INDIAN NATIONAL MOVEMENT AND PALESTINE QUESTION: - A HISTORICAL SURVEY

CHAPTER V
INDIAN NATIONAL MOVEMENT AND PALESTINE QUESTION: - A HISTORICAL SURVEY

The Arab-Jewish / Israeli dispute is the core political issue of West Asian Crisis. India has been associated with it almost since its inception. The long standing commercial, cultural and political interaction between India and West Asia lead us to take a position in favour of the Arabs. The common historical experience of imperialist domination brought India and West Asia on a common platform of anti imperialist struggle. The strong anti-colonial anti-imperialist sentiments in India and West Asia cemented the ties between the people and movements of these two regions.

Apart from anti-imperialism ideological factor like ‘Asianism’\(^1\) - a feeling of Asian unity and solidarity - which has been passionately pursued by Indian Nationalist leaders brought these two regions together. It was Nehru, who popularized the term ‘West Asia’ against Eurocentric term ‘Middle East’ and there by emphasized the Asian identity. Nehru was proud to be an Indian and Asian. He saw India’s revival as a part of Asia’s resurgence in world affairs.

**Indian National congress and Palestine Issue:**

Indian association with the West Asian countries increased after the East India Company established in India. The driving force behind Britain’s

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1. Nehru believed that the emergence of Asia will be a powerful influence for peace. Hence he sought the unity of all the states of the continent.
M.E. Policy was its imperial interests in India. Britain had given top priority to ocean route to India for its relative cheapness and freedom from interference. Britain's dominant motive during the scramble for Africa was the protection of long and short routes to India. John Gallagher and Ronald Robinson pointed out that "The Mediterranean and Indian interest, like a driving wheel in some vast machine, was now engaging the lesser wheels of eastern-central Africa and connecting them one by one to its own workings."  

Britain's trade with India and the Far East and her growing Empire in Australia made her the primary user of the Suez Canal and 70% of the ships that sailed through it belonged to the British. But Britain had no say in the Suez Company's management. So Disraeli, the P.M. of England, purchased all the shares of the Suez Canal Company then owned by the Khedive of Egypt for the sum of under $4,000,000 to ensure the uninterrupted linkage between India and West Asia. In his defense in Parliament on 21 Feb. 1876 against the attack of the Liberals, Disraeli disclosed his motive for the purchase.

'I have never recommended, and I do not recommend this purchase as a financial investment. I have always, and do now recommend it to the country as a political transaction, and one which I believes is calculated to strengthen the Empire...It secures to us a highway to our Indian Empire and our other dependencies.'

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A quarter century after India passed under the British crown, Britain established her control over Egypt. The Nationalist movements in India and Egypt started almost simultaneously: in 1882 Arabi Pasha’s revolt and 3 years later in 1885 the Indian National Congress was born. The two national movements on occasions came close to each other and the two leaderships respected each other when Saad Zaghlal Pasha founded the party of the people, later the Wafd Party, Indian National Congress made close contact to it. Indian delegates passing through the Suez Canal on their way to and from London exchanged notes with the Egyptians to their mutual benefit. When Gandhijji went to the Second Round Table Conference the leaders of the Wafd Party met him at Port Said where he expressed concern for and sympathy with their struggle.\(^5\)

The World War I had drastically transformed the political texture of West Asia. After the allied victory in World War I, Iraq and Palestine came under the British Mandate with a special provision for giving effect to the Balfour Declaration. After breaking down the Turkish Empire, the British in collusion with other European powers of the League of Nations put a permanent obstacle to Arab Nationalist movement by diverting their attention towards the ‘Zionist threat’.\(^6\) Arab and Zionist nationalism clashed bitterly following the ratification of the Balfour Declaration by the League of Nations and other international bodies dealing with West Asia. Both the Arabs and Jews claimed the same territory: Palestine. The former’s demands were based on the fact that they lived there, while the latter’s claim was based on the promise of their God, Yahweh.\(^7\)

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5. Ibid., p.5.
7. Ibid., p.144
It is in this context that Gandhiji and Nehru took active interest in the fate of the Holy Land. The Indians approach to the Palestine issue was voiced by INC through its prominent leaders like Gandhiji, Nehru and Azad. INC strongly opposed the British imperial policies in Palestine and spearheaded Asian state’s opposition to Political Zionism.

Gandhiji was so sympathetic to the sufferings of the Jews in Central-Eastern Europe. He had won the friendship and co-operation of many Jews and was an admirer of the Jewish Philosopher, Martin Buber when he was in South Africa. The Zionist activists like Hermann Kallenback and H.S.L. Polak were the closest colleagues of Gandhiji in his struggle against racial discrimination in South Africa. Gandhiji had read passionately The Zionist literature given to him by Kallenback. It was in this connection may years later, Gandhiji remarked “I am half a Jew myself.”

In an article in the Harijan of November 26, 1938, Gandhiji described the Jews as the ‘untouchables of Christianity’ and opined that “the parallel between their treatment by Christians and the treatment of untouchables by Hindus is very close. Religious sanction has been involved in both cases for the justification of the inhuman treatment meted out to them.”

Gandhiji observed that the German persecution of the Jews had ‘no parallel in history’. ‘If there ever could be a justifiable war in the name of and for humanity, a war against Germany, to prevent the wanton persecution of a whole race, would be completely justified’. (‘But I do not believe in any

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war’, he added, ‘A discussion of the pros and cons of such a war is therefore outside my horizon or province’)\textsuperscript{10}

Even though his sympathies were all with the Jews, he questioned the credentials and rationale of the World Zionist movement. The idea of national home for the Jews in Palestine did not make much appeal to Gandhiji, because it was based on the Biblical past of the Jews. The periodisation of history underlines the linkage between Jews and land of Israel. The first era comprised Biblical statehood, when the Jews had their own territory, followed by the post-biblical era of dispersion termed galut or exile.\textsuperscript{11} According to Bible Palestine was the land promised to God Yahweh to His people, the Jews (Genesis 11:31). Gandhiji believed that the Biblical legitimization of the claim over the land of Palestine by the Jews could not be sustained on moral or political grounds. He opined that the Jews should try to make their home in their country of birth instead of demanding Palestine. He wrote: “If I were a Jew and were born in Germany and earned my livelihood there, I would claim Germany as my home even as the tallest gentile German might, and challenge him to shoot me or cast me in the dungeon. I would refuse to be expelled or to submit to discriminating treatment.”\textsuperscript{12}

‘The Palestine of the Biblical conception is not a geographical tract. It is in their hearts. But if they must look to the Palestine of geography as their national home, it is wrong to enter it under the shadow of the British Gun.’\textsuperscript{13} for the Jews, the return to Zion (Jerusalem) has been a religious act. Gandhiji

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\textsuperscript{10} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{12} “Jews in Palestine”, \textit{op.cit.}
observed that 'a religious act cannot be performed with the aid of the bayonet or the bomb. They can settle in Palestine only by the goodwill of the Arabs'. He criticized the Zionists for their dependence on American money and British arms and on terrorist methods to push themselves on Palestine. In March 1921, Gandhiji wrote 'By no canons of ethics or war... can Palestine be given to the Jews'  

His views on the right of Arabs to hold Palestine was logical, balanced and well reasoned: "Palestine belongs to the Arabs in the same sense that England belongs to the English or France to the French. It is wrong and inhuman to impose the Jews on the Arabs. What is going on in Palestine today cannot be justified by any moral code of conduct. The mandates have no sanction but that of the last war. Surely it would be crime against humanity to reduce the proud Arabs, so that Palestine could be restored to the Jews, Partly or wholly as their national home."

The nobler course would be to insist on a just treatment of the Jews wherever they are born and alive. The Jews born in France are French in precisely the same sense that Christians born in France are French... The Cry for a national home affords a colorable justification for the German expulsion of the Jews. Gandhiji’s firm believe was that the Jews can not receive sovereign rights in a place which has been held for centuries by Muslim powers by right of religious conquest.

13. Ibid., also see “Why was Gandhi against the Zionists?”, www.palestinefacts.org (11-11.05)  
14. Ibid.  
15. Young India, March 23, 1921; also see Gandhi Works, Vol.19, p.472.  
16. Harijan, November 26, 1938; Also see in D.G. Tendulkar, Mahatma, Vol.7 (Bombay, 1953)p.189; also see G.H. Jansen, op.cit., p.172.  
17. Ibid., Also see Gandhi Works, vol.68, p.137.
Gandhiji’s ideas about Jews and Arabs in Palestine under British Mandate government were well reasoned. His analysis mostly favoured the Arab cause. Mahatma Gandhi was not in favour of the creation of a Jewish State in Palestine. He questioned the basic credentials of the Zionist movement. He viewed Zionism as a colonial settler movement under the auspices of British imperialism. He did not consider Zionism as a genuine national movement. Gandhiji’s assessment of the question of anti-Semitism and the survival of European Jewry was based on his own experience with non-violence first in South Africa and then in India.\textsuperscript{18}

In response to the criticism of Mahatma Gandhi regarding Jews in Palestine Martin Buber, the Jewish philosopher and friend of Gandhiji, wrote an open letter on February 24, 1939. In the letter Buber viewed that Gandhian approach was simplistic and he did not consider the complexities of Jewish question. He pleaded to Gandhi:

“You Mahatma Gandhi, who know of the connection between tradition and future, should not associate yourself with those who pass over our cause without understanding or sympathy.

But you say – and I consider it to be the most significant of all the things you tell us – that Palestine belongs to the Arabs and that it is therefore “wrong and inhuman to impose the Jews on the Arabs......... But now you come and settle the whole existential dilemma with the simple formula: “Palestine belongs to the Arabs:”

“What do you mean by saying a land belongs to a population? Evidently you do not intend only to describe a state of affairs by your formula, but to

\textsuperscript{18} G.H. Jansen, \textit{op.cit.}, p.170
declare a certain right. You obviously mean to say that a people, being settled on the land, has so absolute a claim to that land that whoever settles on it without the permission of this people has committed a robbery. But by what means did the Arabs attain the right of ownership in Palestine? Surely by conquest, and in fact a conquest with intent to settle. You therefore admit that as a result their settlement gives them exclusive right of possession; whereas the subsequent conquests of the Mamelukes and the Turks, which were conquests with a view to domination, not to settlement, do not constitute such a right in your opinion, but leave the earlier conquerors in rightful ownership. Thus settlement by conquest justifies for you, a right of ownership of Palestine; whereas a settlement such as the Jewish - the methods of which, it is true, though not always doing full justice to Arab ways of life, were even in the most objectionable cases far removed from those of conquest - does not justify in your opinion any participation in this right of possession. These are the consequences which result from your axiomatic statement that a land belongs to its population. In an epoch when nations are migrating you would first support the right of ownership of the nation that is threatened with dispossession or extermination; but were this once achieved, you would be compelled, not at once, but after a suitable number of generations had elapsed, to admit that the land “belongs” to the usurper.”

In the article, the “Jews in Palestine”, (1938) Mahatma Gandhi advocated passive resistance in the face of Nazi oppression.

Buber wrote back to Gandhiji, “Now do you know or do you not know, Mahatma, what a concentration camp is like and what goes on there? Do you know of the torments in the concentration camp, of its methods of slow and quick slaughter?”

Arguing for reconciliation with the Arabs, Buber asked for a cordial agreement between the nations. In the letter, Buber questioned Gandhiji’s analogy between the Indians in south Africa and the Jews in Europe. Buber rejected the idea of passive resistance against Nazi oppression. For him passive resistance was quite inappropriate for the Jews – a people with no homeland who were being exterminated and tortured.

Gandhiji’s approach to Zionism was based on his own experiences with the imperialist British, a far more civilized and democratic opponent than the Jews faced in Germany. Moreover during the Arab Rebellion (1936-93), the Arabs in Palestine were crushed with British imperialist might. In this period the Jews in Palestine acted hand in hand with British forces. This situation profoundly influenced Gandhi to take an anti-Zionist position. The rise of racial anti-Semitism and the Nazi holocaust proved that Gandhian position was almost impractical. It was noted that nearly every Jew to whom Gandhi addressed in 1938 was dead by 1945. Gandhiji criticized the Jews for entering Palestine ‘under shadow of British gun’. He seems to have not given attention to the policy change in Britain towards Zionists with the issue of White Paper of 1939. With rise of Labour Party to Power in Britain, the Zionists almost lost political, patronage. It was clear that, between 1939 and 1948 The ‘shadow of British gun’ was not favoured the Zionist enterprises in Palestine.

20. Ibid.
Paul Power, Gandhiji's biographer, says four factors influenced Gandhiji's position on Zionism:

- He was sensitive about the ideas of Muslim Indians who were anti-Zionists because of their sympathy for Muslim Middle Eastern Arabs opposed to the Jewish national home.
- He objected to any Zionist methods inconsistent with his way of non-violence.
- He found Zionism contrary to his pluralistic nationalism, which excludes the establishment of any state based solely or mainly on one religion.
- He apparently believed it imprudent to complicate his relations with the British, who held the mandate in Palestine.21

The Zionist writer Judah Magnes, then Rector of Hebrew university, argued that Gandhian 'Satyagraha' was impractical in Nazi Germany because of the lack of publicity to stir up public opinion. On Palestine-Jew connection he said, "Jewish life will always be lacking in an essential constituent if Judaism and Jewish People have no spiritual and intellectual center in Palestine...this Jewish centre cannot be composed only of priests and scholars but endowed with all the problems of life – political and social as well as religious and spiritual."22 He continued that because the Jews had reclaimed the land and revived ancient Hebrew "in this sense the land also 'belongs' to them."23

22. Martin Buber and Judah Magnes, Two Letters to Gandhi, (Jerusalem, 1939), p.28
23. Ibid.
Gandhiji did not reply to the letters of Buber and Magnes as the points raised by them were already discussed and responded on several occasions before. Gandhiji restated his position in another Harijan Article in August 1947. He wrote: “The Jews have erred grievously in seeking to impose themselves on Palestine with the aid of America and Britain and now with the aid of naked terrorism. Why should they depend on American money for forcing themselves on an unwelcome land? Why should they resort to terrorism to make good their forcible landing in Palestine.”

Gandhiji viewed Zionism as a European Colonial settlement movement. As an Asian Nationalist he rejected the idea of establishing in Asian soil a state populated by non-Asian immigrants, contrary to the interests of the native population. Gandhiji believed in self-reliance. As a Hindu, believing in working out of once own salvation, he rejected the total dependence of Zionist on political and financial aid from US and Europe. He did not favour a state based on one religion. Being a secularist to the core, he rejected the idea of a ‘Jewish state’ in Palestine.

Like Gandhi, Nehru too sympathized with the sufferings of Jews in Europe. He moved a resolution in the All-India Congress Committee (AICC) urging the British to facilitate Jewish immigration into India. But the Arab-Jewish conflict in Palestine was concerned he believed that the Arabs were fighting British imperialism while the Jews promoting imperialist interests. He was quite emphatic that “Palestine is essentially an Arab country, and must remain so, and the Arabs must not be crushed and suppressed in their own homelands” \( ^{25} \) In his view Palestine, being a holy

land for Christian, Jews and Muslims and its old history and associations attracts a great deal of attention. The roots of the problem in Palestine lie not in religion but in British imperialist policies. ‘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. On the Arab side are numbers, on the other side great financial resources and the world-wide organization of the Jewry. So England pits Jewish religious nationalism against Arab 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 we have seen in other countries under imperialist domination; it is curious how often it is repeated.”

Nehru, from the 1920’s onwards utilized the Foreign Department of INC as an agency to gather world public opinion against British imperial rule in India, West Asia and other parts of the world. Indian nationalism reacted adversely to British mandate over Palestine, which has been viewed as a ‘cloak to cover imperialist greed’. The Calcutta Session of the INC (1928) assured...the Palestinians of its full sympathy towards their struggle to free themselves from the grip of Western imperialism, which is a great menace to the Indian struggle. For Nehru Palestine Question was not an isolated issue but was a part of worldwide conflict generated by conflicting interests of democracy, nationalism and Imperialism.

The emergence Nazi Germany and its policy of ‘Jewish ethnic cleansing’ resulted in a massive increase in the immigration of European Jews into Palestine. The British Govt. then compelled to treble the number of Jewish

immigrants to Palestine, they admitted between 1932 and 1933: Immediately the Arabs rebelled and struck for the first time at Britain as well as at the Jewish community. In 1933, out of compassion, the British trebled the 1932 figure, and went on raising the quota until 1935, when they admitted over 60,000 Jews – a number small by comparison with Jewish needs but large in relation to the population of Palestine.\textsuperscript{27} Again the Arabs rebelled and from 1936 onwards they sustained until 1939 a rebellion that proved most difficult to quell and this time the conflict had taken clear racial overtones.

The Palestine problem was now taken by the bordering Arab States. The Arab Higher Committee was formed on April 25, 1936, consisting of members from various Arab countries, with Mufti of Jerusalem as President. The great Arab Rebellion of 1936, the biggest and most successful of all the Arab Rebellions, started with a general Arab strike organized by the National committees set up in the towns. The Arab Higher Committee announced that the strike would continue until the British Govt. stopped the Jewish immigration completely. It was very difficult for the British to find a political solution to end the conflict. So violence and counter-violence continued unabated in Palestine.

In this circumstance the Indian National Congress supported unequivocally the Arab cause and the AICC conveyed its greetings to the Arabs in their struggle against Zionism and British imperialism. The INC observed Sep.27, 1936 as ‘Palestine Day’ by holding meetings and demonstrations throughout the country in support of the Arab cause. Nehru

\textsuperscript{27} Elizabeth Munroe, \textit{Britain’s moment in the Middle East 1914-1956} (Methuen, London, 1963) p.85.
addressed the mass meeting held in Allahabad. In this occasion, he expressed his approach to the Arab rebellion and 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."\(^\text{28}\)

For Nehru the Arab-Jewish conflict was never a religious problem as some of the Indian Muslims thought it to be: He viewed the Arab uprising as a national struggle in which the Arabs of different faiths were joining hands for securing freedom for their country. Nehru further pointed out that the "Arab struggle in Palestine will help us to see our own struggle in a proper perspective and make us forget our internal divisions in the face of common adversity."\(^\text{29}\) On British atrocities in Palestine during Rebellion (1936-39) Nehru said; 'the whole Arab world is aflame with indignation and the East, Muslim and non-Muslims alike has been deeply affected by this brutal attempt to crush a people struggling for their freedom."\(^\text{30}\)

The Bombay P.C.C. organized a public meeting and a resolution was adapted conveying full support to the Arabs. Addressing the audience Sarojini naidu said... 'It was the moral duty of the exploited people like Indians to sympathize with the Arabs fighting for independence from British Domination.\(^\text{31}\) The Sind Congress Socialist conference held at Karachi on July 18, 1936, under the presidentship of M.R. Musani declared its solidarity to Palestinian struggle and hoped that they would continue the fight till

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29. *Ibid*.
independence. The first session of the Bihar Muslim independent Party conference held at Patna on September 12, 1936, passed a resolution which strongly criticized the British policy. Maulana Ahmad Sayeed, the President of the session appreciated the Arab fighters and charged that British for using the Jews as instruments for strengthening her control over Palestine. Asaf Ali tabled an adjournment motion in the legislative Assembly on September 11, 1936 to discuss the failure of the Govt. of India in inviting the attention of the British Govt. to the danger of pursuing the policy of denying the indigenous population of Palestine their legitimate right of self determination.32 Sir Mohammed Yakub raised the Palestine issue on Sept. 14, 1936, in the Indian Legislative Assembly. Mohammad Ali Jinnah and Shaukat Ali asked the Govt. of India to clarify the British Policy towards Palestine.33

The Indian Muslims organized separately Public meetings and demonstrations to express their sympathy for Arab uprising and propagated the cause of Palestinians. The Muslim League had given a religious colour to the Palestinian issue. The Executive Board of the All India Muslim League passed a resolution urging the British to change their approach towards Palestinian Arabs. The resolution further demanded the immediate stoppage of British atrocities on Palestinian revolutionaries and warned the Govt. of India that the Pro-Jewish British Policy would cause violent responses in India and all over the Islamic world. In U.P. the Muslims organized the Provincial Palestine Conference at Allahabad on July 18, 1936 under the presidentship of Moulana Qutubuddin Wali.

33. Ibid., p.150
Nehru vehemently opposed the communalization of Palestinian issue. For Nehru, the Arabs were fighting imperialism and the issue was clearly a nationalist one.

The Arab Rebellion of 1936 became a mass agitation and this form of resistance frightened the British as well as the conservative Arabs in the neighbouring states. The traditional Arab Kings and rulers hurried forward to mediate and this act of class solidarity was welcomed by the British as a manifestation of Anglo-Arab unity. Meanwhile, to passify the growing violence in Palestine the British Govt. appointed a Royal Commission known as Peel Commission which recommended Partition of Palestine as the only way to solve the issue. Although the British Government approved the partition it recommended, the approval was rescinded in 1938 because opposition to partition came from both parties. To execute the partition armed enforcement was needed which, at that time the British were in no position to undertake. Therefore the Arab rebellion continued and became more difficult to control because it became a matter of interest to Arab nationalists and Muslims outside Palestine.

In October 1937, the AICC at its Calcutta Session protested strongly against the British reign of terror as well as the partition proposal and supported Arab opposition. The AICC Resolution adopted pointed out that...‘the imperialist machinations and the reign of terror were unleashed with a view to forcing the Arabs in accepting the proposed partition of Palestine.\(^{34}\) In Feb. 1938, the 51 session of the INC held at Haripura condemned the partition Plan and resolved that Britain would be well-advised in revoking its present policy (so as to) leave the Jews and the

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\(^{34}\) Quoted in Aloo J. Dastur, *op.cit.*, p.14
Arabs to amicably settle the issue between 'them' and appealed 'to the Jews' not to seek the shelter of the British Mandatory and not to allow themselves to be exploited in the interests of British imperialism. The INC declared August 26, 1938 as 'Palestine Day' and thousands of meetings and demonstrations held all over India to express support and sympathies to the Arabs. The AICC session at Wardha in Dec. 1938 passed a resolution which expressed the hope that the Arabs and Jews would endeavor to find a basis for mutual co-operation to establish an independent democratic state in Palestine with provisions to protect the rights of Jews. According to Gandhi and Nehru the Palestine problem could only be solved when the Arabs and Jews would forget their differences and come together keeping out the British and opt for a federation in Palestine with equal rights to Arabs and Jews. This envisaged that the Jews and the Arabs should co-operate and co-exist in peacefully within the framework of a pluralistic though Arab state for mutual benefit and development. In agreement with Gandhiji's approach to the character of Palestine, Nehru made it clear that 'Palestine is an Arab country and Arab interests must prevail there.' For Nehru the Federation should have fully autonomous Jewish and Arab units with a special status for Jerusalem and if necessary a review of the whole issue could be conducted after ten years. This position was further reiterated by Nehru in his speech before the Asian Relations Conference held in Delhi, April, 1947.

37. The Hindu, December 17, 1938
Confronted with an international crisis of major proportions and widespread Arab insurrection in Palestine the British were compelled to use military force to crush the uprising. There were only two ways open to the British of stopping a bad situation from worsening; one was to impose partition by force which was impossible in the context of mounting tension in world affairs and the other was to define the policy of British Govt. towards Jewish immigration. The British postponed a decision on the second step and an Anglo-Arab-Jewish congress was summoned at London. Both Arabs and Jews refused to co-operate and the British in May 17, 1939 made a unilateral declaration of Policy known as the White Paper of 1939.

The ‘White Paper’ made it clear that it was not the policy of British Government that ‘Palestine should become a Jewish State.’ It limited the Jewish immigration to a total of 75,000 during the next five years and provided that thereafter Jewish immigration would be permitted only if the Arabs of Palestine were ‘prepared to acquiesce in it.’ The white paper put definite limitations on the land purchase by Jews. It granted the High Commissioner authority to forbid the transfer of land and under this authority the Land Transfer Regulations were issued in 1940. The White Paper proposed to create an independent Palestinian state in treaty relations with Britain at the end of ten years.

The 1939 white paper has not been analyzed dispassionately because of the emotions that it aroused all three of the peoples concerned. The Zionists vehemently opposed the White Paper. According to Jewish sources, the Great Britain in effect said: ‘It is in your interest to accept this until better

times for without it, we may both succumb to Hitler." The White Paper aroused bitter feeling against the British and it gave rise to Jewish insurrection in Palestine. The Zionist leaders however, in 1939 shortly before the outbreak of war showed great discretion and restraint. But they fought the White Paper by a campaign of violence. The three Jewish secret para-military organizations, the Hagana, the Irgun Zvai Leumi and the Stern Gang, joined forces to unleash a series of violent attacks on British and the Palestinian Government to compel the British for the withdrawal of its limitation upon Jewish immigration. The Zionists wanted the Great Britain to support Jewish cause and withdraw the White Paper and everything possible should be done to convince the Arabs that the withdrawal was not directed against them.

Most of the Arab leaders declared the White Paper unacceptable though "a minority of the Arab Political leaders regarded it as an acceptable compromise." From the purely British point of view, the point that counts for most is that it helped to secure enough Arab compliance to tide Great Britain over the war years.'

During the years of World War II (1939-45) Palestine remained relatively calm. At the conclusion of the Arab revolt in early 1939, the Arab Higher Committee had collapsed. The leader of Arab Higher Committee, Hajj Amin-al-Husayni had been officially banned from Palestine following his escape in Oct.1937. After the outbreak of World War II, in April 1941 he

40. Quoted in Elizabeth Munroe, op.cit., p.88
42. See Esco foundation for Palestine, Palestine: A Study of Jewish, Arab and British Policies (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1947), II : 909.
aligned himself with the Iraqi Rebellion against Britain and once it failed he moved to Germany and supported the German war efforts and German barbarity against the Jews. After the British declaration of the White Paper, the Jewish Revisionist terrorist group shifted its focus of terrorist operations from the Arabs to British. With the end of the European war on May 8, 1945 terror resumed a part of a new era in British-Jewish Relations in Palestine. Meanwhile the strong Jewish lobby in US exerted pressure on British through US and American President Truman asked the British Prime Minster Clement Attlee for immediate admission of 100,000 Jewish refugees into Palestine. The British countered it by proposing a joint Anglo-American inquiry into the political and economic situation in Palestine in relation to the possibilities of further Jewish immigration. The Anglo-American commission report, submitted on April 30, 1946, recommended the conversion of the Mandate into a UN trusteeship which would prepare the Arabs and Jews for a binational bilingual state in Palestine. The White Paper policy was reversed and the Americans recommended the immediate admission of 100,000 Jewish refugees into Palestine. The American Administration urged the British to implement the recommendations. Britain not being able to control the situation announced its decision to handover the volatile issue to the United Nations.

The Palestine question has been discussed in the very first session of UN General Assembly convened on 28 April 1947. Indian delegate, Asaf Ali, opposed the inclusion of the Big five powers in the ‘fact-finding commission’ proposed in the General Assembly. But this move was failed. Finally the General Assembly appointed a United Nations Special Committee on Palestine of II States. India and Iran were the two Asian states. The majority report recommended the partition of Palestine while the minority report proposed by India, Iran and Yugoslavia recommended an
independent federal state of Palestine. Indian delegate on the UNSCOP, Sir Abdur Rahman, stated that Britain wanted a Jewish State in Palestine for political and strategic reasons which is against the principle of self-determination.43

Notwithstanding the Arab opposition the General Assembly voted for partition plan with two-thirds majority on 29 Nov. 1947. Practically the whole of ex-colonial Asia and the Near East opposed the solution. To the Arabs and other Asiatic people the UN decision meant that once again the Western powers had imposed its will upon the Eastern peoples. Indian National Movement extended whole-hearted support to the Arabs during their struggle against British Imperialism and her stooge in Palestine.

**Indo-Israel Relations and the Palestine Question**

The Creation of Israel in May 1948 marked the beginning of a new phase in Indo-West Asian relations which was largely in conformity with Asian outlook on the Palestine question. The forebodings of the Asian nations that partition would aggravate rather than resolve the basic conflict underlying the Palestine problem were more than confirmed by the grim events that followed the declaration of State of Israel.44

India wanted to be friendly with all nations and viewed that her destiny was linked with that of her neighbours in Asia. India and Israel had no serious bilateral problems and their only major difference being related to

44. M.S. Agwani, *op.cit.*, p.21
the Palestine Issue. India has, since the very beginning, been an ardent supporter of Palestinians in their epic struggle against Israel. Being the member of UN special committee on Palestine, India strongly opposed the partition of Palestine into two states, one Arab and the other Jewish. She supported the federal state plan which called for an independent federal state of Palestine comprising an Arab state and a Jewish state with Jerusalem as their capital. Jawaharlal Nehru, the architect of Indian foreign policy, stated in the Constituent Assembly that the proposal for a federal state was “not only a fair and equitable solution of the problem (Palestine Question) but the only real solution.”

Having witnessed the calamitous effect of the partition, India sought to avoid partitioning other countries. She viewed that it would be feasible for Arabs and Jews to realize their nationalistic aspirations and simultaneously merge into a common citizenship.

Indian attitude to Palestine and Israel went through two distinct phases. Initially India viewed the Palestine issue as a colonial question. Gandhiji made it clear that British mandate over Palestine is ‘sinful Imperialism’. Elimination of British colonialism and establishment of an independent Palestine state was suggested as a solution to it. The Jewish problem was seen as a minority question and India stood for granting all kinds of democratic rights normally enjoyed by the minorities in other countries, to the Jews in Palestine. In the second phase, India deeply sympathized with the plight of Jews because of Nazi persecution. Even though India did not support a separate state for the Jews in Palestine, mainly on two grounds. First, she considered that any state based on religious exclusivity could not sustain on moral and political grounds. Secondly, the Biblical association of

the Jews to Palestine has been regarded as insufficient basis for the creation of a modern state.

Indian stand had a pragmatic dimension also. The creation of an exclusively Muslim state of Pakistan, the subsequent Kashmir problem and the unsolved issue of the relative status of Hindus and Muslims in the subcontinent influenced India to forge a policy towards the Arab-Israeli conflict. The partition of India and the creation of Pakistan “undercut the most obvious basis for unity between post independence India and the Muslim states of West Asia: a continuous land bridge and a common religion. Pakistan inherited the advantages of both and used them for its own benefit.” So long as ‘geopolitics’ remains a deriving force in strategic foreign policy and economic decision making process of countries, India will have to consider the geographical factor which will be one of the key determinants of the West Asian region.

India’s secular ethos, moral values and democratic stance and Pakistan’s self proclaimed Islamic character underlined the basic ideological antagonism between the two states. The Indian government’s attempts to forge a stronger relationship with the countries of the West Asia were countered by Pakistan’s attempts to bring about a Pan-Islamic Alliance stretching from Turkey and Pakistan. In this context the fears of the emergence of an anti-India Islamic bloc with Pakistan as its leader, deeply influenced Indian policy markers. Even after partition a considerable Muslim population was left with India. Indian leaders were afraid of the

47. Najma Heptulla, *op.cit.*., p. 161
Muslim population of India identifying with Pan-Islamism rose out of Arab-Israel conflict and supporting political aspirations of Muslim states including Pakistan propagated as religious one. Nehru viewed this Pan-Islamic tendency as regressive and counter productive. He believed that it would divide and weaken the movements of the Asian people against the Imperialist states. 'There is undoubtedly a certain Pan-Islamic tendency drawing the Islamic countries of the Middle East towards each other. At the same time, there is a completely different tendency which May be said to be Pro-Asian as against Europe and America....This latter tendency bases itself more on nationalism just as the former bases itself on religion. The Nationalistic tendency is more confined to the intellectuals who can see a little further. They try to play down to a certain extent Islamic sentiment as such because they realize that while it is the cementing factors for certain Islamic countries, it comes in the way of a larger co-operation with other Asian countries.\(^{48}\)

In this circumstance Nehru fostered the Pro-Asian and nationalist tendencies of West Asian countries and cultivated close relations with the progressive Arab leaders to 'counterbalance the conservative Muslim bloc, which stretched from Pakistan to Jordan and posed a threat to India’s security and secularism.'\(^{49}\) Nehru did not want Arab-Israeli conflict to affect the Muslim populace of India by giving additional boost to the Pan-Islamic and separatist elements among them. He also did not want this to affect the Indo-Pakistan and Indo-Indonesian relations. He tried to check the rising tide of Pan-Islamism based on political Islamic fundamentalism by


promoting the Pan Arab nationalist trend, to establish India’s position in West Asian affairs. In the Arab Israeli conflict, Nehru took a stand which was favorable to the Arabs but not hostile to the Jews.

The Question of Recognition and Diplomatic Relations with Israel

Israel was keen on securing India’s recognition being the most influential Post colonial state in Asia and its considerable say on Asian thinking. Israel applied for admission to the United Nations on 4 May 1949 and the matter was put up to vote. India’s first reaction was to abstain but later India chose to vote against Israel. This was because ‘India could not recognize an Israel which had been achieved through the force of arms and not through negotiations?50 The General Assembly vote was in favour of Israeli admission to United Nations (37 to 2 with 9 abstentions). It was at this stage that India’s policy towards Arab-Israeli dispute started losing some of its élan and balance. India was now a modern, independent, sovereign nation state successfully consolidated her politico-territorial identity amidst tense diversities and tensions. India’s cultural heritage and socio-political maturity demand that the country’s national interest is not only safeguard, but its stature also continues to grow. Hence taking a moralistic stand imbued with idealism and an unrealistic vision of the West Asian regional order was untenable. Israel is a reality and hence there is nothing wrong in coming to terms with it.

America was the first country to recognize Israel with Russia following on its heels. Two days later, several communist countries did likewise. India

still did not accord recognition to Israel. But Pakistan's continued efforts to whip up Muslim passion against India went a long way in making Nehru reconsider his general policy of supporting the Arabs, and finally led to his recognition of Israel on 17 September 1950. After according recognition Nehru made it clear that this did not mean endorsement of Israeli position on its frontiers and India would continue to support the cause of the Palestinians. India's belated recognition came in more than two years after the creation of the Israel on the basis of UN resolution. She waited till two Muslim countries, Turkey and Iran, had accorded recognition. According to Prithvi Ram Mudiam "The confusion and fluidity that characterized West Asian politics in the aftermath of the creation of Israel and the implacable Arab hostility to it, concern over Pakistan's efforts to cultivate West Asia on a religious basis, the internationalization of the Kashmir dispute and the sensitivities of the large Muslim community that remained in India after partition were some of the major factors that prompted the Indian Government to be careful and slow in extending formal recognition to Israel." An official explanation gave three compelling reasons for India's recognition of Israel: 'The Government of Israel has been in existence for two years and there is no doubt it is going to stay...India and Israel have been working together for the last two years in the UN and other International bodies, and Israel is throughout this period collaborating with other members of UN for furthering the cause of world peace and establishing better economic and social conditions in all parts of the world... Continued mutual non-recognition is not only inconsistent with the overall relationship between the two countries which are working side by side in the

51. Najma Heptulla *op.cit.*, p.163
UN but would also limit the Government of India’s role as a possible intermediary between Israel and the Arab States.”\textsuperscript{53} The official explanation further made it clear that ‘all aspects of the question were carefully considered including the sentiments of the Arab countries.’\textsuperscript{54}

However a slight policy shift resulted in India recognizing Israel, but she refrained from exchanging diplomatic representatives at any level. The Director General of the Israeli Foreign Office, Walter Eytan, conducted negotiations in New Delhi in the months of February/March 1952 and noted that ‘he was informed that the Prime Minister (Nehru) had approved the proposal... A draft budget for the Indian Legation was being prepared, though the formal decision to establish diplomatic relations still remained to be confirmed by the Cabinet. This was to be done as soon as the new government was set up following the elections a few weeks later.’\textsuperscript{55} But there was no follow up actions taken and it seemed that Nehru had dropped the idea under the influence of Moulana Abdul Kalam Azad, who had strongly advised him against such a move. According to Michael Brecher\textsuperscript{56} Azad warned Nehru of the impact of such a move on the Arab world when the Kashmir issue was being fought in the UN and outside and also of the negative impact of it on the Indian Muslim Community. Nehru was no doubt influenced by Abdul Kalam Azad in the formulation of India’s West Asia Policy. It was Azad’s interference that helped India to develop friendly and

\textsuperscript{53.} The Hindustan Times, September 18, 1950; Also see Sudha Rao, The Arab Israeli conflict: The Indian view, (Orient Longman, Delhi, 1972), p.40 and The Hindu, September 18, 1950.

\textsuperscript{54.} Ibid.


co-operative relations with the countries of West Asia and extent firm support to the Palestinian cause.\textsuperscript{57}

In 1953, Israel was allowed to open a consulate in Bombay. But India confined Israel's representative to Bombay and refrained from maintaining a diplomatic presence in Israel. It was contrary to the principle of reciprocity. When questioned at a press conference in New Delhi on 7th August 1958 Nehru's answer was as follows:

'This attitude was adopted after a careful consideration of the balance of factors. It is not a matter of high principle, but it is based on how we could best serve and be helpful in that area. We would like the problem between Israel and Arab countries to be settled peacefully. After careful thought, we felt that while recognizing Israel as an entity, we need not at this state exchange diplomatic personnel.'\textsuperscript{58}

A week later, on 14 August 1958, this position was further classified in Lok Sabha by Nehru and he advanced new reasons for continuing the status quo:

'Ever since it (Israel) come into existence it has been a source of constant irritation to the Arab countries. The invasion of Egypt by Israel two years ago (Suez Crisis, 1956) is fresh in our memory. Apart from this, there is the big problem of the old Palestine refugees.'\textsuperscript{59}

\textsuperscript{57} Ibid., pp. 129-30.
Israel's repeated attempts to establish diplomatic ties with India was failed because of Nehru's firm attitude. Mr. Moshe Sharett, an admirer of India among Israel's first generation leaders, requested Nehru for diplomatic relations, when he came to India for a socialist meeting. Later, another Israeli Officer, Mr. Gideon Rafael, probed Nehru's mind on the Issue but was frustrated by his firm position. The Israeli leaders being not able to develop a tempo with Nehru became critical of his stand. David Ben Gurion the first prime minister of Israel commented in 1960.

"I cannot understand how Mr. Nehru fits his behavior to Israel with Gandhi's philosophy of universal friendship. Mr. 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 word."\textsuperscript{60}

**Suez crisis (1956) and Indian Response**

The withdrawal of the US offer to finance the construction of Aswan Dam across the Nile, led to the nationalization of Suez Canal by President Nasser in 1956. The negotiations between Egypt and Anglo French governments failed to persuade Nasser to modify his position. While the issue was being debated, Israel launched an attack on Egyptian position in Sinai Peninsula, on October 29, 1956. As a result virtually the whole region passed under Israeli control and the Egyptian resistance was collapsed. A few days later, France and UK joined Israel. Israel's unabashed and unprovoked aggression

on a third world country with ex-colonial powers like the UK and France under false pretences dissipated whatever sympathy the Indian leaders and the public entertained for Israel.

The Suez Crisis was a turning point in India’s West Asian policy. It brought the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) on the central stage in world affairs. Indian stand on Suez crisis was greatly influenced by her opposition to the colonialism of the West. She viewed the Anglo-French attack as an attempt to revive colonialism in an area of great strategic importance, which is so close to her. By helping rid the area of colonialism or neo-colonialism and by coming to the aid of a sister non-aligned country, India strengthened the world movement towards non-aligned and the concept of the ‘area of peace’ in the world.\(^{61}\) The Israeli attack on Egypt arose much anger and concern in India. Nehru publicly denounced the Israeli action as ‘clear naked aggression.’ The whole country, regardless of Party affiliation, condemned the Aggression. The Indian position was well projected in the UN General Assembly...“There has been released over Egypt and its people a manifestation of the law of the jungle instead of the law of peace and the law of nations as enshrined in the Charter. Thus on the territory of Egypt is a mockery being made of the Charter of the United Nations, and there the organs of the United Nations are being affronted by aggression and invasion.”\(^{62}\)

Israeli alliance with UK and France confirmed the nation that Israel was an outpost of imperialist interests in West Asia. According to V.K. Krishnamenon:


\(^{62}\) Quoted in Aloo J. Dastur, *op.cit.*, p.31
They (Israel) had a case for freedom of navigation, they had no case for invasion. I think the Israeli’s lost by joining the French and British. The invasion angered Asia and Africa. It placed them (Israelis) in the role of allies and abettors of Imperialism.\textsuperscript{63} As a result the question of establishing full diplomatic relations with Israel by India seems to have faded completely. Israeli’s growing strategic relationship with the US on the one hand and India’s Cairo-centric policy which made Egypt the lynchpin of India’s Interaction with West Asia on the other, Made Indo-Israeli relations only a marginal concern for both India and Israel.\textsuperscript{64} Even though there have been contacts-both official and private-between the two countries. During Sino-Indian War of 1962\textsuperscript{65} India had secret dealings with Israel and obtained weapons and technological assistance from Israel.

\textbf{Arab Israeli War – 1967}

The border dispute between the Arabs and Israel led to escalation of another war in West Asia. The UN mixed commission setup to settle border dispute faced a very difficult task. Syria seemed to be prepared for military confrontation with the support of Egypt. The Arab countries declared their solidarity with Syria and Egypt. In the meantime Egypt blockade the Gulf of Aquaba. Israel denounced the blockade and on June 5 1967, Israeli Air force carried out a pre-emptive air strike by surprise which almost wiped out the United Arab Republic (UAR) air force in a few hours. The war that followed


\textsuperscript{64} Prithvi Ram Mudiam, \textit{op.cit.}, p.210-211

lasted only for 6 days and it has been one of the most blitzkreig campaign in history. Israel seized the Sinai, Gaza, the Golan heights, the West Bank and East Jerusalem from the Arabs. During the crisis India took a blatantly pro-Arab position. It is very clear that the closure of Gulf of Aquaba by Nasser and the ordering of the withdrawal of United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF) are the immediate reasons for the escalation of war in 1967. But Indira Gandhi’s statement in the Lok Sabha on 6 June 1967 did not consider these ground realities: ‘I do not wish to utter harsh words or use strong Language. But on the basis of information available there can be no doubt that Israel has escalated the situation into an armed conflict which has now acquired the proportions of a full scale war’.66 At the UN, where India was a non permanent member of the security council, the Indian representative, G. Parthasarathy placed the responsibility for the ‘grave situation’ prevailing in West Asia ‘squarely on Israel’.67 Relations between the two countries deteriorated in the aftermath of the 6-Day war in June 1967. It is interesting to note that in spite of the strong pro-Arab stance taken by India during Arab-Israeli wars, Israel has come forward with a pro-India stance, when she was in crisis. During the 1971 Indo-Pak war, India sought and obtained certain ‘crucial weapons’ from Israel.68

**India, Palestine Question and PLO**

India has been an ardent supporter of Palestinians since the very beginning of the Arab-Jewish conflict. The formation of Palestine Liberation

66. Quoted in Prithvi Ram Mudiam, *op.cit.* p.211.
68. Subramaniam Swami, ‘The Secret friendship between India and Israel’ *Sunday 28 Nov.4 Dec, 1982*, p-20
Organization (PLO) as an umbrella organization of various Palestinian guerrilla groups in 1964 was an important step towards the liberation of Palestine. The unexpected defeat of the Arab Armies in June 1967 brought PLO to agree on the necessity of launching independent military action. Cairo Congress of Palestinian National Council held on 1st February 1969, elected Yasir Arafat as the chairman of PLO. In April 1969 Arafat formed the Palestine Armed Struggle Command (PASC) for the co-ordination of all Fedayeen organization in Palestine. The armed struggle carried out by PLO under the leadership of Yasir Arafat acted as a unifying force among the scattered Palestine community and confirmed the Palestinian national identity. The two-sided conflict between Arab states and Israel quickly became three sided. The Palestinians, who until then had played only a minor role, soon became an essential participant in this tragic game.  

India responded positively to these developments in Palestine. The Indo-UAR Joint Statement released on 22 October 1967, during Indira Gandhi’s visit to Cairo expressed support for the Just rights of the Palestine People. The expression ‘Palestine People’ was important because this was the first time this term was officially used and was probably meant to acknowledge and approve the moves being made by the Palestinians to take their future into their own hands.

Indira Gandhi ushered Indian foreign policy into channels of political realism away from the romantic illusions and moral idealism which characterized the foreign policy of India during the Nehru era. During

71. Prithvi Ram Mudiam, *op.cit*, p.213.
1970's and 1980's India put her entire diplomatic clout behind the PLO's effort to reach a negotiated settlement with Israel. In this course India specifically preferred Al-Fatah, the largest of the Palestinian groups and its leader Yasir Arafat because of a variety of reasons: Al-Fatah was essentially a nationalist organization which embarked on an ambitious effort to unite the Palestinians at every level; Al-Fatah wanted to establish a democratic state in Palestine regardless of race or religion and to build a progressive society which could contribute effectively towards the creation of a progressive and united Arab Society and to support the struggle of oppressed people anywhere. These objectives of Al-Fatah are naturally to India's liking. The approach of Al-Fatah was secular. It did not give a religious colour to the struggle against Israel by characterizing it as 'Jihad'. In this backdrop India believed that the pragmatic approach of Yasir Arafat and his charismatic leadership would be helpful in resolving the dispute. According to Prithvi Ram Mudiam:

"India sought to help the PLO to gain international political acceptance as a reasonable and moderate organization and leave down its image as a terrorist outfit by canvassing its case in the UN and outside, so that when the time for the final settlement came, the PLO would have gained sufficient respectability and credibility to participate in the negotiations as an independent organization genuinely representative of the Palestinian people." India co-sponsored a draft resolution in the UN General Assembly on October 8, 1974 calling for the PLO's participation in the

deliberations of the General Assembly on Palestinian issue. It was the continuous efforts of India and other Non-Aligned nations that enabled yasir Arafat to address the UN General Assembly and deliver the historical ‘Olive branch’ address on Nov. 13, 1974. India was the first Non-Arab country to recognize PLO by granting diplomatic status to the PLO’s representative in New Delhi on January 10, 1975. The PLO acquired observer status in the UN in 1974, admitted to NAM in 1975 and to the Group of 77 (G-77) in 1976. India throughout this period seemed to be urging moderation on the part of PLO, a sense of urgency and purposefulness on the part of Israel, as essential for a negotiated settlement.  

**Indian approach to Israel – 1970’s and 1980’s**

Inspite of the pragmatism and political realism of Indira Gandhi, the Indian approach to Israel remained intact during this period. This might be because of what V.K. Krishnamenon had put it earlier:

‘There will be no ‘normal’ relations between Israel and India until the world situation changes. We have got Pakistan on our borders, and the West supports Pakistan, and we cannot go and create more enemies than we have at the present moment.’

**Yom Kipper War 1973**

This time the Arabs triggered the attack against Israel. By complete surprise a coordinated and combined offensive was launched by the forces of


Syria and Egypt on 6th October 1973. The Israeli forces retreated before the massive Arab forces, and paid a high price for checking the campaigns. During the war, India extended full support to the Arabs. The statement released by Ministry of External Affairs condemned the Israel and viewed that the intransigence on the part of Israel was the basic cause leading to the outbreak of hostilities.\textsuperscript{76} Inspite of the unconditional and total support to the Arab cause, the Deputy Permanent Representative at the UN, M.P. Jain, addressing the Adhoc Committee of the UN General Assembly (for announcement of voluntary contributions of UNRLA) announced a contribution of Rs.1,00,000/- in kind on 30 November 1973.\textsuperscript{77} Besides this he emphasized that India had been awarding scholarships directly to Palestinians which would continue in the follow year as well.\textsuperscript{78}

**The Janatha Government and Israel**

There was no drastic change in Indain approach to Israel and West Asia during the period of Janatha Government eventhough it was expected. The friends of Israel in India was so happy when A.B. Vajpayee became the Minister of Foreign Affairs. It was widely expected that there would be a policy shift in favour of Israel. But, the presence of pro-Israeli Janasangh and its leader Vajpayee in the Janata Government couldn’t change India’s traditional policy towards West Asia. The Janata Government reaffirmed


\textsuperscript{78} Ibid.
India’s support to the Arabs in general and Palestinians in particular and was supportive of any possible peace initiative between Arabs and Israel. In the context of Camp David peace process, Moshe Dayan, the Defence minister of Israel, secretly visited India on 14th August 1977 in response to a specific official request from the Prime Minister. During the meet, Morarji Desai, the then Prime Minister of India, told him: ‘You must make peace with the Arabs. The Israeli’s have suffered from the Nazi’s and from the persecution in Europe, but the Palestinians should not be made to pay for it.’ The argument of Dayan that the establishment of an independent Palestinian state would be a permanent threat to the peace and security of Israel was outrightly rejected by Desai. When he raised the question of establishing full diplomatic relations between the two countries, Desai pointed out that ‘India had mistaken...in not having done this at the very outset, when Nehru had come to power with India’s Independence. But this mistaken policy could now not be changed.’

Dayan’s visit produced much confusion and criticism in Indian political scene. Inspite of that Dayan’s secret mission brought about nothing positive in Indo-Israel relations and it was a total failure.

However, there has never been a let-up in the Israeli pressure on India to establish full diplomatic relations with her. Israeli effort might have been based on the reasoning that a considerable section of Indian populace, especially those sections suffered the atrocities of Muslim communalists during the partition were sympathetic towards Israel. The political parties

80. Ibid.
like the Jana Sangh, the rightist swathantra party and a number of Hindu religious and cultural organizations favoured Israel and viewed Israel as a potential ally of India. Shri. M. Pamaswami, Secretary of Tamilnadu Hindu Mission, Salem said:-

“...The sympathy and support of the 46 crores of Hindus lies with the brother Israeli nation which is fighting for its survival...On behalf of Hindus of our country, our Hindu mission expresses its solid support to Israel in its fight against an aggressive Arab world and pray for its success.”

Keeping this in mind the Israeli Consul made a public statement in 1982 that New Delhi’s anti-Israeli position was 'unrepresentative of Indian popular opinion'. He made the statement in response to the sharp and harsh Indian response on Israeli invasion of Lebanon. The foreign minister of India, P.V. Narasimha Rao referred to the invasion as the enactment of a savage drama involving the butchery of our Palestinian brothers and sisters'. Subsequently in September 1982 India declared the Israeli Consul Persona non grata and ordered him to leave the country.

India matched the records of some Muslim countries in voting against Israel and co-sponsoring anti-Zionist measures. In 1985 and 1986 alone, India co-sponsored 21 of the 24 anti Israeli resolutions adopted by the UN. The resolutions included charges of 'war crimes' and of not being a peace-living country.

82. The Hindu, 20 June 1982.
A major change in Indo-Israel relations was occurred after the then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi’s visit to Washington in 1986. It was reported that under US pressure Rajiv Gandhi permitted Israel to post a vice consul at its Consulate in Bombay after the expulsion of the consul in 1982. In 1988, the post of the Israeli vice consul in Bombay was elevated to that of a consul. It was in December 1991, the Government of India made the first major move in favour of Israel. She joined the pro-Israeli lobby at UN and voted in favour of the Resolution. 46/86 on 16th December 1991, which repealed its 10th November 1975 Resolution No. 3379, equating Zionism with Racism. Subsequently higher official level contacts has been established between India and Israel, in the UN, US and elsewhere. Thus all the commitments India had made at NAM Meetings to fight Israel’s racist, expansionist, terrorist policy and its efforts to Judaize occupied territories were practically cancelled. Mr. Chinmay Gharekhan explained his vote at the UN with a new argument: ‘no concepts or theories should be allowed to stand in the way of peace.’84 After analyzing carefully the post-cold war world scenario and the ground realities in West Asia, finally India established full diplomatic relations with Israel in January 1992, after 40 years India recognized Israel.

The visit of then Israeli foreign Minister Shimon Peres of New Delhi on May 17, 1993 opened a new era of friendship and co-operation between India and Israel. During the visit four agreements and two memorandum of understanding (MoU) to promote scientific and cultural exchange, technological transfers, tourism and business were signed. Mr. Peres offered every possible assistance to India to safe guard its territorial integrity and unity85. The two countries have agreed to encourage establishment of joint

ventures and projects in the areas of agriculture, chemicals, textiles, software, fertilizers, agro-industries, tele-communications, medical equipment and non-conventional energy. Mr. Peres stated that 'India is a target country. She is not only a trading partner, but also a strategic partner for joint ventures and technology transfer.' Both countries agreed to focus on those areas of economic co-operation which provide maximum opportunities to develop shared interests and reap mutual benefits.

The new turn in Indian foreign policy has been criticized severely on various grounds. Diplomatic ties with Israel were established during the Narasimha Rao regime. However the real change that is a pro-Israeli tilt in Indian foreign policy was brought in during the Vajpayee regime. It is been criticized that the National Democratic Aliance (NDA) Government led by Vajpayee injected a serious distortion to Indian position on West Asian crisis by ignoring the beleaguered Palestinians and their just cause for building up a 'special relationship' with Israel. This was believed a negation of national sentiment and a shameful interlude in India’s longstanding traditional relations with west Asian countries. The new approach reduced India’s stand on Israel-Palestine conflict to a state of voiceless impotence. So the country was some extent unable to join the international community in denouncing the state sponsored terrorist actions against the Palestinians and their undisputed leader-Yasser Arafat. The critics stand for a straightway shift in policy by jointing the civilized world in denouncing the Ariel Sharon regime’s war – mongering and crimes against humanity.

The economic and political co-operation between India and Israel advanced in 1990's and early years of the 21st century. This new friendship in Indo-Israel relations has been firmly consolidated in 2003 with the visit of Israel Prime Minister Ariel Sharon to New Delhi.

86. Ibid
In a political realist point of view, India's traditional policy towards Israel was not a free and independent one because of her socio-political and historical attachment to the Arabs. It was ideologically inclined and was basically pro-Arab. But in 1990's India redefined the socio-political priorities and strategic imperative of her West Asian policy in tune with the changed context of global political scenario. The reorientation of India's foreign policy perception was a result of the consolidation of new forces in international politics after the demise of socialist bloc and Soviet Union.

The end of cold war hallmarked the beginning of a new era of 'de-politicization and de-ideologisation content in international politics. The consolidation of global capitalist forces resulted in the replacement of political and ideological themes in inter-state relations by economic aspects. As far as the power balance is concerned, a unipolar world is perceived in which the US will have the control of the working of UN as well as the power to shape or mould the international affairs at a global level.

In this changed international context, Indian decision making structure came under intense pressure from US. India's traditional policy towards Israel had been an impediment in its relation with the US. However, when co-operation with Jewish lobby in Washington was started the process of normalisation began. The establishment of closer Indo-US ties and the US pressure on India resulted in the repeal of traditional Indian Policy towards Israel.

Apart from the 'US factor', 'the terrorism' factor also played an important role in normalizing Indo-Israel relations. The 'Islamisation' of Palestine resistance movement with the rise of 'Hammast' and 'Hezbollah', compelled India to reconsider the West Asian policy. Being a country worstly affected

87. N. Sreekant Nair, Ph.D Thesis, op.cit., p.129
by Pak-sponsored Islamic terrorism, India saw Israel and Us as viable partners to tackle the 'Islamic fundamentalist threat' generating from West Asian, North African, and some Central Asian States. India viewed that the experience of Israel in handling the cross-border terrorist incursions would be of great helpful to her.

The demise of Soviet Union created a security crisis for India which was so intense and acute. In such a condition, Israel appeared as a suitable alternative with her defense capability and performance especially in dealing the terrorist attacks. The emergence of pro-Israeli right wing Hindu nationalist forces at the centre in the late 1990's made India to increase the frequency of security defence contacts between the two states. Now one of the most important aspect of Indo-Israel relations is security defense related co-operation.

So far the Palestine question was the core of India's West Asian Policy. The change of direction of her foreign policy was motivated by the end of cold war and the new imperatives of globalization in the economic and security realms. The post cold war reality compelled India to refashion her relations with major powers for mutual benefit, for tempering trends of unilaterism and for creating a world order for maintaining equilibrium in inter-state relations. Now India seeks 'closest relations' with US and friendly ties with Israel. At the same time she supports the Palestinian cause and urges an end to the vicious cycle of violence and counter violence and sincere and meaningful efforts to towards the peace process in accordance with the relevant UN Resolutions.  