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## An International Journal of Ideas

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*Editor*  
**BABUDDIN KHAN**

**THIRD CONCEPT** aims at providing a platform where a meaningful exchange of ideas can take place among the people of the Third World. The attempt will be to communicate, debate and disseminate information, ideas and alternatives for the resolution of the common problems facing humankind. We welcome contributions from academics, journalists and even from those who may never have published anything before. The only requirement is a concern for and desire to understand and take the issue of our time. Contributions may be descriptive, analytical or theoretical. They may be in the form of original articles, reactions to previous contributions, or even a comment on a prevailing situation. All contributions, neatly typed in double space, may be addressed to:

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Designed by: Pt. Tejpal

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## Editorial

### India and Turbulent Gaza

The situation in the Gaza Strip has assumed serious proportions in the wake of exchange of armed hostilities between the Hamas and Israeli forces. More than one thousand people, including both Palestinians and Israelis, have been killed since the fighting began in early July this year. The Gaza Strip is a small piece of land comprising about 142 square miles and it is located in the northwest corner of Israel and also borders Egypt on its west end. With about 1.7 million residents, Gaza is one of the most densely populated areas in the world. The ongoing conflict has rendered about 44% of Gaza as a 'no-go area' for Palestinians and over 118,000 people now who are sheltering in UN schools are running out of food and water. The demilitarization of Gaza is suggested by some experts as the key to ending the current battle between Hamas and Israel — and preventing more fighting in the future. Though the suggestion of demilitarization is seemingly uncomplicated; nevertheless, it gives rise to questions about its practicality and feasibility. There is also the question of implementing the disarmament and ensuring its permanence.

Another vexing question is that as to who would take the initiative and guarantee that removal of rockets from Gaza would benefit Palestinians and Israelis alike and advance the cause of peace; and that Israeli troops would not indulge in unprovoked retaliatory action. Broadly speaking, demilitarization has precedents in this part of the globe, beginning with the 1982 evacuation of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) from Beirut. While Israeli troops besieged the city, the U.N. Security Council enacted Resolutions 508 and 509, which created an international force to facilitate the PLO's exit. Similarly, under the prevailing circumstances, the Security Council can authorize international action to oversee Gaza's disarmament.

Keeping in view India's vital economic and strategic energy interests in West Asia and the Gulf region and its unstinted support for the Palestinians until the past, the ambiguous stand of the present dispensation in New Delhi on the situation in Gaza is not only uncalled for but also contrary to the declared objectives of India's foreign policy. However, the NDA government has seemingly decided that 'silence is the best policy.' West Asia along with Gulf region is of vital importance for India where nearly eight lakh expatriate Indian workers are making their living. It is from their remittances, constituting more than half of country's total foreign exchange earnings, that India gets the wherewithal to procure arms from many countries, including Israel. The safety of Indian workers in the region is crucially dependent on the Arab goodwill that India has patiently built with Arab countries over the years. The region is the second or third most important destination for Indian exports and it is from there that we source 70 per cent of our oil imports.

India can ill-afford to maintain its cordial relations with Israel at the expense of Arab and Palestinian interests. India's support for the Palestinians dates back to pre-Independence days. Gandhi set the tone with his celebrated remark in 1938, "Palestine belongs to the Palestinians as England belongs to the English and France to the French." In keeping with that, but recognising that Palestine was also home to a large and growing number of Jews, Prime Minister Nehru invited both Palestinian and Zionist representatives to the Asian Relations Conference in March 1947. Inevitably, the two clashed, and it was left to Nehru to bring them together. The audience burst into thunderous applause when the heads of the two delegations shook hands.

The broad objectives of India's foreign policy as well as India's national interest require clear, transparent and unambiguous stand on international issues that have direct bearing on the nation's vital stakes and interests. Concomitantly, the machinations and internal power-plays between different groups inside and outside the government jockeying for influence should not be allowed to eclipse the main issues having bearing on national interest. Viewed in broad perspective, a major international crisis is always a fit topic for a "short discussion" in Parliament; and the people have a right to know the stand of their elected leaders and their government on something like the Gaza crisis. The NDA government has set an unhealthy trend by scuttling the debate in the House on flimsy grounds.

— BK