

to this decision from Arab states and Moslems at home was the result of Nehru's careful handling of the issue.

The Years of Lost Opportunities: 1950-55

Soon after recognizing Israel, the government of India declared in the Parliament in reply to a question about normalizing relations with Israel, "Owing to reasons of financial stringency, the case of Israel will presumably have to wait for a propitious time."³⁶ Some reports from the *South Block*³⁷ and speeches by Nehru also indicated that there was no major objection to opening a mission in Tel Aviv.

The Indian recognition of Israel again created optimism in the Israeli camp. This optimism was strengthened by the fact that Israel's cause was receiving some support in the Indian Parliament as well as the Indian press. Significantly, despite its coolness towards Israel, India had never denied the need to establish full diplomatic relations with Israel.

Walter Eytan in Delhi and the Promise

Encouraged by these positive signs, the Israeli Foreign Ministry worked hard to promote the normalization of diplomatic relations between the two countries. The favorable mood in India was reflected during the Delhi visit of Walter Eytan, then the Director-General of Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as an official guest of the Indian government. Eytan observed that on the merits of the case, Nehru believed it was not logical to balk at diplomatic relations after India had recognized Israel a year ago. He wrote that Nehru had agreed to reconsider the question of diplomatic relations. Before his departure from Delhi, Eytan was informed that the Prime Minister had approved the proposal to establish normal diplomatic ties with Israel. However, the final decision to establish diplomatic relations was left to the Cabinet that would be formed after India's first general elections in 1952.³⁸

Why could normal diplomatic relations not be established? Unquestionably, financial constraints and the lack of diplomatic personnel contributed to the Indian government's decision to postpone the opening of its mission in Tel Aviv. However, more importantly, professor Michael Brecher explains that Nehru was cautioned by his Cabinet colleague, Maulana Abdul Kamal Azad,³⁹ not to take such a big risk of annoying the Indian Moslems as well as the friendly Arab states unless India received significant gains from normalizing relations with Israel.⁴⁰

The Role of Moshe Sharett

Moshe Sharett, Israel's Foreign Minister, was very keen to integrate Israel into the family of Asian nations. Understanding Indian constraints, he preferred not to prod India too much. He instructed the Israeli missions in the United Nations, the United States, Great Britain and the Soviet Union to

promote relations with India indirectly.⁴¹ Even on the issue of China's membership in the United Nations, Sharett decided on the spur of moment to defy the USA by joining India, Pakistan, Burma, and the East European bloc in supporting China's entry. He hoped that would improve Israel's chances of establishing formal diplomatic relations with these four Asian states, emphatically re-emphasizing Israel's policy of non-identification or non-alignment.⁴²

Notably, soon after Eytan's Delhi visit, Nehru was reportedly willing to allow establishment of an Israeli diplomatic mission in Delhi but claimed he was unable to open an Indian mission in Tel Aviv.⁴³ Moshe Sharett insisted on the "principle of reciprocity." His rejection of the proposal to open a mission in Delhi without India's reciprocal action was partly due to national pride⁴⁴ and partly, but more significantly, to his assessment that India was increasingly leaning towards establishing full diplomatic relations with Israel. But, as the history of India-Israel relations tells us today, Sharett's decision based on these assessments backfired.

The Strategic Changes Dictating India's Policy

The supposedly temporary postponement of normal diplomatic relations between India and Israel was followed by many international developments that proved harmful to India-Israel rapprochement. Pakistan launched a new political offensive against India. It joined military pacts sponsored by the West, hoping to gain its support over the Kashmir dispute and also sought such support in Moslem states. This state of affairs further prevented Nehru from extending a friendly hand towards Israel æthe archenemy of many Arab states, including Egypt, which played a major role in foiling Pakistan's pan-Islamic propaganda.

Moreover, during this period, Israel virtually abandoned the policy of non-alignment and began to lean towards the West. This was revealed by its behavior during the Korean crisis (1950-53) and later by its attempts to buy Western arms.⁴⁵ Meanwhile, Nehru's admiration for socialism, some changes in Middle East regimes and the Western military's aid to Pakistan, caused India to sympathize with the Soviet bloc. Resultantly, as soon as the early 1950s, the basic foreign policy interests of India and Israel began to move in opposite directions.

The Bandung Conference

At the Bogor meeting, Nehru was in favor of Israel's participation as an Asian country in the Bandung Conference of Asian and African states in 1955. Thereupon, Pakistan launched a diplomatic attack against India, claiming that India was favoring the Zionist state. The Arab states threatened to boycott the conference on this issue.⁴⁶ In this situation, India again succumbed to Arab and Pakistani pressure and Israel was excluded from the Bandung Conference. G. H. Jansen cited this event as follows,

Mr. Nehru agreed that Israel ought perhaps to be invited, but pointed out that if she were present, the Arab states would stay away which would mean that almost the whole of West Asia would be absent. The conference would therefore become so unbalanced that India would have to reconsider whether her own attendance would be worthwhile.⁴⁷

Nehru admitted that it was illogical⁴⁸ not to invite Israel to the conference and took a moderate stand on the resolutions against Israel. Nevertheless, this conference further demonstrated the importance India had attached to its relations with the Arab world.

The early 1950s, thus, proved crucial in the history of India-Israel relations. The initial affinity between the two countries could not be positively utilized. India, perceiving that its national interests clashed with Israel, delayed the normalization of diplomatic relations. But, the longer India delayed normalizing relations with Israel, the more difficult it became to do so without giving the impression of offending the domestic Moslems and the Arab states.⁴⁹ Later, Nehru himself admitted that diplomatic ties should have been established soon after recognition,⁵⁰ a view also shared by his Defense Minister, Krishna Menon.⁵¹ Thus, a historical opportunity was missed.

The Warm Undercurrents

In January, 1953, Israel provisionally opened a consular office in Bombay, where the majority of India's small Jewish community, called 'Bene Israel,' lived, though no Indian consulate was opened in Tel Aviv. This arrangement was justified as a way of helping Bene Israels' immigration to Israel. The presence of the Israeli Consul in Bombay evoked no hostility. It played an important, though low key, role in building up India-Israel friendship at the non-official level. As previously mentioned, there was already some sympathy for Israel in India, especially among rightwing intellectuals and leaders. Thus, despite the lack of normal diplomatic relations between the two countries, good ties were established between individuals, organizations and institutions at the non-official level. Many Indian delegations visited Israel, while Israeli delegations visited India. The visits of S. K. Patil and Moshe Sharett⁵² were at the highest level. Some visits by journalists, student exchanges, cooperative art exhibitions and other cultural activities also took place.

The *Jana Sangha*, a rightwing Hindu nationalist party suspicious of Moslems and Arabs, saw in their adversary, Israel, a potential ally of India. The rightist *Swatantra* party was also persistently critical of India's West Asia policy because it gave too little weight to the claims of pro-Western Israel against the left-leaning Arabs. Close ties were instituted between the Indian Socialist party and the ruling *Mapai* party of Israel. Links were also created between the cooperative and trade union movements of the two countries. The *Histadrut* (Israel's General Federation of Labor) cooperated closely with the

Indian National Trade Union Federation in the late 1950s.⁵³ However, Yigal Allon's efforts to establish ties between the *Ahdut Ha 'avoda* faction and the ruling Congress party of India proved futile.

These contacts may seem important, especially, in the absence of normal diplomatic ties, but they failed to create a political constituency for Israel in India. Nehru was able to convince the Indian public opinion that his West Asia policy was serving India's interests the best possible way. Nehru's strong hold on foreign affairs and the Congress party's dominant position in the Indian parliament made his job easier.

THE WATERSHED

The Nehru-Nasser Friendship

The growing friendship between India and Egypt influenced India-Israel relations negatively. Nehru and Nasser held similar views on many issues. Both were particularly critical of military pacts in southern and southwestern Asia. The Baghdad Pact of 1955 (later CENTO) proved a catalyst for strengthening Indian and Egyptian perceptions of common political and strategic interests. Nehru found Nasser a progressive and secular Arab leader who had suppressed the Moslem Brotherhood movement and was interested in espousing the doctrine of non-alignment. This convergence of interests increased the cooperation between the two countries, which culminated in the Treaty of Friendship signed in April, 1955. Nasser's fierce hostility towards Israel also dissuaded Nehru from making any conciliatory move towards Israel. Commenting on this, one Indian author described the history of India-Israel relations during this period as the history of India-Egypt relations and of the relationship between Pakistan and the USA.⁵⁴

The Sinai Crisis

Soon after the signing of the India-Egypt Friendship Treaty, the Suez Canal crisis erupted and put the treaty to a test. As a major user of the canal, India had a big stake in the developments taking place in the region.⁵⁵ It tried to avert the crisis by mediating over the Suez canal control issue. Nehru and Krishna Menon were successful in persuading Nasser to adopt a less aggressive posture toward Britain.⁵⁶ But when Israel started a 'preventive war' on October 29, 1956, an action followed by a joint Anglo-French attack, India explicitly took the side of Egypt.

Nehru termed this as a 'clear naked aggression' and regarded Israel as a source of trouble in the heart of the Arab world.⁵⁷ Israel's collaboration with the colonial powers against a country of the newly emerging Afro-Asian bloc was unacceptable to Nehru. India cosponsored the UN resolution denouncing the tripartite attack on Egypt, urged an unconditional withdrawal of the British, French and Israeli troops from the Sinai, and deplored Israel's non-compliance

throughout the crisis. However, despite his vehement condemnation of Israel, Nehru turned down Nasser's request for arms.⁵⁸ Few would disagree with Krishna Menon's view that the Sinai war was a watershed in India-Israel relations.⁵⁹ After this war, the Indian attitude towards Israel began hardening and the possibilities of normalizing bilateral relations dimmed.

Israel also realized the difficulties of getting acceptance on the Asian continent. By the late 1950s, Israel had overcome the 'psychological barriers' to its existence: international recognition and legitimacy. Therefore, the country decided to concentrate its diplomatic efforts on its fundamental needs, namely immigrants, arms and money. Clearly, Asia did not fit into this framework of Israeli priorities. At this time, the process of decolonization in Africa had started and Golda Meir, the new Foreign Minister known for her interest in Africa, favored cultivating friendly relations with the newly independent African states.⁶⁰ This resulted in Israel's more or less dropping Asia from its foreign policy priorities.

Arabs Fail to Reciprocate

Nehru's foreign policy, based on the concept of *Panchseela* suffered a big jolt when China attacked an unprepared India in 1962. At this time of national crisis, India appealed for help from all countries, including Israel. Sharing India's concern and finding a fresh opportunity to reopen a friendly dialogue, Israel supplied some arms to India.⁶¹ On the other hand, the cold attitude of supposedly friendly Arab states disappointed India. Nasser's neutrality during the war certainly fell short of the spirit of the India-Egypt Friendship Treaty. Yet again, during the India-Pakistan war of 1965, the general Arab attitude was pro-Pakistan, whereas Israel provided some military help to India.⁶²

Nevertheless, India still regarded Nasser as a valuable Arab leader who could help the newborn Non-Alignment Movement (NAM) and thwart Pakistan's pan-Islamic designs, the two fundamental concerns of Indian foreign policy. This assessment of Delhi once again allowed the Arab factor to torpedo the chances of a new beginning in India-Israel relations. During all these years, despite frozen official relations between the two states, gracious non-official contacts persisted. But, as in the past, such positive manifestations were sidelined by India's political constraints.

During Indira Gandhi's prime ministerial term, India's official attitude towards Israel became openly antagonistic. She reaffirmed Indian support for the Arab cause, expressing concern over the plight of the Palestinian refugees and demanding their right to return to their homeland. In 1966, India's alleged diplomatic discourtesy to Israeli President Zalman Shazar during his inevitable stopover in India while on an official visit to Nepal, was another illustration of Indian eagerness to please the Arabs.⁶³

India and the Six-Day War

The Six-Day Arab-Israeli war further undermined India-Israel relations. The Indian Government had taken a pro-Arab stand even before hostilities broke out on June 6, 1967. This generated a lot of criticism in India. The opposition leaders urged Prime Minister Indira Gandhi to be as judicious and cautious in maintaining neutrality as Nasser was during the China-India and India-Pakistan wars.⁶⁴ But the Government continued to express unqualified support for the Arab position and, at Nasser's request, withdrew the Indian contingent to the United Nations Emergency Force. After the war broke out, India left no stone unturned in condemning Israel. It blamed Israel for the killing of the Indian soldiers during the crisis. Later, it was revealed that Arabs were more responsible for their deaths than Israel is (Israelis).⁶⁵

The Rabat Conference, 1969

In 1969, the burning of the al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem, the third-holiest Moslem shrine, by an insane Australian Christian, was termed by India a "direct consequence of the illegal occupation of Jerusalem and other Arab territories by Israel." Sharing Arab concern on this issue, India tried to participate in the Rabat Conference of Islamic countries, but Delhi's viewpoint turned out to be a fiasco and a big embarrassment. Not only was the Indian delegation denied participation, but the conference also condemned India for the Hindu-Moslem riots on its territory.

The India-Pakistan War, 1971

The war between India and Pakistan in 1971 provided another opportunity to test Arab goodwill towards India and evaluate Delhi's West Asia policy. The Arab states were indifferent to India's appraisal of the situation in the East Pakistan (now Bangladesh), whereas Israel showed concern over the genocide committed there by the military junta from West Pakistan. After the war broke out in December, 1971, Egypt, Syria and Algeria remained neutral, while Kuwait, Jordan, Libya, Morocco and Saudi Arabia condemned India. Jordan and Saudi Arabia even provided some military help to Pakistan during the war. Israel, once again, supplied India some military hardware,⁶⁶ and was one of the first countries to recognize the new state of Bangladesh. The war strengthened the feeling that India's West Asia policy had failed to win her support from the Arab nations, who would side with fellow Moslem countries in any serious crisis. For the first time, India formally expressed its disappointment in the Arab attitude.

The Lack of Consensus over Israel Policy: 1962-73

As already mentioned, there was some opposition to the official Israel policy from the very beginning. During Nehru's ascendancy, this opposition kept a low profile since there was broad consensus that India had much at

stake in the Arab world. Nehru's stature as a world statesman also tended to leave dissident voices virtually unheard. Moreover, Nehru, except in 1956, avoided a rigidly harsh position against Israel.

After Nehru, Indira Gandhi took a strong stand favoring the Arabs without being able to obtain reciprocity from them. This lack of reciprocity was particularly vexing during India's wars with China and Pakistan. The record of Arab support during the Kashmir dispute was also disappointing from the India's viewpoint. Consequently, resentment against the official policy towards Israel was increasing in public as well as in the press.

Soon after the 1962 war with China, some intellectuals and leaders urged the government of India to rethink its West Asia policy and argued that India could support the Arabs without being unfriendly to Israel. The gap between the official position and public opinion surfaced during the Six-Day War of 1967 as the government's stand was widely questioned in the press. After the Rabat fiasco of 1969, opposition to the Israel policy became even more vocal.

The Government of India responded by recalling its senior envoys from Morocco and Jordan, and hinted at its willingness to review its West Asia policy. Pro-Israel parties, pressure groups and individual leaders argued that India was not acting as a regional power in West Asia by allowing its relations with Israel to be influenced by third parties. They also asked why Moslem states like Iran and Turkey could have normal relations with Israel without severing their ties with the Arab world, while India could not.

Some leaders held the view that, due to not having normal relations with Israel, India had failed to understand the complexity of the Arab-Israel dispute. Information which came only from Arab sources did not give India an objective picture of the region. Some also contended that establishing ties with Israel, or at least showing an inclination to do so, would give India some leverage in dealing with the Arab states. For many others, the possibilities of trade and exchanges in industrial and technological fields were sufficient reasons for normalizing relations with Israel.

Notwithstanding the criticism, Delhi remained reluctant to change its West Asia policy. The Government still believed that its pro-Arab policy best served national interests in the region. Delhi maintained that, though the Arab states supported Pakistan during the India-Pakistan wars, they were not necessarily anti-Indian. It tried to differentiate between India's Arab policy and its policies towards individual Arab states. The Arab policy was regarded as successful in maintaining India's status as a leader of the NAM and in meeting the aspirations of Indian Moslems.⁶⁷ The political and economic clout of more than 150 million Arabs, as compared to three million Israeli Jews, impelled India to continue a policy based on "hope for future support" instead of considering its past failures to obtain Arab reciprocity.⁶⁸

In the 1970s, pro-Israel voices in Indian political circles were muted again. The 1969 split in the Congress party removed most of the foreign

policy dissidents from the government, giving Indira Gandhi a freer hand to follow her pro-Arab policies. The decisive military victory over Pakistan in 1971, followed by a massive success in the parliamentary elections, strengthened her position and thus reduced criticism of her policies in the Parliament. Against this background, it was no surprise when India took the Arab side during the 1973 Yom Kippur war, though this time it was clear that Egypt and Syria had initiated the conflict. The Indian position was also influenced by the Soviet Union's hostility to Israel during this war.⁶⁹

Economic Diplomacy (Dependency)

Though the Indian Government never openly admitted that its Arab policy had failed to meet political and diplomatic expectations, there were some undercurrents of realization of this failure among foreign policy makers. Efforts were made to give a new direction to West Asia policy by reducing its dependence on Egypt. Steps were taken to cultivate friendship with states such as Algeria, Jordan, Iraq, Turkey, etc. New areas of immediate importance were also identified in the Persian gulf and India began to pursue vigorous economic diplomacy.⁷⁰ This proved successful as India signed many favorable economic agreements with Iran, Iraq, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and other countries in the region. However, the nature of the trade-oil from West Asia in return for Indian manufactured goods put Delhi in a vulnerable position since the Arabs could purchase manufactured goods elsewhere, while India had few alternative energy sources.

These economic deals were more or less based on mutual bargaining and equal partnership. But the oil crisis of 1973 forced India to compromise the freedom of this economic cooperation. The astronomical rise in oil prices affected the Indian economy severely. The relatively small help provided by some oil and petroleum exporting countries during this crisis was considered a big gesture by the Arab lobby in Delhi.⁷¹ The threat of an oil embargo and the remittances and the welfare of more than a million Indians in the Arab states further pushed Delhi to demonstrate its support to the Arab world.

Consequently, India fell back upon its traditional policy of support for Arab nationalism, Arab unity, and the Palestinian cause. Reiterating its opposition to Israel's acquisition of Palestinian territory by force, it explicitly linked the normalization of relations with Israel's compliance with UN resolutions 242 and 338. It permitted the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) to open a Dehli office, which later was upgraded to full diplomatic status. On the other hand, Israel's mission in Bombay was restricted to the consular level. India also labeled Israel a 'black sheep' like South Africa by cosponsoring the General Assembly resolution 3379 in November, 1975, "equating Zionism with racism."

False Hopes: The Janata Party Government

Israel showed an exceptionally high degree of forbearance in dealing with India, always trying to win India's friendship, despite Delhi's cold and sometimes unfriendly attitude. Jerusalem believed that India had exaggerated concerns over the issue of normal diplomatic relations with Israel and, therefore, never abandoned the hope that two countries' interests would converge in the long-term. Israeli diplomats were even instructed to avoid confrontations with the Indian delegations at the United Nations.⁷² Israel waited for the right time to turn the potential of close relations into a reality. The long-awaited opportunity arrived in 1977, when for the first time the Janata party displaced the pro-Arab Congress party from power in Delhi.

Israel's hopes seemed likely to be realized when Morarji Desai and Atal Bihari Vajpayee, who had generally favored full diplomatic relations with Israel, became the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister of India, respectively. But to Israel's frustration, the new government in Delhi declared it would continue the traditional West Asia policy. Paradoxically, it went even further than the Congress party when it not only made normal relations with Israel conditional upon peace with the Palestinians, but also stated that a separate 'Palestinian homeland' would be essential for peace in the region.⁷³ Moshe Dayan's "incognito visit" to Delhi in 1977, therefore, could yield nothing concrete as regarded the normalization of relations.

Notwithstanding these unfavorable policy pronouncements, the Janata Government made its official stand towards Israel somewhat milder. India's initial reaction to the Camp David accords was closer to the Israeli side: "Boundaries between states should be settled through negotiations and not by force and all the states in the region, including Israel, should have the right to exist in peace with secure boundaries."⁷⁴ But when the other Arab states rejected the accords and Egypt was excommunicated from the Arab world, the Janata Government backtracked from its support of the agreement. In any case, before the Janata Government could have taken any significant step towards the normalization of relations, it collapsed. The Congress party, led by Indira Gandhi, returned to power with a massive majority in Parliament, immediately accusing its predecessor of tarnishing India's image in the Arab world. India-Israel relations were in the freezer again.

The 1980s: A Decade of Mixed Trends

Indira Gandhi hardened her attitude towards Israel. In her speeches and interviews, she openly called Israel an 'expansionist state.' Israel's destruction of Iraq's nuclear plant at Ossirac 1981 and the war in Lebanon (1982) strengthened her perception. The Indian government imposed many restrictions on the activities of the Israeli Consulate in Bombay. When the Israeli Consul criticized India's West Asia policy, the government reacted in an unprecedented manner and for the first time in Indian diplomatic history, declared a foreign

diplomat *persona non grata*.⁷⁵ Israeli sportsmen were not allowed to participate in the 1982 Ninth Asian Games held in New Delhi. During the seventh NAM summit (1983) in Delhi, India took every opportunity to condemn Israel and repeated the demand of self-determination for the Palestinians. Private visits and other non-official contacts with Israel were made even more difficult.

Rajiv Gandhi: Half-Hearted Steps

Things began to change slowly when Rajiv Gandhi became the Prime Minister of India. Unlike his mother, he was free from any ideological mind-set. He gradually shifted from the socialist path and showed interest in the Western world. He was more open towards Israel than his predecessors. The Jewish lobby in the USA became active and raised the issue of normalizing the relations with Israel at every possible juncture. Dehli very much appreciated successful lobbying by the America-Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) in the US Congress to stop the delivery of Airborne Early Warning Systems (AWACS) aircraft to Pakistan. India reciprocated in the political sphere by allowing a Vice-Consul to work again in Bombay and then upgrading the mission to Consul level in 1989. The Israeli tennis team was also permitted to play the Davis Cup tie in India. Visa regulations were made less stringent.

During Rajiv Gandhi's period, Israel approached India on the issue of destroying the Pakistani nuclear plant at Kahuta. It was reported that Israel also offered to sign secret agreements covering the sale of Israeli arms and electronic warfare equipment, as well as cooperation in military intelligence and anti-terrorist operations.⁷⁶ India discussed all these issues but finally decided to reject Israel's ideas and offers. During these contacts, experts from both countries discovered many common strategic interests, but could not see eye to eye on how to advance them.

The few positive steps towards normalization of relations taken by Rajiv's government were outweighed by many counter developments. The beginning of the *Intifada*⁷⁷ in 1987 shifted the focus to Israeli occupied territories. Opinion in the Western world began to favor the Palestinians. In this situation, an Indian rapprochement with Israel seemed very difficult. Dehli was irritated by the Israeli Ambassador's statement to the United Nations that the Israeli government dealt better with the *Intifada* than the Indian government dealt with the Sikhs when it crushed the Separatist movement. Nor did India approve of Israel's involvement in the Sri Lankan ethnic crisis. Similarly, India resented Israel's immediate recognition of Rabuka's regime in Fiji, since Rabuka had overthrown a democratically elected government and made discriminatory laws against the Indian majority on the island.⁷⁸

During the late 1980s, the popularity of Rajiv's government plunged, after it was found involved to be in the multi-billion dollar Bofor guns bribery scandal. In these circumstances, any positive step towards Israel were seen as carrying a needless risk of annoying the traditional Moslem voting bloc in

Congress. Just before the parliamentary elections of 1989, the Rajiv government conferred the Jawaharlal Nehru Award for International Understanding on Yasser Arafat. India even reversed its sports policy and refused to play its 1988 Davis Cup tie against Israel in Ramat Gan. When the PLO declared the 'State of Palestine' on November 5, 1988 in Algiers, India was one of the first countries to recognize it.

The Policy Changes

With the change in the international balance of power after the Gulf War of 1991 and the disintegration of the Soviet Union, India and Israel finally found an opportunity to normalize their relations. By allowing Allied aircraft access to refueling facilities during the Gulf War, India had signaled a readiness to re-examine its West Asia policy. This was motivated by Delhi's perception of new priorities in India's national interests dictated by rapidly changing international realities.

The disintegration of the Soviet Union, India's long standing ally and biggest supplier of arms, was a major blow to Delhi. All of sudden, in a very unstable world, its superpower umbrella had disappeared. The Gulf War had previously demonstrated the superiority of Western arms over Soviet arms. There were flutters in the Indian defense establishment, because India's weapons and warfare tactics were based on the Soviet pattern, while Pakistan's were based on the Western pattern. India felt the urgent need to upgrade its armed forces along Western lines.

In 1991, India also introduced structural changes in its economy and desperately looked for Western investment to make these changes succeed. Simultaneously, the Indian government was facing much criticism from the West for violating human and patent rights, and for continuing its missile and nuclear development programs. Economic aid and loans to India were often conditional on concessions on these issues.

As a result, Delhi began to identify Indian interests with the West and especially with the USA. The role of the US Jewish lobby in stopping AWACS sales to Pakistan and garnering support for India on Kashmir during the early 1990s was not only appreciated in Delhi, but it also apprised Indian leaders of Jewish clout in the USA.

The end of the cold war also largely eroded the political and ideological relevance of NAM. The depressed oil prices in the early 1990s reduced India's oil dependence on the Arab states. The passage of a pro-Pakistan resolution on Kashmir by the Islamic Conference (OIC) also encouraged India to re-evaluate its West Asia policy. After the Madrid Peace Conference of October, 1991, the argument that India should avoid the Arab states considered friendly and the Moslems at home became irrelevant since the Arabs, including the PLO, were themselves negotiating peace with Israel. On the other hand, Israel, finding itself dictating the terms for the first time, any Indian participation in the

Middle East Peace Process made upon the normalization of relations between the two countries.

The rise of Islamic fundamentalism and terrorism worsened the domestic and regional security environment of India, which saw a common cause with Israel in this regard. The killing of one Israeli tourist and the abduction of others in Kashmir presented a rare and useful opportunity for Indian and Israeli officials to work together. The interaction between them helped build confidence and created a perception of mutual importance in the changed international scene.

After the Gulf War, public opinion in India once again demanded a fair attitude towards Israel. After much deliberation, the first concrete step in this direction came when India voted to rescind the 1975 UN resolution "equating Zionism with racism." This policy reversal raised little controversy in India and there were no strong protests from Arabs. Most of the actual and perceived constraints behind India's policy of "no full diplomatic relations with Israel" had virtually lost their rationale. Even Moscow and Beijing housed Israeli embassies. India, finally, became the last major non-Moslem country to follow suit on January 29, 1992.

The Reactions

The Government of Narsimbha Rao took this historic decision with a paper-thin parliamentary majority, justifying it with the argument that it would give India a role in the ongoing Madrid peace talks. The Prime Minister said in Parliament,

On external affairs, one point that has been raised is about the establishment of diplomatic relations with Israel. We were in touch with all concerned interests, our friends, and we came to the conclusion that it is better for India not to get isolated in the peace process of the Middle East... The dividends of this decision are not merely to India but to the entire Middle East Peace Process where we have always been playing the role of a champion of rights... It is our duty to enter this arena at a time when a conciliatory role by India is of essence. And that is why we have taken this decision.⁷⁹

The pro-Israel *Bhartiya Janata Party* (a successor of *Jana Sangha*) welcomed the decision, but found itself in an awkward position since the Congress party had hijacked its agenda. The *Janata Dal*, a centrist party depending on low caste and Moslem support, expressed some mild criticism. The communist parties reacted in a confused manner. Some of the Moslem leaders flayed the move as ill timed and hasty, arguing that it should have been preceded by the PLO's recognition of Israel.⁸⁰ The Indian press, with a few exceptions, welcomed it. The Arab reaction was muted, calling it "neither unexpected nor dramatic."⁸¹ The decision to upgrade ties was hailed in Israeli and American circles.