

THE ARAB-ISRAELI WARS FROM 1948 TO THE CAMP DAVID ACCORD, 1978-79

The causes of the Arab-Israeli conflict have been discussed in detail in Section 9(I) above. To sum up, it may be said that

1. Israeli people wanted to get their home land in Palestine and Arab insistence to deny it lay at the root of the conflict. The Arabs are by nature clannish and cannot tolerate any other religion and culture than Islam. They had congenial hatred for the Jews. They became emotional over the question of Jewish immigration to Palestine. They believed that the sanctity of Islam would be damaged by Jewish infiltration.
2. The British government played a double role by assuring the Arabs the independent Arabia and the Jews' home land in Palestine. This dishonest, cunning and crooked diplomacy led to clash between the Arabs and the Jews. Britain expected that the Arabs and the Jews would peacefully live together under British hegemony but this did not materialize. Britain expected to get hold of oil deposits of Middle East by creating a base in Palestine.
3. When she found that two people were at daggers drawn to each other, Britain proposed partition which greatly angered the Arab nationalists. Occasional riots broke out in Palestine. Thus force became the arbiter of the dispute.
4. The Jews were clever in diplomacy while the Arabs were violent and emotional. Thus they lost sympathy of the Western powers. By forming the Arab League, President Nasser of Egypt hoped for Arab solidarity to crush the Jews. But the Jews mobilized American arms and support by diplomacy.
5. The Cold War aggravated the situation. As USA was in favour of Israel, the Soviet Union supported the Arabs. Proxy war was a main feature of Cold War and such war soon broke out.

The main events of Arab-Israel war spread over a period from 1948-73. During the post-Second World War period, no other question was so tough, chronic and violent than the Arab-Israel question.

First Arab-Israel War, 1948

As soon as the state of Israel was declared in 1948, Egypt, Syria and Jordan attacked it. The Arabs under Nasser, the President of Egypt, would not hear any term except eradication of the Jews from Palestine. Most people expected that Arabs would win easily. The Israelis gave up conciliation policy. By their superior strategy and skill, they tried to crush the Arabs to dust. The **Israeli General Valerian** routed the enemies on all sides by small, tidy, very well equipped forces of Israel. Israel very soon captured west of the Gaza Strip and West Bank of river Jordan

and evicted one million Arabs from the occupied zone. Israel won partly because they fought desperately and partly because the Arab states were divided among themselves. The evicted Arabs came to be known as **Palestinian refugees**. Their cries for homeland were organized by **Yasser Arafat** and this added new knots to the already knotty problem of Palestine. The UNO declared cease fire but Nasser declared a state of war with Israel ignoring the UN mandate. They would not recognize the legality of Israel. They, though defeated, regarded this war as only the first round of struggle to destroy Israel and liberate Palestine.



**Palestinian Leader of the Arabs
Yasser Arafat**

THE SUEZ ISSUE, 1956

Colonel Nasser, the new ruler of Egypt, was in favour of Arab unity and independence. He wanted liberation of Palestine from the Jews. For this he organized guerrilla fighters to carry on sabotage and murder inside Israel. At his insistence, the Egyptian ships blockaded the Gulf of Aqaba leading to the Israeli port of Eilat.

In 1936 Britain had signed an agreement with Egypt. According to this agreement, Egypt allowed the British to keep troops at Suez. This treaty was due to expire in 1956 and Britain wanted its renewal. Nasser refused and insisted that all British troops should be withdrawn immediately as the treaty ended. Nasser also sent help to the Algerian Arabs in their struggle against France. He also signed an arms deal with Czechoslovakia for Russian arms and ammunitions. The Russian experts now came to Egypt to train the Egyptian army.

As a result, the Americans became furious because the Western powers were no longer in a position to control arms supply to Egypt. Egypt now became a part of Cold War. America thus cancelled a promised grant of 46 million dollars for the construction of Aswan Dam. America thus followed a policy of forcing Nasser to cut off his connections with the Communists.

In 1956 Britain and France got involved in a conflict when Egypt retaliated by nationalizing the Suez Canal. The Anglo-French powers decided to teach Egypt a lesson by sending their attacking forces. Israel joined the Anglo-French forces and occupied the Gaza Strip and destroyed Egyptian military installations. At last America and UN intervened and the Anglo-French forces were withdrawn. Israel later withdrew from Gaza most reluctantly under pressure of UNO and America. By that time, the definite superiority of Israeli military strength over the combined forces of the Arabs became an accomplished fact. But this was a complete humiliation for Britain and France because they achieved nothing from this war.

The Outcome of the Suez War of 1956

1. The war failed to overthrow Nasser and his prestige as leader of Arab nationalism had greatly increased. He became a hero to the ordinary people.

2. The Egyptians blocked the Suez Canal. The Arabs reduced oil supplies to Western Europe where petrol rationing was introduced for a time being.
3. Britain was now weak and unable to follow a foreign policy independent of the USE.
4. The Algerians now became encouraged in their struggle for independence against France.

5. The war was not without success for Israel. Although she had been compelled to handover all territories captured from Egypt, yet she had inflicted heavy losses on Egypt in men and equipments which took years to make good. For the time being, the guerrilla raids ceased and Israel got a breathing space to consolidate her position.

ARAB-ISRAEL WAR

The partition of Palestine and the creation of Israel became the bone of contention between the Arabs and the Jews. The Arab countries never accepted the arrangements of 1948 as permanent. The Arab countries did not recognize the new state of Israel. So a perpetual enmity existed between Israel and the Arab countries.

A number of clauses worked behind the Arab-Israel contest.

1. One million Arabs became homeless as a result of Arab-Israel conflict since 1948.
2. The Jordan Water Dispute between the Arab states and Israel also created tension in West Asia.
3. The border dispute between Israel and the Arabs was also a cause of dispute.
4. As the Western countries supported Israel, the Arabs opposed it. Mentally the Arabs never accepted Israel and regarded the Jews as alien there. The immediate cause of the war was the border dispute in which Nasser of Egypt supported Syria.

THE SIX DAY WAR, 1967

The causes of the War

- (a) The main cause was the increasing tensions between Israel and its neighboring Arab states since the formation of the state of Israel in 1948.
- (b) Israel adopted a policy of diverting water from the **Jordan River to the Negev Desert** and this became the cause of tension. This angered Arabs so much that they threatened to divert this flow into the **lake Galilee**. In 1965 and 1966 Israel bombed Syria soon after they began implementing the policy of diverting river water from Israel.
- (c) The **PLO** and **Fatah Movements** started against Israel and as a result the already tense situation became extreme. Most of these activities were initiated from the West Bank and Golan Heights. So Israel felt that war was an effective solution of wiping out these movements.
- (d) In the mean time, a militant anti-Israel Group, **Bath Party** came to power in Syria in 1966. Taking advantage of the Cold War, both Egypt and Syria got arms from the Soviet Union.
- (e) President Nasser also took a militant stance against Israel. He then asked the UN peacekeeping forces to leave Sinai Desert by sending its troops there and closed the Gulf of Aqaba. The Mediterranean was also closed by Egypt. As a response Israeli army

became activated. Syria and Jordan also joined with Egypt in this 'Crush Israel' campaign. The Israeli army very soon scattered the Arab allies and destroyed 2/3rd aircrafts of Egypt. They soon captured **Sinai, Gaza** from Egypt and **Golan Heights** from Syria and brought Damascus within the range of Israeli guns within six days. For this the war is known as **Six Day War of 1967**.

Results of the War

1. This was a great success for Israel. This time they strongly ignored a UN order to return the captured territories. These territories became buffer zone between Israel and the Arab states. But this also created a new problem for Israel because Israel had to deal with about a million extra Arab refugees who were now under Israeli rule. These Arab people now lived in refugee camps on the West Bank and Gaza Strip.
2. This was a great humiliation for the Arab states more specifically for Nasser. His prestige was lost like anything. Nasser now realized that it would not be possible to free Palestine from Israel without foreign help. It was also clear that sooner or later the Arabs would try again to liberate Palestine and destroy Israel.

1. When the Six Day War ended, Moshe Dayan of Israel remarked that he was waiting at the phone for King Hussein to call because it was obvious that a new deal could be struck and there would be an end of the Arab - Israel problem. But the Arabs were extremely tenacious in their hatred for Israel. After the war, the Arabs had a post war Conference at Khartoum. In the Khartoum Resolution of September 1, 1967, the Arabs decided what became known as the "Three No's".

- No recognition of Israel
- No Peace with Israel
- No negotiations with Israel

Israel did not know what to do with its victory in the war. In retrospect, the six Day War was seen as the last opportunity---- diplomatically, socially, economically and religiously.

Answer the following:

1. State the causes of the Arab-Israeli War.
2. Discuss the Suez Canal issue along with its outcome.
3. Give all the causes of the six days war, 1967, with special reference to its consequences.