

“Indo– Israel Strategic Ties: Sky’s The Limit”

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Abstract

Since the upgradation of relations in 1992, defence, agriculture and technology formed the three main pillars of bilateral engagement. In recent days, relations have seen rapid growth across a broad spectrum of areas with future vision of the cooperation is of a strong hi-tech partnership. In ever-changing global scenario since the 1990s. Both the countries contribute towards making a compelling case in favour of the establishment of a long-term, multilevel strategic bond between Israel and India that may call new dimension of power balance.

KEYWORDS: Defence cooperation, Power balance, strategic partnership long-range reconnaissance and observation systems

Introduction:

India announced its recognition of Israel on September 17, 1950. Embassies were opened in 1992 when full diplomatic relations were established. On closer examination it appears considerable degree of compatibility between both the Jewish and Indian people and their respective nation Israel and India. Both Indians and Jews are ancient peoples, with a long history and illustrious civilizations dating back thousands of years, which still deeply impact the national mindset and the conduct of many aspects national life today.

Both emerged into an era of post-colonial sovereignty from British rule which left lasting imprints on the two nascent independent societies. Both maintain a strong commitment to democratic governance and to values of tolerance, pluralism and liberty in domestic political environments might have been expected to be highly conducive to the growth of dictatorship both countries have had to contend with external threats to national security, periods of economic hardship, political assassination. Nair (2004) is probably the first pioneering work in this domain of ‘delayed diplomacy’. Nair’s work provides an analytical study of this bilateral relationship and carefully addressed issues loaded in this bilateral relation but did not analysis the global/regional impact of this relationship. Sharma (2004) is another work on this largely undermined area of research. Sharma’s work is more a prescriptive political doctrine for Hindu-Jew consolidation against Islamic terror, than a systematic research work. Sharma provides a comparative study of the histories of these old nations. India and Israel together will confront Islamic jihad and will ‘remake the world order’.

Most of the major works (Kumaraswamy 2010; Blarel 2014; Gerberg 2008) are on the India-Israel ‘non-relationship’, rather than their Relationship. Most of the existing literatures (Blarel 2014; Gerberg 2008; Gopal and Sharma 2007) are mere chronological representations of historical events. The thrust of existing literature is also on the shadow of Palestine on the India-Israel relationship, but there is little work done to analyze why and how India gradually developed this relationship towards the level of strategic

partnership.

THE RESEARCH QUESTION: The central research question of the study is, why and how did India shift from her 'Recognition without Relation' policy towards 'Burgeoning Strategic Partnership' through 'Diplomatic Normalization' in 1992?

- 1) Why did India develop a strong military partnership with a country it had ignored for 42 years?
- 2) What can explain the development of defense ties in spite of limited political leadership involvement over the past decade?
- 3) What is Israel's strategic importance in India's Defence policy?

OBJECTIVES AND HYPOTHESIS: This research work is an attempt to assess the potentiality of Indo- Israel Defense cooperation. After a decade of secret affair between India and Israel under cold war era, India officially opened up its diplomatic relation with Israel in 1992 which took its momentum in 2003 when Ariel Sharon visited India. There are important sources reporting that R&AW and Mossad maintained serious strategic communication even before the cold war. End of Cold war, betrayal of Arab-world on Kashmir question and the rise of global terrorism forced India to rethink on her Israel Policy. Defence budget of the present government provides serious scope for Israeli investment in Indian defence sector. On the basis of logical evidence as a starting point for further assumption 'Jammu & Kashmir policy' of the Modi Government is also similar with 'Jerusalem Policy' of Israel. In the days to come India and Israel can become greatest allies in world politics which may change the structural composition of the region and the world. In further assumption 'War on Terror' policy India and Israel together will confront Islamic jihad and will 'remake the world order' in parlance of Hindu-Jew consolidation against Islamic terror.

METHODOLOGY : Research methodology is to achieve the reality of study for similar purpose and gives attention on large level study. Thus, the proposed research will follow the broad methodological framework of DPA (defence policy analysis). As far as method of research is concerned, it will follow the qualitative method. The study will follow interview method for primary data, content analysis method for secondary data and historical method for a comparative assessment of data. Apparently, there is a lack of availability of Primary Data on the theme. Therefore, the research will depend heavily, but not exclusively, on the interviews with former diplomats and Military officials from India and Israel.

Discussion 1: Early 90's Factors

In ever-changing global scenario since the 1990s. Both the countries contribute towards making a compelling case in favour of the establishment of a long-term, multilevel strategic bond between Israel and India that may call new dimension of power balance.

Indo-Israeli relation blossomed vertically, in a significant upward looked in defense cooperation, intelligence sharing, and counterterrorism very soon Israel became India's second-largest source of defense equipment. A combination of factors led to the

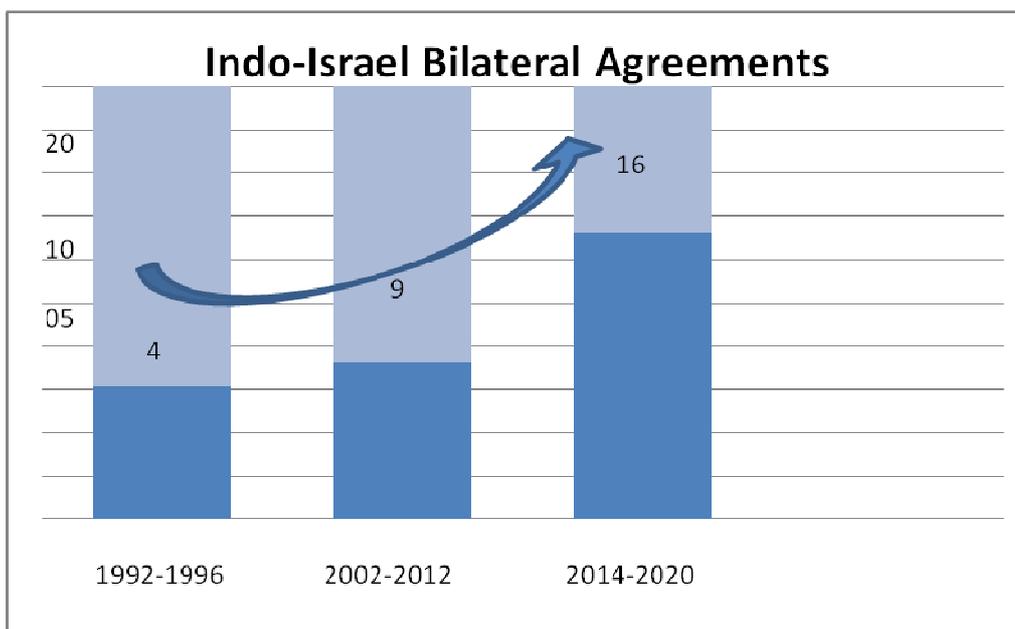
emergence of a strong security partnership between India and Israel in the 1990s. Following the 1998 nuclear tests, India was isolated internationally and subjected to severe military sanctions. But Israel did not condemn the nuclear test and resumed defense exports to India, enhancing its credibility as a reliable arms supplier. Assistance from Israel in the aftermath of the 1999 Kargil conflict with Pakistan further enhanced the Indo-Israel security partnership.

The 2008, the Mumbai terror attacks planned and engineered from Pakistani territory once again exposed the glaring inability of the Indian state to control its borders, process actionable intelligence, and preempt and counter terrorist attacks. The urgent need to address the grossly inadequate, fractured nature of the Indian security apparatus aroused a growing interest in Israeli counterterrorism methods. Israel has provided India with satellite photo imagery, unarmed vehicles (UAVs), hand-held thermal imagers, night vision devices, long-range reconnaissance and observation systems (LORROS), and detection equipment for counterterrorism purposes.

Discussion 2: Bilateral Agreements

India has already adapted several Israeli techniques and methods in countering terrorist threats emanating from Pakistan. New Delhi has held regular talks with Tel Aviv on counterterrorism within the framework of a Joint Working Group set up in 2000. During Israeli President Reuven Rivlin's landmark meeting with Modi in New Delhi in November 2016, counterterrorism was one of the priority areas of discussion.

The central pillar of the relationship Defense cooperation which has increased dramatically under the NDA government. Political ties between the two countries became friendlier when Hon'ble President Pranab Mukherjee undertook a state visit to Israel in October, 2015, while the Israeli President Reuven Rivlin visited India in November 2016. Increased high-level exchanges and ministerial visits on both sides have expanded cooperation in different functional areas such as trade, agriculture, S&T, culture and security. But it fully boomed when Prime Minister Modi undertook an historic first ever visit by an Indian PM to Israel from 4-6 July 2017, during which the relationship took new heights to a strategic level signed seven Agreements and vivid discussion made specially counter terrorism measures, both the country committed in the fields of R&D innovation, water, agriculture and space. Prime Minister of Israel, H.E. Mr. Benjamin Netanyahu, made a visit to India from 14-19 January 2018 during which four G2G agreements on cyber security, oil & gas cooperation, film co-production and air transport were signed, along with five other semi-government agreements. As a result the bilateral merchandise trade stood from US\$ 200 million in 1992 (diamonds), US\$ 5.84 billion (excluding defence) in 2020. Total no of bilateral agreements made between 2014 to current year sixteen which was nine in 2002-2012 and only four in initial stage.



Indian acquisitions from Israel range from Phalcon AWACS (airborne warning and control systems) and Heron, searcher and Harop UAVs (unmanned aerial vehicles) to Aerostat and Green Pine radars and several types of missiles and laser-guided bombs. India has entered into significant defense collaborations with Israel, including developing Barak-8, surface missile defense systems with India’s Defense Research and Development Organization (DRDO). Last year, India cleared procurement of Israeli combat radio sets for the Indian army. Israel’s state-owned Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI) recently signed a \$630 million deal with India related to the supply of LRSAM (long-range surface to air missiles) systems to four ships of the Indian navy, giving a boost to the “Make in India” campaign.

The very first time Indian Air Force is scheduled to participate in an air combat multinational exercise in Israel. The exercise, Blue Flag, will include six other nations – the US, Greece, Poland, France, Germany, and Italy. There are other tempting possibilities to be explored in the realm of defense cooperation. As stated by Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu some time ago, “the sky’s the limit” for Indo-Israeli cooperation.

Discussion 3: Expanded Area of Cooperation

Indian software companies, notably TCS, Infosys, Tech Mahindra and Wipro, are beginning to expand their presence in the Israeli market. During PM Modi’s visit in July 2017, the first meeting of the newly established India-Israel CEOs Forum took place, while its second meeting took place during PM Netanyahu’s visit to India. India has found it useful to study Israeli approaches to cross border terrorism, because Israel has developed remarkable technological and operational capabilities in its fight against this problem.

Israel guards its borders from serious threats on all sides with the help of highly effective surveillance equipment. Delhi is very eager to take advantage of Israeli expertise in the field of infiltration prevention, as both the eastern and western borders of

India are highly infiltration-prone. Israeli equipment can also be very useful in bringing down border problems with China, where India often falls short. Similarly, Israel can share its expertise with India on how to keep common dangers such as al-Qaeda and ISIS at bay by adopting special counter-terrorism and forensics techniques.

India seems to give priority for the development of elite forces alike Israel's defense force Sayeret Matkal. These dynamics are likely to translate into greater security cooperation with Israel. Considerations of security have always influenced India's Israel policy, Terrorist attacks have occurred in India with alarming regularity. In the current geopolitical circumstances, there does not seem to be much hope of reducing the jihadist terror threat in the near future. Although the current government is steadily expanding the scope and dimension of its counterterrorism and intelligence-sharing cooperation with Israel, it may encounter limitations, as India and Israel are not directly fighting the same adversary. Similarly, the Indian government faces challenges in using the same kind of counterterrorism tactics that Israel has practiced, thus it necessary the use of Special Forces operation efficiently like surgical strikes India carried out across Pakistan-occupied territory last year.

Conclusion

Since the upgradation of relations in 1992, defence, agriculture and technology formed the three main pillars of bilateral engagement. In recent days, relations have seen rapid growth across a broad spectrum of areas with future vision of the cooperation is of a strong hi-tech partnership. Nation's commitment to build on the momentum in Indo-Israeli ties established three decades ago remains unparalleled. New Delhi has a great opportunity to influence the fact that a strong India playing a larger role in world affairs is good for Israel to high axis of balanced power.

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