

**INDIA ISRAEL COOPERATION WITH CHANGING NATIONAL SECURITY  
CONCERNS**

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***Abstract:- India and Israel share had remain as the home for ancient civilisations. Both the countries are born out of bitter experience of partition and have successfully allowed the democratic culture to flourish in later and spirit. Though India and Israel share lot of similarities yet it took four decades for them to develop diplomatic relations, flourishing bilateral trade, and strategic cooperation which are largely in the interest of both the countries. As an important country of the continent of Asia, Israel from the time of its independence was very keen to develop warm relations with the Asian countries particularly with India and china. The hostility of Israel with the Arab states compels the policy makers of Israel to go beyond the Arab borders in search of friends and markets. On the other hand the successive congress governments feel reluctant to establish warm relationship with Israel due to the traditional support of India to Palestinian cause, but the changing political conditions at home also played a very important role for growing indo Israel relations. The main focus of the paper is to analyse the compulsions under which both the countries decide to develop warm relations***

**Key words: Diplomatic, civilisation, bilateral, partition, traditional**

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

India and Israel share had remain as the home for ancient civilisations. Both countries have an experience of British colonial rule. India and Israel became independent 1947 and 1948 respectively in the post–World War II wave of decolonization. Both the countries born out of bitter experience of partition and have successfully allow the democratic culture to flourish in later and spirit (Barua, 1992). Though India and Israel share lot of similarities yet it took four decades for them to develop diplomatic relations, flourishing bilateral trade, and strategic cooperation which are largely in the interest of both the countries. As an important country of the continent of Asia, Israel from the time of its independence was very keen to develop warm relations with the Asian countries particularly with India and china. The hostility of Israel with the Arab states compels the policy makers of Israel to go beyond the Arab borders in search of friends and markets (Barston, 1991).

In 1950 India recognised Israel but did not establish full diplomatic relations, allowing Indians only the opening of a consulate in Bombay in 1953. The congress leadership in India was very reluctant to develop warm relationship with Israel as the Indian government perceives Israel as the colony of western front led by America (Ashraf, 1993). The important cause why the Indian government was reluctant was the creation of Israel by force from the territory of Palestine. The government of India was not ready to dissent the Muslim minority population of India. The Muslims of India by and large were the supporters of Palestinian cause and were not ready to accept the reality of Israel as an independent sovereign country.

Pressures from the Arab bloc discouraged India from accepting Israel's advances and led to NAM's adopting an anti-Israeli policy. The identity of Israel as an important ally from 1960 onwards became an obstacle in the relations between India and Israel (Aynor, 1991).

The state of Israel provided limited military assistance to India in 1962 India china war and in 1965 war with Pakistan. The perception of the governing elite dominated by congress party did not change towards Israel till 1988. The Peace Treaty of 1979 between Egypt and Israel made no change in the formal hostility displayed by the Indian political elite against Israel. From 1982 to 1988, India did not even allow full consular relations (Ashraf, 1993).

India has changed its policy and began to reassess its relations within the new world order after the break down of Soviet Union. The emergence of USA as the only super power in the world has increased the importance of Israel as an important ally of America. The policy makers of India knowing the importance of Israel in the post-cold war era began to give importance of Indian relationship with Israel without losing the support of Arab world. The changing political conditions at home also played a very important role for growing Indo Israel relations (Aynor, 1991). The rise of BJP after the 1989 general elections and the decreasing power of congress party also played a crucial role for developing warm relations with Israel. The BJP, with its nationalist, Hindu outlook, believes that the Jewish state was not so much a diplomatic burden but as a potential ally against Pakistan and radical Islam. The policy of economic liberalisation started by PM Narsima Rao needs technological and economic interactions with the west and other technological developed states in which Israel occupies key importance. It was from 1996 onwards both states increase their official relations, when Israeli president Ezer Weizman's visit to India in December 1996 showing the new bilateral warmth in the relationship between India and Israel. The states of India and Israel signed various trade agreements and started a broad based policy to start industrial projects and cultural cooperation.

The bilateral trade reached up to 1.5 billion in 2002 which was seven times larger than the projected trade was in 1992. In 1999 when USA lifts the ban that it has imposed on India after India conducting nuclear tests in 1998 removed a thoughtful hindrance in Jerusalem's relations with New Delhi, flagging the way for achieving even closer ties. The attacks on USA in 2001 and the war on terror appeared to create a climate even more favourable to Indo-Israeli collaboration (Ashraf, 2004). The UPA government led by congress follows the similar policy that was developed by the NDA government during its tenure from 1999 to 2004 under the leadership of Prime Minister Vajpayee. In 2009 India becomes the largest buyer of military arsenal of Israel and Israel becomes the second largest military supplier to India after Russia. It was estimated that the cost of defence cooperation between India and Israel goes beyond \$9billion in 2009. In 2014 India becomes the third largest trade partner of Israel in Asia. In 2014 total bilateral trade excluding military equipment stood at \$4.52 billion (The Hindu 23 September 2014)

In order to boost its national security India purchased 50 drones from Israel at an estimated cost of \$ 220 million. In 2007 Israel signed defence agreement with India at \$ 2.5 billion to develop anti-aircraft system for India. This was the biggest defence deal that Israel signed with any country till 2007. In 2008 when terrorist attack took place in Mumbai Israel offered a help of 50 special operation forces and special team for the investigation. In 2015 Indian

government approves the purchase of 10 Heron TP drones from Israel to boost the capability of Indian air force to watch the activities across the border (Jackson, 2015).

*a) India Israel common background in dealing with conflicts*

Both India and Israel have faced common issues from the time of their independence as for as their conflicts with their neighbours. India has engaged in wars with china and Pakistan while Israel has fought war with Egypt, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon. India As the important country in south Asia struggling in its own region against its enemies like Pakistan and china. India has faced boldly the cross border terrorism supported by Pakistan as Pakistan policy makers from 1947 wants to disintegrate India by providing support to terrorists in Jammu and Kashmir, Sikhs in Punjab for the creation of separate country for Sikhs in the form of Khalistan. It is not only cross border terrorism that India is faced; it also faced the threats from its neighbours who possessed weapons of mass destruction particularly the threats of using nuclear weapons on the part of pakistan in case of a possible war between India and pakistan (Barston, 1993).

Though Indian government started many confident building measures and diplomatic means to resolve its border dispute with china but the cold respond on the part of chins ruins all the diplomatic efforts to resolve the border dispute between India and china. As for as the boundary dispute between India and china is concerned most of the strategic experts is of the opinion that china as the rising economic and military power is a threat for national security of India.

*b) Defence ties between India and Israel*

The approach of the Indian defence establishment has been less hostile towards Israel than the official stand of Indian government. The tremendous advancement that Israel has made in the military advancement and military technology has developed an important role for the to develop the military cooperation between India and Israel. In 1995 the commander of Israel air force paid an official visit to India responded by the same visit by the India air force commander to Israel in 1996. Similarly in 1997 Indian government sent a military technical expert team to Israel marking a new era in the defence cooperation of India and Israel. In 2002 Indian home minister L.K Advani stressing on close bilateral cooperation between India and Israel during his official visit to Israel in 2002.

The relationship between India and Israel relationship was not a kind of military alliance as the main objective of the relationship was to develop the national self-defence capabilities and stability and without involving in the regional conflict of other states. Both India and Israel agreed to develop bilateral relations in such a way so that no other state takes this relationship as a threat for their security (Anupam, 2004). The state of Israel develops relationship with china in such a way so that Pakistan does not see this cooperation as a threat for their national security. Similarly India has economic as well as political interests in Arab world, her long tradition of supporting the Palestinian cause and the presence of large diaspora in Gulf countries. That's why India remains very cautious that the India Israel bilateral relationship will not harm its relations with the Arab world where from it has satisfied its energy needs. Defense ties include weapon procurement, plans for co-producing

military equipment, and cooperation in counterterrorism and low-intensity conflict. Lately, the two states have also developed ties in the area of space activities (Gosh, 2003).

*c) Transfers of Military Technology and Military Modernisation*

Indian need to modernise its military programme and the quest of Israel to broaden its markets for the sale of military hardware plays a key role for the defence cooperation between India and Israel. The failure of Russia to transfer the required military armaments in a time bound schedule compels the defence officials of India to develop military cooperation with Israel (Banerji, 1988). The difficulties of New Delhi in developing unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) and various missiles, and failure to deliver promised weapons on budget and on schedule, it turned to Israel, which over the years becomes New Delhi's second largest Defense supplier after Russia. The military hardware companies of Israel helped India to upgrade its old military hardware including tanks, air jets unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) and various missiles (Fabien, 2002). The main reason why Israeli companies have the capability to upgrade all the Old Russian made weapons is the presence of large number of technicians who have experience of working in the Soviet era military hardware factories of Soviet Union later on migrated to Israel.

Israel Aircraft Industries (IAI) has signed several large contracts with the Indian Air Force (IAF) for projects that include fitting its MiG-21 ground-attack aircraft with laser-guided bombs. Negotiations reportedly are in advanced stages for Israel to provide state-of-the-art fire-control systems and thermal imagers for the Indian Army's Russian-made T-72 tank fleet, as well as upgrading its armour. Israel's Soltam Systems won the contract to upgrade Soviet 133 mm artillery pieces and is a candidate for upgrading the L-60 anti-aircraft guns for the Army (Ghosh, 2003).

India failed to produce Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) indigenously. The defence ministry of India has signed a fixed price with Israel at \$7.2 million per UAV. The air force of India has an urgent need of 100 Operational Unmanned Aerial Vehicles. It was after the Kargil war India realised the need for these Unmanned Aerial Vehicles to spy activities across the border so that the onward operations like Kargil could be stopped in future. The government of India signed a defence deal of \$130 million with Israel for the purchase of 18 Heron UAVs so that the defence in air could be made more strong and capable to defend the sovereignty and integrity of the country (Avineri, 1978).

*d) India Israel cooperation in counterterrorism and low intensity conflict*

India Israel has a long history of dealing with terrorism and extremism as India is fighting with the terrorism supported by Pakistan. Similarly Israel is fighting with the extremist groups like Hamas supported by various Arab states under the spirit of Islamic brotherhood. Both Israel and India cooperated with each other in the fields like exchange of information on terrorist groups, their finances, recruitment patterns, operations and training, as well as comparing national doctrines and operational experience (Fabien, 2002). The India Israel cooperation on counterterrorism gained momentum after the 9/11 attacks on America. The NATO alliance led by USA provides all the logistic and moral support for India Israel cooperation to tackle the menace of terrorism and extremism. India Israel cooperation provides a good experience for India to learn the tactics for border security, the Indian

military aims at developing the ability to quickly deploy troops inside enemy lines for specific missions which help the Indian army to respond Pakistan inside its borders by carrying out surgical strikes in which more than 300 terrorists got killed in February 2019 (The Hindu 26 February 2019).

The Indian government is also seeing the creation of a 30,000-troop rapid mobility force under the Army, reportedly training it at training centres of Israel. Israel's Defense Ministry director-general Amos Yaron has denied this news, but at the same time announced on a related issue that the Indian Army will be buying Israel's Tavor assault rifles, making India the first country to buy thousands of these rifles under the military modernisation programme. Indian government recently signed a \$30-million agreement with IMI for 200 Galil sniper rifles and 3,400 Tavor assault rifles as well as laser range-finding and targeting equipment. The desire of Indian government to stop the infiltration from across the border needs a better border monitoring equipment that Israel is using from decades to stop the infiltration of Hamas terrorist in boundaries of Israel (Fabien, 2016). Israel has also supplied India with movable battlefield radars and a wide variety of human-movement sensing sensors, hand-held thermals, and night-vision equipment to Indian Armed Forces.

*e) Joint Efforts of India and Israel to tackle the fear of growing fundamental Islam*

India along with Israel have a common fear from the growing Islamic fundamentalist thought spreading in various countries supported and financed by Pakistan.

The royal Saudi family who runs the affairs of Saudi state is involved in financing various extremist groups who are acting as a threat for the Indian and Israeli interests. It is due to this support of Saudi royal family for the various terrorist groups that Israel wants to reduce the influence of Saudi Arabia in international level in general and at Middle East in particular ((Amin, 1985). In order to achieve this goal Israel wants to use the influence of America to pressurise Saudi Arabia to stop financing and supporting the terrorists groups who are acting as a threat for the existence of Israel. Israel is active in encouraging Washington to wield greater pressure on Riyadh to stop financing organizations such as Hamas and Islamic Jihad (Bandyopadhyaya, 1984). The growing Muslim population in both the countries is a serious concern for the policy makers in India and Israel as India constitutes 14% Muslim population only a small part is integrated in the Indian society and the rest of Muslims could be radicalised by fundamental elements. Similarly Israel has 20 % Muslim population in which most of them are very patriotic and law abiding citizens. But the growing extremism in various Arab countries could influence the younger Muslim generation in Israel. It was analysed that from last several years a significant increase in the number of Israeli-Arabs involved in terrorist activities (Bhaba, 1986).

## **II. INDIA ISRAEL COOPERATION IN INDIAN OCEAN**

India shares long cultural and strategic relations with the energy rich central Asian states. In the contemporary times India describes this region as "extended strategic neighbourhood," because India faced a tough competition from China and Pakistan for the influence in this region (Agwani, 1978). In the similar way Israel is also interested in growing its influence in the energy rich central Asian region. Israel by following the footsteps of India wants to sell military equipment to Central Asian states and has a diffident diplomatic and business

presence there. Both Israel and India aim to limit the influence of Iran and Saudi Arabia, the agents for radical Islamization (Amin, 1985). Both states show their more preference for the model of secular Turkey and they like if the other Muslim countries can follow the Turkish model of governance than the fundamental Saudi and Iranian system of political system.

### **III. CONCLUSION**

The Indo-Israel growing closeness is in the national interest of both the countries. The growing security threats from last few years from the nexus of Pakistan-China demands military modernisation on the part of India. In the military modernisation programme of India Israel occupies a very pivotal position due to the tremendous technological advancement made by Israel from last few decades. The common fundamental Islamic threat faced by both India and Israel played a crucial role for both the countries to adopt a common strategy to deal with the growing threat of terrorism and extremism. The bilateral relationship provides an opportunity for Israel to boost its defence industry by supplying armaments to India. The transfer of technology between India and Israel provides an opportunity for both the countries to boost the industrialisation and defence sector. The relationship between India and Israel is surely based on mutual benefit and understanding.

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