



A NEW WAY TOWARDS INDIA AND ISRAEL BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP

Tanaji Pol

Sonopant Dandekar Arts

V.S. Apte Commerce and M.H. Mehta Science College
Palghar

Visiting Faculty for Centre for Central Eurasian Studies
University of Mumbai

Abstract

India and Israel both countries share an extensive relations on the global platform in innumerable areas like economic, military and strategic partnership. They also focus on newly emerging areas like tourism, water management, agriculture and other developmental spheres. Both nations share old socio-cultural relations which are documented in historical literature. There was a brief period of cold war politics which kept both the nation away. However, in the post disintegration years, India maintained its relations with Israel like any other Asian nations. As an important nation of Asia and the world, India designates Israel as significantly important partner country.

The cold war witnessed a different mode between relations of both nations due to Palestinian and Israeli conflict. The phase of 1950s to 1990s remained informal as the political heads were not willing to establish direct formal relations with each other. After the end of cold war with changing situations both came together. Till now both of them have strategically preserved their relations. The different ways were opened up in multiple links like diplomatic relations, military and strategic ties, trade and economy, scientific progress and technological developments. As mentioned above, new ties have been established in contemporary areas like tourist industry, water management, and healthcare and agriculture cooperation.

Israel and India today share warm and cordial relations. By considering the strategic importance of both countries they are looking forward to concretize their relations in trade and investment. Greater partnership between the two countries will definitely facilitate and boost the economies of both the countries. Both need to explore the common threats and should take steps to curb them jointly. In the years to come, the Indian talent and Israeli technology will be the best combination to deepen the ties.

Keywords – Diplomacy, Strategic interest, Defence, Trade and investment, Tourism, Technology, Agriculture.

Introduction:



A historic milestone was established with a six day visit of Prime minister of Israel to India. Though the relations between India and Israel have boomed up after the cold war period, they started since cold war. Rather India shared its close links to the other Asian states since ancient time. On 17th September 1950 India formally has recognized the existence of Israel. As soon as India gave its consent, thereafter the Jewish agency has established an immigration office which further converted into a trade office later became a Consulate.

Both the countries are having commonalities in multiple senses. They have passed through the nationalization process in which religious factor and communities were prominent one. The conflict between religious communities existing between both the nations (viz. Hindus and Muslims in India and Jewish and Palestinians in Israel) have largely affected not only the domestic politics at internal level but also has put an impacts on their external relations. Both the countries have shared the common security concerns related to the Islamic terror support. With the same the neighbourhood of both of them was problematic at a certain point. Though both of them have received their independence from the British colonialism in 1947 and 1948, still it took nearly four decades to engage with each other. Today, India and Israel are now progressing in terms of starting ups in various emerging sectors.

Research Methodology:

The scholar has tried to use descriptive and analytical methods of research paper writing.

For the same the researcher has used the secondary data from various governmental sites, books and other online sources.

Historical background:

The historical relations can be traced way back in centuries. However, India recognized the Israel as an independent state on 18th September, 1950 under Prime Minister Pundit Nehru. Still the relationship of these two countries did not geared up immediately. Rather the traces of partition had an impact on the foreign policy of India which was pro Palestinians. “The Pro Arab foreign policy not only became a party consensus but also became an integral part of the Congress party ethos.” [1] Also during indo china war and India Pakistan wars India purchased weapons and arms ammunitions from Israel. This phase also includes the meetings of foreign ministers but did not render any fruitful output as such. As the phase witnessed the cold war period politics, India being a leader of Non Align Movement (NAM) and its closed relations with the Arab world and Soviet Union was bearing the weight on one side. On the other hand side Israel



had developed its closed relations with the opposite superpower and the other capitalists' western allies.

Besides their ups and downs, the relations were boomed up after the end of cold war which led India to change its foreign policy towards its neighbours. The changes in international order after the Gulf War and collapse of the USSR brought India and Israel together to normalize their relations. The formal relations were put forth officially in May 1992 which facilitated various areas of cooperation like defense, security issues, technology exchanges and internal security managements. Since the relations started grooming, India which was earlier anti-Israeli now changed its turn towards pro-Israel. It started taking position in the United Nations platform and Non Alignment Movement meetings to moderate the anti-Israeli relations.

Significance of the Relationship:

The relationship of India and Israel is significant from many angles. As India was put under the sanctions imposed by international regimes, Israel was the one who forth come to sell the weaponries in times of India's need. It was proved in Kargil War of 1999. Even today Israel and India conducts their crucial defence trade with each other. Another significance of their relationship is in spite of having differences of opinions over the Palestinian issue both countries are cooperating and holding their relations. India's support for Palestinians was seen in its pro- Arab policy as being sensitive towards Muslims community. But in later period it became distinct as India Israel started getting up with each other. For the improvement of areas like water management provisions and agricultural crisis India is strengthening its ties with Israel so that it can implement the solutions successfully. The major significance of their bilateral relationship is they not only had cooperated over the domestic areas but also the on the external affairs and their changing global power equations and according to their strategic interests. Though India publicly kept distance from Israel, they had already made a beginning to develop their relations with Israel before establishing an embassy in New Delhi. Thousands of Indian Jews started travelling to Israel. The deep ties of cooperation can be traced through the following areas.

Defence Co-operation:

The very important aspect of India Israel relations is security and defense. "In the early 2000s, the Indian army declared its intensions to implement a modernization program to which resources of 10s of billions of dollars would be allocated. Since then, defense deals with Israel have grown exponentially." [2] Technological advancement plays a crucial role in modernization of defence equipments which Israel sells to other countries. Recently India and Israel have



signed a deal to strengthen their defense ties. “The defence contract was preceded by the conclusion of a \$ 777 million deal, signed on 25th October, 2018 between IAI (Israel Aerospace Industries) and BEL (Bharat Electronics Limited) for the supply of four Barak 8 LR SAM systems to the Indian Navy.” [3] Like Rafael advanced defense system Israel and India’s DRDO had jointly developed this Barak 8 LR SAM missile. It was successfully tested by the Indian navy. Besides this India and Israel had signed various bilateral agreements related to arms and ammunitions. Also both of them are working on the up gradation of the weapons together. Indian envoy while participating in panel discussion of annual AIPAC 2019 Conference regarded Israel as a reliable defense partner.

Economic Co-operation:

For commercial activities the resources and opportunities can be explored in both the countries like a huge market can be certainly helpful for the Israeli entrepreneurs and vice-a-versa India can be benefited through the vast research and development department which is actively existing and performing in the industries and institutions. The trade of diamonds dominates. However, with the same sectors like water management, clean technology, medical instruments, biotechnology, nanotechnology and training sessions are some of the areas of economic exchanges.

India and China are the largest trading partners of Israel. This trade as affected in the period of global recession in 2008. Later some initiatives are been taken by the Israel government to gear up the commercial relations. Both the countries have signed free trade agreements. As far as investment is concerned some Indian companies (like Wipro, Tech Mahindra, Infosys) have invested in different spheres irrigation, pharmaceuticals, engineering etc. similarly some Israeli private entrepreneurs have invested in telecom sector, energy, water management technology and interestingly they are planning to set up research and development centers as well as production units in India. Apart from this direct investing, the FDI from Israel to India comes through foreign countries like US and EU.





As close allies of the capitalist countries, an economy of Israel has been more open to trade. It is also one of the founding members of the World Trade Organization. Due to the higher percentage of trade and financial activities the GDP of Israel has always been greater than the India's GDP. There is a notable change in the trading partners of Israel. Earlier India was the central country. Since 2012 this place was grabbed by the China and Germany. Study says that to make concrete relations in economic matters it needs to explore more and more products for trade unlike very few. "From the quality margin analysis, it is evaluated that Indian products such as coffee, not roasted, heterocyclic compounds, polystyrene, plain weave cotton fabric, knitted t-shirts, and vests, non-knitted bedspreads, irons or steel articles, and aircraft parts have developed their export profile in Israel which can be translated to a strengthened long term prospects by increasing market share with higher unit price realization." [4] The countries have reduced the tariffs on the certain consumer goods and capital goods. For an emerging economy like India it is much needed that India must establish its good links with such reliable partner which authenticate the trade growth and overall the general perception of India at the global level. With the same by considering the India's large market and its wide consumer base Israel must explore different areas of cooperation as it is lacking behind as compared to the other nations in terms of its imports and exports.

Science and Technological Ties:

In its multiple institutions Israel has developed the research and development departments. Both have signed an agreement over the science and technology cooperation. For the betterment academics have also joined and focus on how to give better outcome. There are exchanges of students in India and vice versa. To promote the research both have explore the funding programs for the students so that there can be more flow of quality people. In science and technology and cyber security are emerging areas on which both are focusing. According to scholars both countries are taking keen interest in setting up an identity of role model for cooperation. "Israel is going to be a significant partner in the Science and Technology programmes like NIDHI that boosts innovation ecosystem in India and can strengthen and accelerate them." [5]A hope was peeped out in the sense that this cooperation will facilitate the India Israel relations to the other level.

Since 2014 in the field of pure science and social science 21 joint research grants have been awarded. In the next year second proposal was submitted for the collaborative research projects by researchers from India and Israel. Providing grants for research has attracted many young scholars. "In November of 2017, India's institute of Management Bangalore (IIMB) opened an Israel Centre on its



campus, which will serve as a hub for research, business strategy, technological innovation, and academic collaboration between Israel and India.” [6]

Agriculture and Water Management:

This is indeed an important area where Israel and India has cooperated at their best level. Both the nations are working for 5 year comprehensive plan for the development of agriculture. Under the program there are 28 centers are established across nine Indian states. “A three year joint programme (2018 – 2020) has already commenced, under which the Centers of Excellence (COEs) are being set up across the country to train farmers about Israeli farm and water management technology.” [7] Under the speeches of the head of the states both leaders are very keen to extend their ties of cooperation. This comprehensive plan fulfills the objective of bringing Israeli technology and agricultural practices to India so that the Indian farmers can be benefited. Also it will definitely fruitful to accomplish the growing food demands of Indian population with sophisticated technology. Prime Minister of Israel Benjamin Netanyahu possessed vision for revolutionizing the Indian farms sector with effective usage of water management supply as agriculture and water management issues are complementary to each other. They have signed Memorandum of Understanding over management of water resources. Israel has the strategy of effectively channelizing the ocean water management for the agricultural purpose especially for the dry land. Under the area of water resource management they have potential for working over the river water pollution which has become a serious threat to India. Adapting certain ways and implementation of those will certainly help India to overcome its challenges of water scarcity and irregularity of its monsoon due to which agriculture affect.

Both the Prime Ministers of respective countries have expressed their level of satisfaction over the three year joint program that they have signed for optimization of proper resources. For complementary to this big project small training sessions are being arranged on regular basis which works as a capacity building for effective implementation of the program. Various agricultural products belongs to the Israeli origin are being widely used in Indian farming process. By getting availed the technical and expertise assistance from Israel India has benefited in horticulture management, nursery, drip irrigation technology and post-harvest management.

Cultural Ties:

This informal aspect proves always beneficial for strengthening the other relations. It includes tourist agencies, films and television, music across the



borders. Young Israelis considered India as an ancient nation and very much attracted towards the tourism. Approximately 35000 Israelis visit India for some or other purpose. Prominent among them come as a tourist and sometimes for business purpose. An embassy at New Delhi has organized several cultural programs in which delegates of both countries participates and celebrates the events. Academic exchanges of the Professors also happened at Tel Aviv University under the MoU signed by them. The Jew community became prominent which travelled at Jerusalem create close cultural ties. The young Jews are attracted towards Israeli society. From 2013 onwards they meet once in a year as a get together under the program of Annual National Conventions.

Strategic Interest

1. Concerns of Pakistan and Nuclear Issue:

As there are deep ties between India and Israel over the defense and security purpose, Pakistan is worried about the growing relations of both. Also it is skeptic about growing relations of India and Israel accordingly which will destabilize the region. Also the acquisition of Phalcon early warning system by India from Israel that will enable it to get prevention from any attack is of high concerns. Contrary to this both India and Israel did not signed either Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT) nor Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) and though both of them don't have directly nuclear development program but still Israel being among the top 5 sellers of arms and ammunitions provides India different well equipped weapons. This issue suggests that both India and Israel have similar stand at an international level about the possession of nuclear weapons. Also they have concern over Pakistan being a nuclear power. Though India is also a nuclear power it does not throw any challenges. The problem of terrorist organization, especially the Pakistan State Sponsored Terrorism and nuclear weapons possessions shares as a common security concerns and threats for both the countries.

2. Iran:

India and Iran both have developed a significant relationship. The growing ties of India and Iran are of concern for the Israel. Strategically Iran is very important for India for several reasons. Prominent among them are India's energy needs and its access to Central Asia via land locked country Afghanistan. And similarly Iran gets a huge market for its natural resources on which its entire economy is depend. Because of this flourished relationship of Iran and India Israel have its own concern about India. However India should take a balance approach by



giving equal importance to both as strategically both the nations are important to India. Like India had handled the issue of Palestinians at par with the Israel.

3. Indian Ocean Strategy:

Israel is very keen to develop its strategic ability to counter Pakistan, Iran and other Mediterranean states in the Indian Ocean Region. This step of Israel goes complementary with regards to the strategic interest of India in Indian Ocean. “The Indians present also seen comfortable with, and appreciative of, Israel’s expanding security perimeter and its growing strategic involvement in the Indian Ocean Region.” [8]

Way Forward:

By taking in to consideration the recent developments, both India and Israel have put great remarks on various spheres. Both have certain commonalities with diversities. But in this regard Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s visit and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s visit proved certainly fruitful for both to engage and explore multiple areas of cooperation. These two must try to take their commercial relations at the apex level. In matters of trade there is a need of Free Trade Agreements. India must open up its health sector for the Israeli companies. Very importantly both need to cooperate for combating terrorist activities and attacks, growing radical activities in neighborhood including in cyber space. A significant relationship that has evolved over nearly 4 decades is still becoming more mature by exploring crucial areas of cooperation. India by protecting its strategic interests India is trying to balance its relations with Israel and Palestine and also with the Arab World. A hope has risen with the great combination of Indian talent and Israeli technology can be the better solution to their any problem. Once this became enrooted within them then surely there will be different regional and international picture of politics.

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