

International Relations



India's Balancing Act in Israel-Palestine War

Tags:

- GS Paper - 2
- Bilateral Groupings & Agreements
- Groupings & Agreements Involving India and/or Affecting India's Interests
- Effect of Policies & Politics of Countries on India's Interests

For Prelims: India's Balancing Act in Israel-Palestine War, Israel-Palestine conflict, Mahatma Gandhi, Cold War, West Bank, India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC).

For Mains: India's Balancing Act in Israel-Palestine War, Bilateral, Regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.

Source: TH

India's diplomatic stance on the Israel-Palestine conflict has evolved over the years, reflecting a delicate balance between its **historical support for Palestine and its growing relationship with Israel.**



How has been India's Policy over the Israel-Palestine Conflict?

▪ **Background:**

- India's **historical stance on the Israel-Palestine conflict** leaned towards Palestine, driven by factors such as Mahatma Gandhi's opposition to a Jewish state in Palestine, India's large Muslim population, and the **need to maintain good relations with Arab countries**.
 - India's position with regard to Palestine was also guided by the general consensus in the Arab world, the Non-Aligned Movement, and the United Nations.
 - When the partition of Palestine plan was put to vote at the UN, **India voted against, along with the Arab countries**. India also opposed Israel's admission to the UN.
- During the Cold War, India aligned **itself with the Soviet Union**, which supported the Arab states, thus **perpetuating its pro-Palestine position**.

▪ **Shift in India's Policy:**

- **Establishment of Diplomatic Relations:** In 1992, India established full **diplomatic relations with Israel**, marking a significant shift. Despite this, India continued to **voice support for the Palestinian cause**.
 - It was only after the end of the Cold War that Prime Minister Narasimha Rao took the bold step of **establishing diplomatic ties with Israel, irrespective of potential fallout** with the Arab nations.
- **Balance in National Interest:** India's diplomatic decisions are guided by **national interest**, necessitating a balance between maintaining strong relations with Israel, supporting Palestine, and **developing ties with the Arab world**.

What are the Current Policy and Diplomatic Nuances?

▪ **Relations with Israel as a National Interest:**

- India's relations with Israel have strengthened considerably in recent years, encompassing **various sectors like trade, technology, defense**, and counter-terrorism cooperation.
- India's support for Israel is seen as a response to its **fight against cross-border terrorism**, although the situations in Israel and India differ significantly.
- **Stands With Palestine's Cause:**
 - Besides growing relations with Israel, India has reiterated its stand for Palestine's cause.
 - Amid the ongoing tensions, USD 29.53 million has been contributed by India to the **UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA)** for Palestinian refugees.
 - India also sent nearly 6.5 tonnes of medical aid and 32 tonnes of disaster relief material for the **people of Palestine**.
- **India Balancing its Stance:**
 - In 2017, the Indian Prime Minister for the first time visited Israel and in 2018 he made an official visit to Palestine for the first time.
 - In 2017, India voted **against the U.S. and Israel for an attempt to declare unilaterally all** of Jerusalem as the Israeli capital.
 - India's policy is clear, they condemn **terrorism but do not support indiscriminate reprisal bombings**.
- **India's Official Stand:**
 - India's official position on the Israel-Palestine conflict remains unchanged, advocating for a **two-state solution with Israel and Palestine** as good neighbors.
 - It was only after the mediation of the US, in the **1991 Madrid Peace conference** a two-state solution was agreed to **resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict**.
 - This is evidenced by the Indian Prime Minister's visit to **Ramallah in the West Bank in 2018**.

- **What will be the Likely Implications of Israel Palestine Conflict on India?**
 - **Defense Deals with Israel:**
 - India has a significant defense relationship with Israel, with defense procurement and technology cooperation. The conflict may **impact this relationship, as Israel may focus more on its security needs** during the conflict.
 - Israel supplies the most military equipment to India, with the military business between the two countries worth around USD 2.1 billion.
- **Energy Security:**
 - India is **dependent on oil imports from the Middle East**, and any escalation in the region could affect energy prices and, subsequently, India's economy.
 - Since all the world economies are interconnected therefore, if countries like Saudi Arabia and Iran get involved in ongoing Israel-Palestine conflict then definitely there will be **direct consequences over India's energy supply**, economy and investment.
- **Impact on India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor:**
 - The conflict has the potential to affect the stability of the Middle East, a region of strategic importance to India.
 - An escalation of hostilities could have implications for India's interests and engagements in the region.
 - India recently signed the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) as an ambitious infrastructure project aimed at connecting India, the Middle East, and Europe through various transportation modes, including shipping and rail networks.
 - Instability in the region can create security challenges, and affect the smooth operation of the IMEC.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

Prelims

Q 1. Which one of the following countries of South-West Asia does not open out to the Mediterranean Sea? (2015)

- (a) Syria
- (b) Jordan
- (c) Lebanon
- (d) Israel

Ans: (b)

Mains

Q1. 'Too little cash, too much politics, leaves UNESCO fighting for life.' Discuss the statement in the light of US' withdrawal and its accusation of the cultural body as being 'anti-Israel bias'. (2019)

Q2. "India's relations with Israel have, of late, acquired a depth and diversity, which cannot be rolled back." Discuss. (2018)

Social Justice

SC Asks States to Appoint Officers under POSH Act, 2013

Tags:

- GS Paper - 2
- Issues Related to Women
- Government Policies & Interventions

For Prelims: Supreme Court, Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013, Vishakha guidelines, Local Complaints Committee (LCCs)

For Mains: Initiatives related to women's safety in India and issues concerned therewith.

Source: TH

Why in News?

Recently, the Supreme Court of India (SC) has directed Ministry of Women and Child Development (MoWCD) of all states/UTs to appoint district officers under the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 (POSH Act) to ensure the effective implementation of the law.

What are the Supreme Court's Directives to States ?

- **Need for SC's Direction:**
 - The Supreme Court realised that women found protection under a law against sexual harassment in workplaces **beyond their reach** for the simple reason that there was no one to go to with their complaints.
 - The court found that **many states had not bothered to notify District Officers under the POSH Act** all these years. Therefore, it directed all states to immediately appoint district officers under the POSH Act.
- **Role of District Officers Under the POSH Act:**
 - The POSH Act mandates states to appoint an officer in every district who would play a **“pivotal” role in the implementation of the Act.**
 - The District Officer would constitute Local Complaints Committees (LCCs) to receive complaints from women employed in small establishments with less than 10 workers or cases in which the assailant is the employer himself.
 - A District Officer's responsibilities also included appointing nodal officers under the Act in rural, tribal and urban areas.
- **Appointment of Nodal Persons:**
 - SC directed that the **MoWCD of every State/UT** through its Principal Secretary, should consider identifying a **‘nodal person’ within the Department**, to oversee and aid in coordination as contemplated under the POSH Act.

- This person would also be able to coordinate with the Union Government on matters relating to this Act and its implementation.
- **Deadline of Report Submission:**
 - Further, each State/UT Government is to submit a consolidated report of its compliance with the below directions to the Union Government within 8 weeks.

What is the PoSH Act, 2013?

- **About:**
 - The POSH Act is a legislation **enacted by the Government of India in 2013** to address the issue of sexual harassment faced by women in the workplace.
 - The Act aims to create a safe and conducive work environment for women and provide protection against sexual harassment.
 - The PoSH Act **defines sexual harassment to include unwelcome acts such as physical contact and sexual advances, a demand or request for sexual favours, making sexually coloured remarks, showing pornography, and any other unwelcome physical, verbal, or non-verbal conduct of a sexual nature.**
- **Key Provisions:**
 - **Prevention and Prohibition:** The Act places a legal obligation on employers to prevent and prohibit sexual harassment in the workplace.
 - **Internal Complaints Committee (ICC):** Employers are required to constitute an ICC at each workplace with **10 or more employees** to receive and address complaints of sexual harassment.
 - The Complaints Committees have the powers of civil courts for gathering evidence.
 - **Duties of Employers:** Employers must undertake awareness programs, provide a safe working environment, and display information about the POSH Act at the workplace.

- **Penalties:** Non-compliance with the Act's provisions can result in penalties, including fines and cancellation of business licenses.

What Can Be the Way Forward?

- **Employment Tribunal:** Setting up of an **employment tribunal instead of an internal complaints committee (ICC)** in the Sexual Harassment at the Workplace Act should be followed.
- **Power to Form Own Procedure:** To ensure speedy disposal of complaints, it is proposed that the **tribunal should not function as a civil court** but may choose its own procedure to deal with each complaint.
- **Expanding Scope of Act:** Domestic workers should be included within the purview of the Act.
 - The Justice Verma Committee said any “unwelcome behavior” should be seen from the subjective perception of the complainant, thus broadening the scope of the definition of sexual harassment.
- **Responsibility of Employer:** The **Justice Verma Committee** said an employer should be held liable if:
 - he or she facilitated sexual harassment.
 - permitted an environment where sexual misconduct becomes widespread and systematic.
 - Where the employer fails to disclose the company’s policy on sexual harassment and ways in which workers can file a complaint.
 - The Verma panel also said that the **time-limit of three months to file a complaint should be done away with** and a complainant should not be transferred without her consent.

Other Initiatives Related to Women’s Safety

One Stop Centre Scheme

UJJAWALA: A Comprehensive Scheme for Prevention of trafficking and Rescue, Rehabilitation

and Reintegration of Victims of Trafficking and
Commercial Sexual Exploitation

SWADHAR Greh (A Scheme for Women in
Difficult Circumstances)

Nari Shakti Puruskar

**UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year
Questions (PYQs)**

Q. Two of the schemes launched by the Government of India for Women's development are Swadhar and Swayam Siddha. As regards the difference between them, consider the following statements: (2010)

1. Swayam Siddha is meant for those in difficult circumstances such as women survivors of natural disasters or terrorism, women prisoners released from jails, mentally challenged women etc., whereas Swadhar is meant for holistic empowerment of women through Self Help Groups.
2. Swayam Siddha is implemented through Local Self Government bodies or reputed Voluntary Organizations whereas Swadhar is implemented through the ICDS units set up in the states.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Ans: (d)