted at the Security Council. 67 Egypt did not respond to Khan's request and choose to stick to its neutrality on the conflict for different reasons. According to the Eastern and Asian Division 68 in the Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, these reasons are:

- Egypt did not want to anger India that agrees with Cairo in the main principals of foreign policy. Both India and Egypt cooperate fully on the international forums. India stood by Egypt during Suez crisis.
- Egypt did not want to show itself as not defending the interests of Muslim world.
- Pakistan follows the policy of military pacts and aligns with the West and these policies are contrary to the principals of Egyptian policy.

After studying the situation and the available options for Egypt, the Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs decided that Egypt should abstain if any vote will take place at the

66 ibid.
67 The Memorandum of Eastern and Asian Division, EMFA, to the Joint Secretary (Eastern and Asian Affairs), 24 May n.d, Malaf no.37/53/2 vol.3, Mahfaza 1427, EAMFASG, Cairo.
68 ibid.
General Assembly. As a matter of good fortune for Egyptian diplomacy, Egypt did not need to take a position because on 24 January 1957 the Security Council adopted a draft resolution. This resolution referred to the principle embodied in the earlier resolutions of the council and to the evaluation of UNCIP of 13th August, 1948 and 5th January 1954 that a final disposition of the state of Jammu and Kashmir would be decided in accordance with the will of the Kashmiri people, which will be expressed through democratic means of a free and impartial referendum, to be conducted under the auspices of the UN. This saved Egypt of the pain of declaring its position, which probably was going to anger Pakistan and not satisfy India.

In 1958, Pakistan was trying, through Iraq, to have Kashmir as an issue on the agenda of the 29th Session of Arab League. Again, Egypt chose to stick to its neutrality in the conflict because its support for India may increase the level of anti-Egypt campaigns in Pakistan and member countries of Baghdad Pact. Egypt instructed its Representative at the Arab League to postpone listing Kashmir on the agenda fewer than two pretexts; one that the Kashmir issue was already debated at the Security Council and the latter was waiting a report from its envoy to South Asia, Mr. Graham, to take its decision. Therefore, it was wise that Arab League gave enough time for the Security Council to make its decision and allow India and Pakistan to have direct negations without any external intervention. The second pretext was the request of Pakistan’s ambassador to EMFA on 31 October 1957 that the issue of Kashmir should not be debated at the coming meeting of the Arab League as the issue was already on debate at the Security Council.

However, this was the beginning of a new trend on Egypt’s policy towards Kashmir, in which Cairo would stick to its declared neutrality on the conflict but it will try hard not to allow Pakistan to use Arab and Islamic forums against India.

Berindranath argued that Nasser consistently supported India's contention that the issue could best be solved between the two neighbours themselves. It was due to the tremendous influence exerted by the U.A.R. delegation during the Arab summit.

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69 The Memorandum of Eastern and Asian Division, EMFA, to the Director (Arab Division, EMFA), 23 February 1958, Malaf no.37/53/2 vol.3, Mahfaza 1427, EAMFASG, Cairo.

70 ibid.
conference held at Casablanca soon after the Indo-Pakistan conflict that Pakistan's efforts to get India condemned could not yield results. Rejecting the pleas of those who want to intervene in the Indo-Pakistan dispute in the name of religion, Nasser has consistently taken the stand that no foreign intervention is called for in the settlement of the dispute.\textsuperscript{71}

**Concluding Remarks**

It is clear from the foregoing that the Egyptian quest for establishing balanced relations with India and Pakistan has encountered several obstacles. The most serious obstacle for this quest was the problem of Kashmir. Egypt was in serious trouble when it was forced to announce its stance on the problem because the issue was causing great sensitivity to both India and Pakistan. India provoked a crisis in 1950 / 1951, as a result of its fear of the growing Pakistani-Egyptian relations, which may prejudice India’s strategic goal of preventing an Arab-Pakistani front to be shaped as well as neutralizing the Islamic factor of affecting Indo-Pakistani conflict. India’s ambassador built the foundations of the crisis on the Pakistani propaganda in Egypt, the support of some scholars of AlAzhar to Pakistan position in Kashmir and the controversial statements attributed to Abdel Wahab Azzam, whether real or fabricated. The objective of India in making the crisis was to keep Egypt away from Pakistan, but the fact is that Egyptian diplomacy succeeded in containing the crisis without abandoning its own policy of maintaining good relations with India and Pakistan. India did not succeed to achieve its strategic aim during the crisis while securing a tactical victory in asserting the neutrality of Egypt in Kashmir. Egyptian diplomacy was very successful in handling the crisis by adopting dual strategy, which stressed Egypt’s adherence to strict neutrality in Kashmir while emphasizing its commitment to strong relations with Pakistan and India.

In sum, Egypt’s policy towards South Asia during the years between 1947 and 1957 was to balance its relations with both India and Pakistan. Egypt did its best not to

appear as a supporter of one of South Asian country against the other. Moreover, Egyptian diplomacy was looking forward to earn the support of India and Pakistan for both the Egyptian and Arab causes. However, the unique relations that were forged between Cairo and New Delhi in post-July 1952; the unconditional support of India for Egypt during Suez crisis and Arab nationalism and the discovery that the West was using Kashmir as an issue to blackmail India politically moved Egyptian position in Kashmir gradually to a point that satisfied India. However, the position of Egypt in 1957 and 1958 was the beginning of a new trend on Egypt’s policy in Kashmir where Cairo would stick to its declared neutrality on the conflict but it will try hard not to allow Arab and Islamic forums to be used by Pakistan as a base to attack India.