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## Indo – Israel defense relations

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### Abstract

Defence relationship between India and Israel is the most defining aspect of these two nations. The relation between Indo – Israel lay dormant for four decades due to political and other imperatives until the two countries established diplomatic relations in 1992. India's growing interest and rising regional and global profile call for strengthening ties with the region.

**Keywords:** Israeli phalcon, AWACS planes, cruise missiles, ground based radars, weapons of mass destruction, cyber warfare

### Introduction

#### Research problem

The general questions examined in the study emphasize India's changing position perception and policy with regard to Israel in different international political context. Along with this the study tries to examine why India made a policy shift on Israel? What are the perspective of Indo-Israel defense co-operation? And what is the strategic implication of Indo-Israel defense co-operation.

### Methodology

The proposed study has been made relying on the case study method. However as per the requirements a few other method have also resorted. As the study demands historical and analytical method have also been considered.

### Hypothesis

- 1) Relations between Indo-Israel brings mutual benefit to both.
- 2) Indo-Israel relations is also guided by International Scenario.
- 3) Co-operation between Indo-Israel is of diplomatic and strategic importance.

### Objectives

- 1) To examine and analyze India's relations with Israel.
- 2) To understand the nature of this relationship and its determinants.
- 3) To describe the various facets of this relationship with view to understand the basic assumption and motivation those having propelled India to interact intensely with Israel during the period of study.

### Indo-Israel defense relations

Israel became independent in 1948 but India refused to recognize it as independent state. It was only after two years of attaining independence that India recognize the nation Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru were vehemently against the partition of Palestine and the creation of Jewish state which a state based on religion in this region. Although India officially recognized the Jewish state in September 1950, it did not establish full diplomatic relations under 1992. Mahatma Gandhi's attempt to build up Hindu, Muslim unity and Jawaharlal Nehru's negative evaluation of the Zionist movement, led the Indian National Congress to follow a pro-Arab policy in the Arab – Israeli conflict. Moreover, India's support to and sympathies with the Palestinian cause affected to establish diplomatic relations with Israel<sup>[1]</sup>. During the cold war, due to the anti – imperialist point of view, Israel and India took different sides of the political spectrum. Due to Indian and anti-western and anti- Israeli stances, Indian leaders played a role against Israeli and rejected the partition a

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Palestine <sup>[2]</sup>. In this period, the priorities of Indian politics were anti-colonial Afro-Asian Solidarity support for allies in Kashmir issue, neutralizing Pakistan influence on the Arab Countries, oil dependency from the Gulf of Basra and exporting a huge labour force to the Gulf <sup>[3]</sup>. The relation between India and Israel were at a very low ebb during the cold war as Israel was a US ally and Indian inclination was more towards Russia <sup>[4]</sup>. India developed intense diplomatic economic and military co-operation with the Soviet union and thus strength edits military power. After the end of cold war and collapse of the Soviet union. India was forced to reorient its foreign policies to accommodate the changing international milieu <sup>[5]</sup>. It was in 1992 that it granted full diplomatic recognition to Israel leading the two countries to establish embassies in each other country. Since then the Indo-Israeli relationship has attained new dynamics with a significant upward trend. After 1992, the normalization of relations helped the two countries explore many areas of co-operation such as agriculture, culture, tourism especially trade and military exchanges. Although both the governments are still reluctant to talk openly about co-operation in this sensitive area arms sales are a major component of this flourishing partnership. Existing studies emphasize the obvious link between the convergence of Indo Israeli interest in 1991-1992 and the almost sudden change of global politics from a bipolar world to a unipolar world characterized by the disappearance of India's traditional Soviet partner and the emergence of United States as the sole super power after the Gulf Crisis of 1990-1991. The dramatically changed structure of global politics of 1991 pushed India to modify its foreign policy towards the US and the western block and most notably towards Israel. Numerous domestic factors shaped India's west policy after 1991. The existence of complementary national security interests with Israel pushed the Indian Government to modify its West Asia policy. Finally individual leadership in India also played an important role in the sudden establishment of a strong and stable strategic partnership with Israel. It is important to analyse the pivotal role of the Narashima Rao Government in moving Indo-Israeli strategic relations from rhetoric to substance in the post-cold war settings <sup>[6]</sup>. The visit of Israeli foreign minister Shimon Peres to India was a turning point for the Indo-Israel relations in 1993. Two Countries signed a series of agreements in the areas of intelligence, security and military equipments.

### **Military co-operation**

The ballast for Indo-Israel bilateral ties is provided by the defence co-operation between the two states with India emerging on Israel's largest arms markets displacing Turkey and with Israel becoming India's biggest arms supplier. With the end of cold war, the lure of the Russian arms market for India has diminished due to high degree of obsolescence. Moreover, with Israel specializing in upgrading Russian equipments it has emerged as an alternative source of hi-tech defence procurement as an India has decided to diversify its defence purchasing <sup>[7]</sup>. On the other hand, for Israel empowering the India military has meant becoming a major exporter to that large financially, rewarding arms market. In this context, Israel's growing defence relationship with India goes a long way towards sustaining its own local defence industries and this in turn is also a significant boost to Israel economy as a whole. As a

consequence the Indo-Israel defence partnership has reached a critical mass in recent years. In fact in its vigorous search for new markets for its defence product. Israel has emerged in 2006 as the fifth largest arms exporter in the world <sup>[8]</sup>. The terrorist attack in Mumbai in 2008 publicly revealed the fractured and unsatisfaction nature of the Indian security apparatus. This tenuous internal security situation is deriving one strand of India's relationship with Israel, which has spent decades trying to prevent counter terrorism and cope with terrorism <sup>[9]</sup>. Fighting terrorism is a major issue and challenge for both India and Israel since both the countries face the threat of Islamic terrorism emanating from their respective neighbourhood. While India faces such threats from Pakistan is Israel faces countries such as Syria and Iran who it alleges as supporting various terrorist groups. Israel is also providing crucial logistical support to India to deal with terrorism <sup>[10]</sup>. In December 2009, Lt. Gen. Gabi Ashkenazi Chief of staff of the Israel defence forces made a visit to India to cement the defence ties between the two countries. He pledged every help to India in fighting terrorism. In 2011 Israel has sold radar and surveillance system as well as electronic component for military aircraft and has helped India defence itself through training terrorism methods. Also in 2011, India placed orders for four advanced Israeli Phalcon AWACS planes which are capable of detection hostile aircraft, cruise missiles and other incoming aerial threat far before ground based radars <sup>[12]</sup>. In 2012 India & Israel stepped up their counter terrorism co-ordination strategy in the wake of Indian External affairs Minister SM Krishna visit to the Jewish State. While in Israel Krishna met with top Israeli Government and defence leaders and agreed to work to boost their counter terrorism Co-operation <sup>[13]</sup>. India Israel Co-operation increased dramatically in 2014 since the election of New Prime Minister Narendra Modi Israel and India continued their positive relationship in 2015 with Israeli defence minister Moshe Ya'alon making the first official visit of an Israeli defence Minister to India in February. The purpose of Ya'alon trip was to increase interaction and co-operation between defence industries in Israel and India. Indian President and Prime Minister to visit Israel Pranav Mukherjee became the first India President to visit Israel on October 2013 to October 2015. Foreign minister Sushma Swaraj visited Israel in 2016 and met with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu President Reuvin Rivlin visited India for a week long state visit in 2016 <sup>[14]</sup>. Modi was the first Indian Prime Minister to have made an official visit to Israel in July 2017. Netanyahu reciprocated Modi's visit by visiting India in January 2018. During both these visits, the two parties signed scores of agreements aimed at boost in co-operation between the two states in various fields. Indeed, the flourishing relations between the two is unprecedented among nations <sup>[15]</sup>.

### **Conclusion**

India and Israel have increased co-operation in military and intelligence ventures since the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1992. Historically the step towards Indo-Israel defence co-operation was taken much before formal diplomatic ties were established. India acquired defence equipments from Israel for combating extremist and secessionist movements in the years following India's independence. In the past few decades the strategic defence co-operation has understandably dominated the bilateral ties

since both countries have been victims of similar threats. India and Israel share mutual concerns regarding terrorism and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Fundamentalist Islamic extremism is very real threats to India and Israel as both are democratic pluralist states with a large population of the Muslim minority. Moreover, the fact that India is currently the number one export target of Israel's defence industries further reinstate the strong defence ties shared between them. Widely famous for its advance technology, innovation in cyber warfare intelligence, precision in armaments and electronics the Israel defence forces is one of the most technologically advanced militaries in the world. One of the most positive outcome of this relationship to Israel has been the growth of its economy since it is heavily dependent on its defence industries is important as it provides domestic employment. The country's research and development programme are funded by the defence deals which help the country in producing cutting edge weaponry. An important dimension of the India Israel defence co-operation is the prospect of co-production and joint ventures between these two countries. There is immense enthusiasm on both the sides with regard to their defence ties. Thus, the security dynamics and challenges on both the countries along with the rising forces of anti-state actors terrorism and extremism will surely bind the relation stronger. Under such circumstances military security co-operation will definitely remain a key elements in the ties India needs a reliable arms supplier like Israel for defence. Currently the political climate is such that the overall ties are only broadening and as Netanyahu put it sky is the limit when it comes to Indo-Israel ties.

### Suggestions

- The strategic cooperation between India and Israel carries immense potential and India must harness the technological expertise from Israel to modernize an indigenous defence industry.
- As the USA sees a major role for India in maintaining the balance of power in the Indo-Pacific more technologies are likely to be transferable in the future. With improving strategic understanding between India and the US these technologies can be flexibly deployed to various wings of the military.
- Indo-Israel defence cooperation must be up-scaled in terms of Joint Ventures (JV) and Joint Research and Development (RD) which can be a force multiplier to realistically achieve India's ambition to be a major global power.

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