

**INDIA AND ISRAEL IN THE POST COLD WAR WORLD:
EMERGING STRATEGIC AND ECONOMIC DIMENSIONS**

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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

IN

POLITICAL SCIENCE

by

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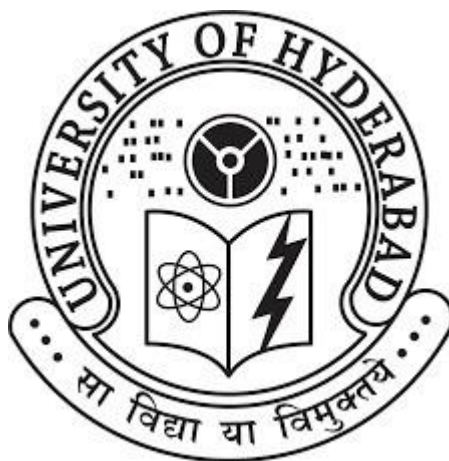
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I, Katari Akhilesh Kumar (17SPPH01), hereby declare that this thesis titled, '**India and Israel in the Post-Cold War World: Emerging Strategic and Economic Dimensions**', submitted by me under the guidance and supervision of Dr. Aparna Devare, is a bonafide research work. I also declare that it has not been submitted previously in part or in full to this University or any other University or Institution for the award of any degree or diploma. I hereby agree that my thesis can be deposited in Shodhganga/INFLIBNET.

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1. '**India-Israel Relations**', *Third Concept: Journal of International Ideas* Vol.35, No.420, February 2022, pp.7-10.

and

has made presentations in the following conferences:

1. "**India-West Asia Relations: Israel As A Major Factor**", at the Two Day National Seminar on *India's Foreign Policy Transformation: Prospects and Challenges*, Department of Political Science, St. Ann's College for Women, 21-22 August, 2019.
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Further, the student has passed the following courses towards fulfilment of coursework requirement for Ph.D./ was exempted from doing coursework (recommended by Doctoral Committee) on the basis of the following courses passed during his M.Phil. Programme and the M.Phil. Degree was awarded:

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SCA 662	Regional Cooperation in South and Central Asia	4	A+
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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

The India and Israel relationship, which remained subdued during the Cold War years, moved close to each other after the culmination of the Cold War. This thesis explores the origins of India's Israel policy and subsequently discusses the various dimensions that shaped this relationship in the post-Cold War global order. Unlike the Cold War era, where the relationship was largely viewed through the prism of geopolitics in West Asia, the post-Cold War ushered in significant changes, which made this relationship more broad-based, with various strategic and economic dimensions involved.

The formulation of India's policy towards the Jewish question, and later, Israel in 1948, was a major aspect in its relation towards West Asia. After emerging as independent states in 1947 and 1948, both countries pursued similar values, such as parliamentary democracy, democratic socialism, and open societies. However, India embarked on a policy of *non-relationship* and remained aloof and distant from Israel during the Cold War, due to various ideological and political reasons.

The end of the Cold War was a turning point as bilateral relations perceptibly improved. Both countries began to move close to each other due to several factors, such as change in global politics following the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the US emerging as the only superpower, the shift in West Asian politics after the first Gulf War, and India opening up its economy. After the normalization of ties in January 1992, this evolving partnership enjoyed non-partisan support in India's mainstream political parties, with both the Indian National Congress (INC) and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) favouring a strengthened relationship during their regimes.

The objective of this thesis is to study India's relations with the Jewish state through key drivers of this bilateral relationship, such as, defence, trade, and people-to-people contacts. This thesis is an attempt to provide an overview of India's relations with Israel from the Balfour Declaration (1917) to three decades after the establishment of full diplomatic ties between India and Israel in 1992. Accordingly, the study comprises seven chapters and a conclusion. Given the evolution of India's policy towards the Jewish question and later the state of Israel in the Cold War years, a historical background was necessary to understand India's Israel policy which was discussed in the initial chapters. Against this background, the principal focus of this study is on the policy trajectory in the post-normalization phase and i.e., three decades

of India's Israel policy till the 2020s.

The thesis elucidates the context and compulsions of India's enhanced engagement with Israel after the end of the Cold War. The study aims to explore the various dimensions of India's Israel policy after 1992, which deepened and broadened this partnership. Encompassing the multifaceted dimension of the partnership with a broad convergence of geopolitical and economic interests, the rapid expansion of defence ties, enhancing economic partnership, and the role of civil society in the evolving partnership, the thesis covers the three decades of deepening ties between India and Israel. Unlike the existing studies, which highlight the security relationship, this study focuses on two other aspects of India and Israel partnership in the post-normalization phase, namely, the increasing importance of their economic partnership and the deepening of ties between the two countries through intersocietal exchanges.

Although security, continued as a significant dimension in the bilateral relationship in the post-Cold War years, trade and people-to-people contacts broadened and consolidated this relationship. While the neorealist perspective is used in this work to understand and explain the burgeoning security relationship between the two countries, the neo-liberal framework is adopted to evaluate the growing importance of the Indo-Israeli economic partnership. The fact that both countries are democracies and open societies promotes societal interactions and people to people contacts which underpins the liberal ideology that characterizes the two societies.

As any partnership pivots around certain key pillars, this thesis argues, that India's Israel policy has three major dimensions after the end of the Cold War: First, the security which emerged as a central pillar in the partnership in response to the events in post-Cold War global politics. Second, though there is a disparity in the economic size between India and Israel, it is worth mentioning that due to India's relations with the Jewish state, there is a congruence of interests in agriculture, water conservation, and technology, helped in strengthening the economic linkages between New Delhi and Tel Aviv. Third, the role played by Indian Jews who migrated to Israel and non-state, and sub-state actors in shaping India-Israel ties are significant. Although, the relationship was looked largely through the prism of geopolitics in West Asia, it was extended to newer areas, such as higher education, tourism, and healthcare.

Due to the changes ushered in global politics in general, and West Asian politics in particular, both countries have looked for a closer, strategic partnership with other countries with whom they differ but share common interests. It discusses areas where

both countries cooperate as they are interest-driven and mutually beneficial. The outlines of bilateral partnership in defence, trade, and investment and deals signed are discussed. Indo-Israel ties, which remained frozen during the Cold War, evolved into a new partnership in the last three decades and is of immense importance.

Significance of the Study

After the Cold War came to an end, international politics witnessed significant changes. The thesis provides a glimpse into the various dimensions of India's relationship with the Jewish state after Cold War's culmination. For scholars in international relations, this thesis is a modest attempt to examine Indo-Israel relations from the upgradation of diplomatic ties in 1992 to the evolution of three decades of the bilateral relationship. The thesis covers the various components of bilateralism as it offers an overview of existing and emerging areas of cooperation between them. Also, the shift in geopolitics in West Asia with Israel expanding its diplomatic footprints with developments such as the Abraham Accords in 2020 and its role as a major constituent in the emerging multi-lateral grouping along with India, USA, and UAE offers immense opportunities for India to further strengthen its ties with Israel.

The thesis tries to answer the following questions.

- What is India's national leadership's approach towards the Jewish question, the Zionist movement during the colonial period, and subsequently with the Jewish state during the Cold War years?
- What are the factors that led to a shift in India's Israel policy in the post-Cold War years?
- What are the various significant areas of engagement in India's relations with Israel?

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are as follows:

- To examine the changing relations between India and Israel in the post-Cold War period.
- To examine the Indo-Israel bilateral relationship through the prism of neorealism/neoliberalism.

The chapter examines India's Israel policy through a theoretical prism of neorealism and neoliberalism. Neorealism, otherwise known as structural realism, developed during the 1980s by Kenneth Waltz (1979), who argues about the anarchy of the world system. Within the neorealist school of thought, it is divided into offensive realism and defensive realism variants. The former is developed by John Mearsheimer, wherein he argues that the states are security seekers and they strive to increase their military capabilities. However, neorealism has faced challenges since the late 1980s from neoliberal institutional scholars.

Unlike the neorealist school of thought, which emphasizes security, neoliberals focus on cooperation among the nation states. Though the neoliberal scholars outrightly do not reject the realists' emphasis on security, they argue about fostering trade links and cooperation between states, which can minimize or reduce the conflict.

The realist perspective on international relations is predicated on the following key assumptions: (i) States have a considerable role in international affairs. (ii) The international system is anarchic, and it shapes the behaviour of the states. (iii) The national interests defined in terms of power. (iv) The primacy of security as a dominant goal.¹ Prominent realists include Richard Niebuhr (1932), E. H. Carr (1947), John Herz (1951), Robert Gilpin (1981), Henry Kissinger (1994) and others.

The realist school of thought in international relations lays emphasis upon two cardinal principles in world politics, which include: *power* and *national interest*. According to Hans Morgenthau, national interests must be accorded primacy and power is "*both an end and a means to security*."² According to Morgenthau and other adherents of the Classical Realist school of thought, the interests of a state are determined by the state's strength, and power drives international politics.³

This power is mostly explained in terms of military capabilities.⁴ The state centred sovereignty is an essential paradigm of the realist theory of international relations. In the words of Hans Morgenthau, "*The prestige of a nation is its reputation*

¹ Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle For Power and Peace*, (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1948), p.10, Other works include: Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, (Reading, Mass: Addison-Wesley, 1979), p.95, Stanley Hoffmann, *The State of War: Essays in the Theory and Practice of International Politics* (New York: Praeger, 1965), pp. 27, 54-87, 129.

² Hans Morgenthau *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle For Power and Peace*, (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1948)

³ Ibid., p.75.

⁴ Peter Wilson, "Idealism in International Relations," in *Encyclopedia of Power*, ed. Keith Dowding (London: Sage, 2011), pp. 332 -33.

for power. That reputation, the reflection of the reality of power in the mind of the observers, can be as important as the reality of power itself. What others think about us is as important as what we actually are”⁵

Further, in the words of Robert Gilpin, “..the final arbiter of things political is power.”⁶ As the state increases its power capability, it will “try to expand its economic, political, and territorial control; it will try to change the international system in accordance with its own interests.”⁷ In the words of B.C. Schmidt, “state has a fundamental and unchangeable interest in survival, security and maintaining sovereignty and Realists would deem power as the only guarantor of this interest.”⁸

In pursuance of its foreign policy, every sovereign nation seeks power and does whatever to ensure its survival as it competes with and opposes the policies of all other nations.⁹ In the words of Hans Morgenthau, “all nations do what they cannot help but do: protect their physical, political, and cultural identity against encroachments by other nations.”¹⁰ For Morgenthau, “the capability of armed forces, technological innovations in army, navy are the strong determinants of power.”¹¹

The above description aptly applies to India and Israel as both nations face constant non-state security threats in a hostile neighbourhood. The unsettled boundary disputes for New Delhi with Islamabad and Beijing, and Israel with Arab states drew the two nations closer than ever. Since they were born, both nations have faced the wrath of international organizations such as the United Nations (UN) for India’s handling of the Kashmir crisis and Israel’s treatment of Palestinian Arab citizens.

In the aftermath of independence, New Delhi’s main priority was to secure its national interests and preserve its territorial integrity. Similarly, in the case of Israel, upon its establishment in May 1948, led to Tel Aviv pursuing a calibrated approach

⁵ Hans J. Morgenthau, *Vietnam: Shadow and Substance*, New York Review of Books, 16 September 1965.

⁶ Robert Gilpin, “The Richness of the Tradition of Political Realism,” in *Neorealism and Its Critics*, ed. Robert O. Keohane (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), p. 304.

⁷ Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981) pp.22-23.

⁸ Brian C. Schmidt, “Realism and facets of power in international relations,” in *Power in World Politics*, ed. Felix Berenskoetter & M. J. Williams (London: Routledge, 2008), p.43-63.

⁹ John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company 2001), p.17.

¹⁰ Hans J. Morgenthau, “Another ‘Great Debate,’: The National Interest of the United States”, *The American Political Science Review* 46, No.4. (December, 1952): p.972.

¹¹ Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle For Power and Peace*, (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1948).

towards its national interests which became the major driver of Israel's foreign policy. Thus, *security* and *survival* emerged as two important dimensions in the foreign policy of both nations. For the two nations, national security and protection from external aggression or subversion was a primary concern.

Within the discipline of realism, the postulates of classical realists' such as human nature, society being governed by objective laws, behaviour of statesmen were contested and challenged due to the behavioural revolution in international relations.¹² Further, this was challenged by Kenneth Waltz (1979) who replaces the idea of human nature with a structural realist position, otherwise known as *structural realism*. Waltz contends that the ideas of Hans J. Morgenthau were scientifically inadequate of the realist school. Hence, he was highly influenced by scientific ideas and systematised realism by incorporating the scientific method. By anarchy, it does not mean chaos or disorder; it is created by the absence of a central authority. However, the international system is characterized by anarchy is very fundamental to all realists.¹³

The states conduct relations with other states on their own instead of being dictated by an overarching authority. The main implication of anarchy in world politics is a *self-help* system. Due to the lack of higher authority to enforce a system, states must concentrate on their own *security* and *survival* as it hinders or minimizes the prospects for cooperation among the states. The states will cooperate only when there are self-interests involved. Hence, the potential for conflict always exists. The realists offer a pessimistic analysis of the international cooperation among the states.¹⁴

“Whether or not by force, each state plots the course it thinks will best serve its interests. If force is used by one state or its use is expected, the recourse of other states is to use force or be prepared to use it singly or in combination. No appeal can be made to a higher entity clothed with the authority and equipped with the ability to act on its

¹² Klaus Eugen Knorr & James N. Rosenau, *Contending Approaches to International Politics*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1969), Martin Hollis & Steve Smith, *Explaining and Understanding International Relations*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990)

¹³ Robert J. Art and Robert Jervis, *International Politics: Enduring Concepts and Issues*, (Boston, Pearson Education, 2016) p.7.

¹⁴ Richard Rosecrance provided the insight that realism presents an essentially pessimistic view of the human condition: this is noted by Robert Gilpin, “The Richness of the Tradition of Political Realism,” in *Neorealism and Its Critics* ed. Robert O. Keohane (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), p. 304. This pessimism realist theory is most clearly evident in Hans J. Morgenthau, *Scientific Man vs. Power Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1946), especially pp. 187 -203.

own initiative.”¹⁵ Waltz’s believes that, “the enduring anarchic character of international politics accounts for the striking sameness in the quality of international life through the millennia.”¹⁶

For Kenneth Waltz, states seek to gain power by disregarding the personality of actors, their actions, and interactions, and ideological commitments, economic and social interactions that states may hold.¹⁷ In terms of power, all states are guided by self-interests and they behave in a certain way due to the anarchy that exists in the international system. In Waltz’s view, “Structure defines the arrangement, or the ordering, of the parts of a system.”¹⁸

For him, every state, as a unit in the system, works in the interest of survival and security and shapes its response to what other states do. All states are functionally similar, working in the interest of survival which is a prerequisite factor towards the fulfillment of other goals. However, they vary widely in terms of size, wealth etc. States differ from each other in terms of their own capabilities. In Waltz’s view, “In defining international-political structures, we take states with whatever traditions, habits, objectives, desires, and forms of government they may have. We do not ask whether states are revolutionary or legitimate, authoritarian or democratic, ideological or pragmatic. We abstract from every attribute of states except their capabilities.”¹⁹

The birth of India and Israel coincided with the onset of the Cold War between the Soviet Union (East) and the US (West) from the same imperial power i.e., Great Britain. Upon attainment of its independence in 1947, to serve its own national interests, New Delhi advocated a policy of *non-alignment* and remained equidistant from the two power blocs. Similarly, after its establishment in 1948, Israel pursued the path of *non-identification*.²⁰

Like Jawaharlal Nehru, Israel’s first foreign affairs minister, Moshe Sharett, was one of the statesmen who articulated the idea of *non-alignment*, for the newly emerged independent states of Asia and Africa. Both nations wanted to remain aloof

¹⁵ Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, (Reading, Mass: Addison-Wesley, 1979), p. 113.

¹⁶ Ibid., p.66.

¹⁷ Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, (Reading, Mass: Addison-Wesley, 1979), p. 80.

¹⁸ Ibid., p.81.

¹⁹ Ibid., p.99.

²⁰ Michael Brecher, “Israel’s Foreign Policy: Challenge of the 1970s,” *International Journal* 28, No. 4, The Arab States and Israel (Autumn 1973), p.751.

from the Eurocentric cold war. In the early years of the Cold War, they were neither formally aligned to any superpower nor belonged to any alliance, pact, or regional organization.²¹

The two nations had unsettled relations with their immediate neighbours in the South and West Asian region, and they resorted to ensuring their security by augmenting their military power. Security, survival, and economic development emerged as major dimensions of Indian and Israeli foreign policy. Both nations face a similar challenge of Islamist militancy and remain vulnerable to external military threats territorially. In the case of Israel, its isolation within the region and reluctance, especially by its neighbours to forge ties, diminished its diplomatic maneuvers in world politics. After its establishment as a sovereign state, its recognition was denied by faraway countries in Asia and Africa.

Geographically, located in Asia, India and Israel are not guided by national interests alone, they both are democracies within their regions with a parliamentary form of government, free and fair elections, universal suffrage, the rule of law, a competitive party system, freedom of speech and expression, market economy, civil society groups. In the words of Walzer, New Delhi and Tel Aviv were, “*by world standards...liberal regimes with opposition parties, a highly critical press, and free universities.*”²²

Due to a volatile neighbourhood, the two nations wanted to forge diplomatic relations with militarily the most powerful nations like USA, Soviet Union to combat aggression from any external force. In the early years of independence, the two nations converged on various international issues such as the recognition of China, the Korean crisis, and others.

Despite these convergences between the two nations, they viewed the international politics during the Cold War years as parallel to each other. For New Delhi, the principles of anti-colonialism, anti-imperialism, solidarity with the newly emerged Third World countries guided its foreign policy outlook. India wanted to pursue its national interests and distanced itself from the power-based international state system.

²¹ Avi Shlaim, “Israel Between East and West, 1948-56,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 36, No.4, (November 2004) p.658.

²² Michael Walzer, *The Paradox of Liberation: Secular Revolutions and Religious Counter revolutions*, (Michigan: Yale University Press, 2015), p.35.

In the words of Nehru, “*the problems we have to face are many and complicated, as they will never be solved except on the basis of good morals and conscience.*”²³ Nehru’s world view was that nation’s diplomacy should be guided by morality and ethics rather than power politics which dominated the globe in the Cold War years. He viewed diplomacy by a state need not be in commensurate with its power.

Though Israel sought recognition from India after its establishment as a sovereign nation, geostrategic factors such as the Kashmir dispute, the emergence of Pakistan as a separate nation and its ties with the Arab world constrained India in forging ties with Israel. Not only the above-mentioned factors, but also domestic factors such as the large Muslim minority population inhibited New Delhi’s formal recognition of Israel.

The motive behind Israel’s request for India’s recognition was that New Delhi’s acceptance could influence the newly decolonized Afro-Asian countries to revise their policy toward Israel as they constitute the majority of states in the world.²⁴ For garnering support in the international community, gaining diplomatic recognition by countries in Asian continent turned out to be a major challenge in its foreign policy. In the early 1950s, only four countries: Burma, India, Philippines, and Thailand, extended their recognition towards Israel.

Despite New Delhi’s recognition of Israel in September 1950, the process for normalization was deferred, and the relations were not upgraded until the early 1990s. Though there were signs of improvement in the normalization of ties with Israel in the early 1950s, Nehru identified Israel with imperialism when it colluded with two imperial powers, France and Great Britain, and attacked Egypt in 1956. The Suez Canal crisis further deteriorated ties between the two and reached a low point.

Though India maintained frosty ties with Israel, it did not inhibit seeking support from the latter in times of crisis. For instance, agricultural assistance was sought by New Delhi from Tel Aviv.²⁵ In the words of Nehru’s biographer, S. Gopal, “*despite basic differences with Israel, Nehru sent some experts to that country to study*

²³ Speech by Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru in the United Nations General Assembly, New York, December 20, 1956.

²⁴ Prithvi Ram Mudiam, “Indian Power Projection in the Greater Middle East: Tools and Objectives,” in *The Greater Middle East in Global Politics*, ed. M. Parvizi Amineh (London: Brill, 2007), p.422.

²⁵ P. R. Kumaraswamy, *India’s Israel Policy*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010) p.113.

the working of the cooperative movement.”²⁶ Further, the backchannel contacts continued between India and Israel in the early 1950s and 1960s with political leaders, and interest groups visiting each other.

For India, generally, its West Asia policy and particularly its Israel policy was guided by its national interests in the initial years of the Cold War. Despite New Delhi’s recognition of Israel, its refusal to upgrade diplomatic ties, which otherwise could antagonize the Arab states, was a balanced approach by India towards West Asia.

Like India, Israel wanted to pursue a non-aligned and independent policy towards global politics as discussed earlier. Although super powers with a large number of Jews supported Israel’s establishment as an independent Jewish state, Israel’s senior official, Michael Comay, said, “*at the birth of the state, there were two godfathers-the United States and the Soviet Union. To try to retain the support of both, we adopted a posture of non-identification, of keeping out of the Cold War.*”²⁷

Israel’s first Foreign Minister Moshe Sharett, and Prime Minister, Ben Gurion summed its foreign policy as “*knocking on any door*”, for assistance and “*we must take all possible steps to find understanding, if not friendship, anywhere in the world.*”²⁸ Further, he said: “*there is no identification between a small and a big nation, except if the small nation completely subordinates itself, or if the big nation is composed entirely of angels. We do not want to subordinate ourselves to anyone, and we do not believe that angels rule anywhere.*”²⁹

However, in the early days of Israel’s existence, it faced four challenges : First, Gaining acceptance from the countries in Asia to expand its diplomatic clout in the international community and minimize its marginalization within the continent. Second, the hostility in its periphery i.e., Arab states. Third, securing vital economic and military aid in strife torn West Asia. Fourth, immigration from the Arab countries and the Eastern bloc.

Israel’s foreign policy underwent a major change during the Korean war in June 1950, thereby, veering away from its non-alignment policy towards world politics and

²⁶ S. Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru: A Biography*. 3 Vols, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1979) p.117.

²⁷ Avi Shlaim, “Israel Between East and West, 1948 -56”, *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 36, No.4, (November 2004), p.658.

²⁸ Uri Bialer, *Between East and West: Israel’s foreign policy orientation 1948-1956*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p.14.

²⁹ Michael Brecher, *The Foreign Policy System of Israel: Setting, Images, Process* (London: Oxford University Press, 1972), p.40.

embracing Western power, i.e., the US. The relationship with the USA expanded to several fields such as military, economic and others throughout the 1960s and 1970s. Hence, Israel's policy of non-identification with any bloc was short lived.

The structural constraints within the international system are important. New Delhi's interest in the Arab states was high due to factors such as oil, and a huge number of expatriates in the region. Further, it can also be said that though India recognized Israel in the early 1950s, its diplomatic proximity to the USA (super power) in the Cold War years constrained India from deepening its ties with Israel. Although, there were informal talks between the two, they failed to make headway in forging ties.

For Waltz, due to the international system which is anarchic, the threat of war always prevails. For all the realists, the constant threat of conflict exists due to the anarchy within the international system. As the nations are in constant conflict with each other, the structural realist theory by Waltz also specifies the *balance of power* to contain war or minimize the conflict. In the words of Waltz, states are, "*They are unitary actors who, at a minimum, seek their own preservation and, at a maximum, drive for universal domination. States, or those who act for them, try in more or less sensible ways to use the means available in order to achieve the ends in view.*"³⁰ In an anarchic power driven international system, the *balance of power* shifts and calculations are very important.

In Cold War years, since the sub-continent was divided based on religion, and Pakistan embracing the Western power i.e., US, was a concern for India because of its military pact with the former. The arms and ammunition by the USA to Pakistan had the potential to change the security paradigm in South Asia. New Delhi's security concerns heightened as Islamabad received economic and military assistance during the Cold War from the USA through military pacts such as CENTO and SEATO. For New Delhi, upgrading relations with Israel would antagonize the Arab countries as the support for the border dispute with Pakistan was significant for India's foreign policy. For Israel, it never wanted Arab states to move into the influence of the two superpowers in the Cold War years as it was detrimental to Israeli interests in the region. As the threat existed within the region for Israel, it embraced US in the initial years of the Cold War.

Further, Kenneth Waltz argues, "*Externally, states work harder to increase their own strength, or they combine with others, if they are falling behind. In a competition for the position of leader, balancing is sensible behavior where the victory*

³⁰ Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, (Reading, Mass: Addison-Wesley, 1979). p.118.

*of one coalition over another leaves weaker members of the winning coalition at the mercy of the stronger ones. Nobody wants anyone else to win; none of the great powers wants one of their member to emerge as the leader.”*³¹

Despite the absence of diplomatic ties in the Cold War, back channel security ties existed between them during the wars with Beijing and Islamabad. This was clearly a *realpolitik* outlook of India's policy towards Israel. For Waltz, *realpolitik* adjustments are common as the states seek to secure their own interests, making and remaking adjustments to suit their own sovereign interests.

The above discussion makes it clear that India's Israel policy was pragmatic and guided by national interests in the Nehruvian years, as it recognized Israel but not upgraded the diplomatic ties. The support for the Palestinians and its aloofness from Israel reflected New Delhi's balanced approach to the conflict in West Asia. However, in the 1960s and 1970s, India pursued *realpolitik* when it sought military assistance from Israel in 1962, 1965, and 1971 wars.³²

After Cold War's culmination, it necessitated New Delhi to diversify its military cooperation with other powers such as Israel, France, USA. The defence ties are very important in the bilateral relationship between New Delhi and Tel Aviv. John Mearsheimer's five assumptions in his seminal work, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, is compatible within the theory of offensive realism.

“The first assumption is that the international system is anarchic, which does not mean that it is chaotic or driven by disorder, The second assumption is that great powers inherently possess some offensive military capability, which gives them the wherewithal to hurt and possibly destroy each other, The third assumption is that states can never be certain about other states intentions. The fourth assumption is that survival is the primary goal of great powers. Specifically, states seek to maintain their territorial integrity and the autonomy of their domestic political order. The fifth assumption is that great powers are rational actors. They are aware of their external environment, and they think strategically about how to survive in it. In particular, they consider the preferences of other states and how their behaviour is likely to affect the behaviour of those other states, and how the behaviour of those other states is likely to

³¹ Ibid., p.126.

³² Sunil Kumar, “Indo-Israeli Relations: A Quest for Great Power Status Since 1991,” *Jewish Political Studies Review*, Vol.28, No.3/4, (Fall 2017), p.39.

affect their strategy for survival.”³³

After the demise of Soviet Union, New Delhi diversified its military cooperation with other powers in the globe such as USA, France to meet its defence needs. Israel, being a major power in global politics in military equipment with high-tech advanced technology, India found a suitable partner to upgrade its Soviet military equipment through the collaboration with Israel. In view of Beijing’s rising economic and political footprint in international politics, its sphere of influence in South Asia (India’s immediate neighbourhood) forced India to look for alternative sources of defence partnership. As it was rightly pointed out by John Mearsheimer, Kenneth Waltz, the structure of anarchic system compels states to worry about its military power, it aims to achieve and augment its military preparedness.

Until the 1990s, the debate over national interests was shaped by the ideological rivalry that existed between the two super powers. During the Cold War, the national interests were viewed in terms of military capabilities and survival. However, Cold War’s culmination brought a shift in the nature of the power. Although realists like Kenneth Waltz, argue about the economic gains shaping the state’s military preparedness, he downplays the importance of economy or cooperation among the states. For realists, “*the high politics of military security dominates the low politics of economic and social affairs.*”³⁴ In the words of Kenneth Waltz, “*In a self-help system, considerations of security subordinate economic gain to political interest.*”³⁵

For realists, the conflict is inherent and inevitable, whereas neoliberals emphasize that cooperation and institutions can minimize the conflict. Neoliberals take a positive view of cooperation, unlike the realists who present a pessimistic view of cooperation as the stability in the international system can be only through military power and the use of force.

If realists from Morgenthau and Kenneth Waltz up to John Mearsheimer lay emphasis on power and security, neoliberals like Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye emphasize that “*economic strength is ultimately the basis for economic and military*

³³ John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company 2001), pp.30-32.

³⁴ Stephen M. Walt, “The Renaissance of Security Studies,” *International Studies Quarterly* 35, no. 2 (June 1991), pp. 211-39.

³⁵ Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, (Reading, Mass: Addison-Wesley, 1979), p. 107.

power.”³⁶ However, they concur and do not differ with Waltz’s view on anarchy as the fundamental feature of the international system. They argue that cooperation among the states is possible as they pursue their national interests in the self-help system.³⁷ Other scholars within the domain of International Relations, such as Robert Axelrod, Kenneth Oye, Robert Art, Robert Jervis also presented an optimistic analysis of cooperation on the premise that international politics is anarchic. For instance, in *Cooperation Under Anarchy*, Oye argues, “*Nations dwell in perpetual anarchy, for no central authority imposes limits on the pursuit of sovereign interests.*”³⁸

Though the *military security* continues to shape the bilateral relationship, the economic cooperation between the states gained traction. When the Cold War came to an end, it ushered significant changes in the international system with the rise of new centres of power such as India, China, South Africa and Brazil. With the demise of the Soviet Union, the structure of the international system moved from bipolarity to unipolarity, with the USA emerging as the sole super power. The establishment of alliances or groups became one of the most notable characteristics of the international order when the Cold War ended. The states began engaging economically with each other for mutual benefits.

In view of the above circumstances, the theory of *realism* is *insufficient* or *inadequate* to explain the India-Israel bilateral relationship in post-Cold War politics, where the cultural, economic, and political dimensions brought the states closer in an interdependent or integrated global order. Hence, neoliberal institutional scholars such as Joseph Nye and Robert Keohane emphasize trade, investment, and *flow of business*.³⁹ The *non-territorial actors* such as multinational or transnational corporations, civil society groups play a major role in relations between the two democracies. For neoliberals, states must pursue not only military power, but also economic well-being is very important.

Undoubtedly, in post-Cold War years, though the security paradigm remains the

³⁶ Robert O. Keohane, *Power and Governance in a Partially Globalised World*, (London: Routledge, 2002), p.63.

³⁷ Robert O. Keohane, *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), pp. 73, 85, 88.

³⁸ Kenneth A. Oye, *Explaining Cooperation Under Anarchy: Hypotheses and Strategies*, *World Politics* 38, No. 1 (October 1985), pp.1.

³⁹ Robert O. Keohane and Joseph Nye, *Power and Interdependence*, (Scott, Foresman, 1989) p.28; See also Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, “Transgovernmental Relations and International Organizations,” *World Politics*, 27, No.1, (October 1974), p.50.

central force driving international politics, non-traditional security concerns such as climate change, drug trafficking, cyber security, food security, healthcare, migration, and natural disasters are playing a very important role. No nation can remain immune to these threats in a globalized or interdependent world. With geopolitics in the international system, the narrative of geoeconomics was also set in the global order.

In the post-Cold War period, the economic pressures generated due to globalization compelled New Delhi to usher in economic reforms, which included: dismantling the domestic-licensing system, and opening its economy for exports and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). When Cold War came to an end, it diluted India's stance towards Israel, and India normalized ties with Israel due to various domestic and international factors.⁴⁰

In the words of Amnon Aran, the foreign policy of Israel, when the Cold War came to an end “pursued three foreign policy stances which include: entrenchment, engagement and unilateralism.”⁴¹ Israel restructured its economy through the 1985 Economic Emergency Stability Plan (EESP), which provided immense opportunities for the Jewish state to tackle the challenges.⁴² Through its *Look East policy*, Israel wanted to engage with two Asian powers namely China and India. As Israel's defence industry and technology transfer emerged as major exports in boosting its economic growth, it desired to seize the opportunities through strengthening its relations with Asian countries by embarking on its East looking orientation.⁴³ Israel viewed India as its potential economic partner due to New Delhi's huge size of the market and its quest for technology to fulfil its military and economic needs.

For Keohane and Nye, One of the elements of economic cooperation between the two includes multiple channels of contact. “*Multiple channels connect societies, including informal ties between governmental elites as well as formal foreign office arrangements; informal ties among nongovernmental elites (face-to-face and through telecommunications); and transnational organizations (such as multinational banks or corporations). These channels can be summarized as interstate, transgovernmental,*

⁴⁰ Prithvi Ram Mudiam, “Indian Power Projection in the Greater Middle East: Tools and Objectives,” in *The Greater Middle East in Global Politics*, ed. M. Parvizi Amineh (London: Brill, 2007), p.422.

⁴¹ Amnon Aran, *Israeli Foreign Policy since the End of the Cold War*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020).p.1.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Shirzad Azad, “Tapping into the zeitgeist: Israel's East-looking policy,” *Israel Affairs* 26, No.2, (January 2020), p.5.

and transnational relations. Interstate relations are the normal channels assumed by realists. Transgovernmental applies when we relax the realist assumption that states act coherently as units; transnational applies when we relax the assumption that states are the only units."⁴⁴

For Keohane and Nye, states are not the only actors. The interaction between the states can also take place without the interference at the governmental level. In their words, "*The environment of interstate politics, however, does not include only these powerful and well-known forces. A good deal of intersocietal intercourse, with significant political importance, takes place without governmental control.*"⁴⁵ The intersocietal interactions between the states and non-state actors play an important role in formulating and shaping state policies. According to Keohane, they have not paid adequate attention in the interstate system.

*"Their ability to operate as international or transnational actors may be traced to the fact that men identify themselves and their interests with corporate bodies other than the nation-state."*⁴⁶ These are defined by Joseph Nye and Robert Keohane as "*contacts, coalitions, and interactions across state boundaries that are not controlled by the central policy organs of government.*"⁴⁷

This can be reflected in the growing economic engagement between India and Israel. As regards bilateral economic ties, Indo-Israel trade has witnessed a multifold increase since 1992, touching US\$ 6.3 billion (excluding defence trade) in 2021. The FDI flow in India from Israel (from April 2000 to March 2022) stands at \$270.91 million.⁴⁸

Agriculture and allied sectors emerged as a major area of economic cooperation between the two since the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1992. India's economic partnership with Israel moved beyond defence trade to diverse sectors such as pharmaceuticals, space, real estate, healthcare, energy, industrial products and others. The joint research and development by India and Israel in telecom,

⁴⁴ Joseph S. Nye, Jr. "Limits of American Power", *Political Science Quarterly* 117, No. 4, (Winter 2000), p.545-559. See Kenneth Waltz, "Globalization and American Power", *The National Interest*, (Spring 2000): pp.20-21. Joseph Nye, *The Future of Power* (New York: Public Affairs, 2011).

⁴⁵ Joseph S. Nye, and Robert O. Keohane, "Transnational Relations and World Politics: An Introduction," *International Organization* 25, No.3 (Summer, 1971), p.330.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p.331.

⁴⁸ Invest India, "Israel-India Relations," last accessed 17 July 2022, <https://www.investindia.gov.in/country/israel>.

biotechnology, and software are major areas of cooperation. The Israeli technology obtained by India augurs well for the modernization of the Indian economy.

India and Israel have numerous *soft power points* of interaction through the Indian Jewish diaspora that exists in Israel. Though the Indian diaspora's influence is limited in Israel, unlike in the Western powers such as the USA, they play a very pivotal role in strengthening the relations between the two. Civil society groups, cultural organizations, and academia cooperation can enhance the partnership between New Delhi and Tel Aviv through people-to-people contacts.

Though realism remained a dominant paradigm in shaping international politics until the 1970s and 1980s, Cold War's demise ushered in significant developments in the global economy, which include the rise of international institutions, new dynamics of power in the economic realm, transcending borders in a globalized world cannot be ignored. In this regard, Keohane and Nye broadened the prevailing realist world view in international politics. The post-Cold War politics and the rise of globalization turned out to be major factors in the trajectory of the Indo-Israel bilateral relationship. For Keohane, Waltz's structural realism is static and does not explain the change in the international system. He believes that theory needs to be reformulated in conjunction with the dynamics of the international system.⁴⁹

The economic collaboration between India and Israel brought a new dimension to the existing relationship beyond the two countries' established military ties. Both countries have the convergence of their interests in several areas of economic cooperation. Given the growing military and economic ties, the complementarities of strategic interests will play a significant role in shaping this relationship.

Though realists such as Joseph Grieco argue that states are not atomistic actors as said by neoliberal institutionalists and the element of cooperation between them can lead to cheating as the states compete with each other to outweigh the benefits of others in the international system. To put it succinctly, for Grieco, two factors act as barriers for the cooperation in a realist world.⁵⁰

First, the concerns about cheating. He says, "*states may wish to cooperate, but, aware that cheating is both possible and profitable, 'lack of central agency to enforce promises.'*"⁵¹ Second, the relative gains inhibit the states to cooperate. Grieco says, "*a*

⁴⁹ Robert O. Keohane, *Neorealism and Its Critics* ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986):p.25.

⁵⁰ Joseph M. Grieco, "Anarchy and the Limits of Cooperation: A Realist Critique of the Newest Liberal Institutionalism," *International Organization*, 42, No.3: (Summer, 1988), p.485-507.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p.497.

*state concerned about relative gains may decline to cooperate even if it is confident that partners will keep their commitments to a joint arrangement. Indeed, if a state believed that a proposed arrangement would provide all parties absolute gains, but would also generate gains favouring partners, then greater certainty that partners would adhere to the terms of the arrangement would only accentuate its relative gains concerns. Thus, a state worried about relative gains might respond to greater certainty that partners would keep their promises with a lower, rather than a higher, willingness to cooperate.”*⁵²

John Mearsheimer agrees with Grieco that absolute advantages can only be applied to the economic domain, as opposed to relative gains in the security realm. For him, as the states in the realist world primary motive is to consider the relative gains to foster cooperation among the states, they play an important role.

For John Mearsheimer, even if states solve the cheating problem, the relative gains continue to prevail. He says, *“If states cannot cheat each other they need not fear each other, and therefore, states would not have to worry about relative power. The problem with this argument, however, is that even if the cheating problem were solved, states would still have to worry about relative gains because gaps in gains can be translated into military advantage that can be used for coercion or aggression. And in the international system, states sometimes have conflicting interests that lead to aggression.”*⁵³

The neoliberal institutionalists focus on the *benefit* that state obtains rather than its comparison with other states. Though cooperation exists, the states continue to act in their self-interests. The behaviour and interactions of the states are dynamic, and they need to adapt to the changed international system. Robert Keohane was in concurrence with Grieco over relative gains and acknowledged by saying, *“Grieco has made a significant contribution by focusing attention on the issue of relative gains, a subject that has been underemphasized, especially by liberal or neoliberal commentators on the world economy.”*⁵⁴

⁵² Ibid., p.499.

⁵³ John. J. Mearsheimer, “The False Promise of International Institutions,” *International Security* 19, No. 3 (Winter, 1994-1995), p.12. Other works include: Joanne Gowa, “Anarchy, Egoism, and Third Images: The Evolution of Cooperation and International Relations”, *International Organization* 40, No. 1 (Winter 1986), pp. 172-179; and Oran R. Young, “International Regimes: Toward a New Theory of Institutions,” *World Politics* 39, No. 1 (October 1986), pp. 118-119.

⁵⁴ Robert O. Keohane, *Institutional Theory and the Realist Challenge*, in *Neo realism and Neoliberalism: The*

To conclude, neorealists focus on security concerns of the state are essential in international politics, however, neoliberal institutional scholars argue that the international system is anarchic, and states are dominant actors in international politics. They emphasized on cooperation among states as a vital factor in international politics. The interconnectedness in a globalized world persuades states to cooperate in the economic realm.

To summarize further between realism and neoliberalism, there exists similarities and differences.⁵⁵ The similarities include:

- Anarchy characterizes the international system.
- The interaction between the states is conflictual.
- The power is fundamental feature in international politics.

The differences include:

- First, realism finds its roots in sociology and psychology, whereas neoliberalism is rooted in microeconomics.
- Second, if realists believe power is fundamental for the behaviour of states, neoliberals believe security is the high end.
- Third, if realists believe *power* and *national interests* drive the behaviour of states; neoliberals examine anarchy and distribution of capabilities in international system.
- Fourth, realists emphasize upon relative distribution of power and capabilities through military realm; In neoliberalism, the cooperation in economic realm between the states is important.

Literature Review

There were only few articles and books which focused on India's Israel policy. It can also be partly attributed due to the absence of full diplomatic relations between them. In the 1950s and 1960s, the preliminary information on bilateral relations between them was noticeably available in biographies and memoirs, such as *Burmese Diary*, (1953-55), David Hacohen in 1963, *The First Ten Years*, (1958) by Walter

Contemporary Debate, ed. David Allen Baldwin (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), p. 283.

⁵⁵ Ethan B. Kapstein, "Is Realism Dead? The Domestic Sources of International Politics," *International Organization* 49, No.4 (Autumn 1995), p.751-774; Robert Gilpin, "The Richness of the Tradition of Political Realism," In *Neorealism and Its Critics*, (ed) Robert O. Keohane. (New York: Columbia University, 1986) Robert Jervis, "From Balance to Concert: A Study of International Security Cooperation," in *Cooperation Under Anarchy*, edited by Kenneth A. Oye. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986).

Eytan, and Gideon Rafael's, *Destination Peace: Three Decades of Israeli Foreign Policy* provided an overview of their own diplomatic interactions in India. In Cold War years, literature on India's Israel policy was analysed through India's constraining factors in establishing full diplomatic ties with Israel. Jansen (1971), Kohn (1959), Meron Medzini (1971, 1976), Michael Brecher (1957, 1959, 1960, 1963, 1968, 1972, 1974).

Some of the above-mentioned scholars emphasized on India's external policy particularly, through the role of Jawaharlal Nehru. For instance, Michael Brecher, wrote extensively on the political leadership of two Prime Ministers of India and Israel (Nehru and Ben Gurion) during the Cold War years. Other scholars who drew the works from the ideas of Gandhi and Nehru were, Heptullah (1991), Kumaraswamy (2010), Nicolas Blarel (2015), Subash Kapila (2003), and others.

Few scholars, Abadi (1991; Brecher 1961, 1963), elucidated the role of various nationalist leaders like Nehru and Gandhi in shaping India's *non-relationship* policy towards Israel. Other scholars, Heptullah (1991), *Indo-West Asian Relations: The Nehru Era*, Rajkumar (1952), *The Background of India's Foreign Policy*, Prasad (1960), *The Origins of India's Foreign Policy*, Rubinoff (1995), *India's Normalization of Relations with Israel*, looked at the absence of diplomatic relations with Israel for the diplomatic support from Arab countries and the need for energy resources.

In the 1970s and 1980s, few scholars analysed the absence of diplomatic relations between the two from an Israeli perspective. David Kimche (1973), Ran Kochan (1976). Being the former Director General of the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, David Kimche viewed India's position in Bandung Conference as a watershed moment in India's Israel policy. From the Indian side, Jansen (1971), focused on Israelis original efforts to establish diplomatic ties with the newly emerged Asian states. Sudha V. Rao (1972) through his work, *The Arab Israeli Conflict*, viewed policy by New Delhi towards West Asia was "*inconsistent and illogical*."

After the ties normalized in 1992, substantial literature emerged in the post-normalization period. Significant academic studies were published on bilateral relations encompassing various areas of cooperation such as cultural, defence, economic and others. To this extent, literature was available through various official documents, annual reports, newspaper articles and others.

The defence partnership between the two countries emerged as a central pillar in the relationship. Inbar and Ningthoujam (2012), in *Indo-Israeli Defense Cooperation* focused on the defence cooperation between two countries and the constraints. Prasad

and Rajiv (2020) explored the varied aspects of the bilateral partnership between India and Israel wherein, defence engagement emerged as a dominant driver in the partnership between two countries. To this extent, literature was available through various official documents, annual reports, newspaper articles and others.

India's normalization of ties with Israel was clearly explained by India's Ministry of External Affairs Foreign Secretary, J.N. Dixit in his memoirs, in *My South Block Years* (1996). In his memoirs, J.N. Dixit laid emphasis on various factors which influenced India to alter its policy towards Israel. Other academic works include; [Aaron (2003), Blarel (2006), Cohen (2001), Dinesh Kumar (2001, 2003), Farah Naaz (1999, 2000), Gopal and Sharma (2007), Gerberg (2008), Harsh V. Pant (2005), Raja Mohan (2003), Nair (2004)]. The scholars emphasized upon various dimensions of India's bilateral ties with Israel. Dinesh Kumar asserted that the changed global order compelled India to alter its policy towards the Jewish state. Stephen Cohen (2001), in work on *India: Emerging Power*, stressed on the "ideological opposition to a state conceived on religious principles."

Nair (2004) through this work *Dynamics of Diplomacy Delayed*, explored the factors responsible for the upgradation of diplomatic ties with Israel by India in the Cold War years. Farah Naaz published works related to India's Israel policy with special emphasis upon culture, defence, and economy. Kumaraswamy (2010), Mohan (2005), Pant (2004) explained the post-Cold War developments and New Delhi's policy shift in 1990s. Few scholars have focused on India's diplomacy towards Israel through its categorization into various periods. Kumaraswamy, leading Indian scholar on India's Israel policy, categorized the relationship into four phases. The first phase began in the early 1920s coinciding with the Khilafat struggle. The second phase P V Narasimha Rao established formal diplomatic ties with Israel. The third phase was when Dr. Manmohan Singh was voted in power in 2004. The fourth and current phase when Narendra Modi is voted to power in 2014. Gerberg (2008) focused on the changing nature of Indo-Israeli relations with specific time frames in the bilateral relationship.

In Sumit Ganguly's *Engaging the world: Indian Foreign Policy Since 1947* (2016) Nicolas Blarel, stressed upon various domestic, international and ideological factors which shaped India's Israel Policy. In the aftermath of Cold War, Tanvi Pate (2020), *Re-(Modi)fying India's Israel Policy: An Exploration of Geopolitical Reasoning*, looked at New Delhi's policy through the framework of "practical geopolitical reasoning", and the representations of India, Israel and West Asia' Post

2014. These are very few works which looked at the partnership between India and Israel through theoretical prism existing in the domain of international relations. The works have not given attention to the traditional theories of international relations and lacked a rigorous theoretical argument. In the changing times, India's Israel policy lacked a strong theoretical argument to emphasize how this relationship consolidated over the last three decades.

The above mentioned scholars laid emphasis on the burgeoning defence relationship between India and Israel. Widely published academic works have not emphasized various dimensions of India's Israel policy. They have not dealt extensively with the economic partnership which flourished post-normalization phase. In addition to the defence and trade between India and Israel, the people-to-people contacts, which remained very meagre in the Cold War years, witnessed significant improvement in ties through various dimensions, which remained an unexplored dimension in the bilateral relationship.

The literature available on the economic relations between the two, are merely descriptive and have not been analysed through various areas of economic cooperation such as agriculture, water, science and technology and others. Similarly, though a limited *civil society* dimension existed in the Cold War years, this factor was important to the burgeoning bilateral relationship and added a new substance to the growing Indo-Israeli bonhomie. Some academic studies have attempted to explain Israeli policy only through the prism of the *Palestinian cause*. However, these studies required a reformulation as, India continues to engage with Palestine while it strengthened its relationship with Israel.

As observed from the literature review, the Indo-Israel relations have mutual complementarities and commonalities of *national interests*, as there is a possibility for collaboration in diverse fields which remained unexplored. There is a tremendous prospect for growth in India's Israel diplomacy in the changing global order. This thesis combines the literature available and presents it to the readers in a manner, where it dwelt upon the various dimensions of India's Israel policy post-normalization. Towards the end, the analysis of the available literature does reveal the possible areas of cooperation between two countries diplomacy in the changing global order.

Methodology

The previous section elaborated upon the existing literature on India's Israel policy. This thesis dwells at the various dimensions of India's Israel policy in the post-Cold War years. The thesis aims to cover India's Israel policy in the post-Cold War years. Research on the thesis that has been chosen involves the semi-structured interviews, primary and secondary sources. The thesis does rely on the application of the existing theoretical approaches prominent in international relations such as *neorealism* or *neoliberalism*. The study is primarily an explanatory and empirical exercise. The thesis attempts to explain the various dimensions of India's Israel policy since normalization.

I draw on *content analysis* for the research on the thesis. The content analysis enables the researcher to extract information from wide-ranging sources including documents, newspapers, magazines, and other forms of written material. This is a major qualitative technique to analyse the texts in the research. Further, content analysis falls in the interface of observation and document analysis. "*It is defined as a method of observation in the sense that instead of asking people to respond to questions, it takes the communications that people have produced and asks questions of communications.*"⁵⁶

While reading the texts available on the thesis, the key drivers of India's Israel policy over the last seven decades were analysed. After normalization of ties in 1992, *defence*, *economic*, and *people-to-people contacts* emerged as the three main contours of cooperation in the strategic engagement of India and Israel. The neoliberal school of thought in international relations was used to explain the primary drivers of the India/Israel relationship in the post-Cold War years. To test the theoretical framework, there is a need for careful consideration of various elements in the bilateral relationship.

The thesis used a variety of primary and secondary sources. The empirical evidence draws on two qualitative research analytic techniques: documents analysis (archival collection, government and nongovernmental), and interviews in semi-structured form. Apart from secondary sources, primary sources included Government of India and Israel publications, including those published by Parliament of India (Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha Debates), Annual Reports and documents of various Indian ministries, which include: Commerce and Industry, Defence, and External Affairs. Other primary sources included public statements and speeches by

⁵⁶ Kerlinger, F. N. *Foundations of behavioural research* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1986).

government officials, political parties resolutions, and parliamentary debates, which helped analyse various dimensions that shaped India's Israel policy. The thesis also analysed original articles from various leading national dailies from India and Israel. Other primary sources included the publications of various think tanks in India, which included: the Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence and Strategic Analyses (IDSA), Indian Council for World Affairs (ICWA), Institute for Peace and Conflict Studies (IPCS), Observer Research Foundation (ORF), Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and others.

The study was supplemented through semi-structured interviews with various relevant actors as a method of generating information which played an important role in the construction of this thesis. Interviews with Indian and Israeli academicians, retired Indian diplomats, officials associated with the Embassy of Israel in New Delhi, individuals involved in India's trade and industry bodies and others. Some of the interlocutors were not available due to their prior assignments. In sum, the interviews helped develop arguments of the thesis as their inputs were deeply valuable in understanding specific areas of cooperation.

It is very important to note that all the sources, used in the construction of this thesis, through primary or secondary have their limitations. Mostly, the sources referred to have not given a holistic understanding of India's Israel policy through multiple areas of cooperation involved in this bilateral relationship. In order to carry out the research for this thesis, I was constrained to do field work in Israel due to finance and the disruption arisen due to the global pandemic in 2020 and 2021. Prior to the outbreak of the pandemic, field work was carried out in two phases in Delhi. The first phase lasted a period of one month in February 2019 while the second covered a period of two months, from December 2019 to early January 2020. I spent time in collecting materials at various libraries in Delhi. I gathered materials at Nehru Memorial Museum and Library (NMML), Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), Jamia Milia Islamia (JMI) and University of Delhi. I visited the Embassy of Israel in New Delhi in December 2019 which helped in collection of material related to research though it was limited.

Chapter 2

India's Engagement With The Jewish Question And Israel: A Historical Narrative, 1917-67

As a reaction to the rise of European nationalism and anti-Semitism in the late nineteenth century, political Zionism emerged as a new nationalist movement. This marked a watershed moment in the conflict between Arabs and Jews, as well as the start of Jewish immigration to Palestine in the 1880s. Zionism is an effort by Jews to regain their national self-determination and live in the homeland of their ancestors.¹ The World Zionist Organisation met in Basel, Switzerland, in 1897 and resolved to establish a Jewish state in Palestine.² The primary aim of Zionism was two-fold: “*to regain Jewish self-respect and dignity in the eyes of non-Jews; and to rebuild a Jewish national home.*”³

Political Zionism was initiated by a pre-eminent Zionist ideologue Theodor Herzl, a Viennese based Jewish journalist from Budapest. Due to the rapid rise of anti-Semitism in Austria, France, Germany, and Russia, he espoused the idea that the Jewish aspirations could be realised only when they have a homeland of their own. He argued that the Jews who migrated to Palestine would uplift and educate the Arabs who already lived there.

Herzl, *The Jewish State* in his pamphlet, in February 1896, published in Vienna wrote “*The idea which I have developed in this pamphlet is a very old one; it is the restoration of the Jewish State...The Jewish question still exists. It would be foolish to deny it.....The nations in whose midst Jews live are all either covertly or openly Anti-*

¹ Arthur Hertzberg (ed.) *The Zionist Idea: A Historical Analysis and Reader*, (New York: Doubleday, 1962).

² Muslih, Muhammad. “History of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict.” in *The Struggle for Peace: Israelis and Palestinians* Elizabeth Warnock Fernea and Mary Evelyn Hocking (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992) p.62-79.

³ Walter Laqueur, *A History of Zionism: From the French Revolution to the Establishment of the State of Israel* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1972), p.599.

Semitic.”⁴ He believed that the restoration of the Jewish state was the solution to the problem. “*The whole plan is, in its essence, perfectly simple...Let the sovereignty be granted us over a portion of the globe large enough to satisfy the rightful requirements of a nation; the rest we shall manage ourselves.*”⁵

Following the concerns expressed by Theodor Herzl about the Jewish community, Lord Lansdowne, former Foreign Secretary of Britain, offered unrestricted immigration of the Jewish community to the territories of Cyprus, Egypt, and Uganda. This interim solution offered by Lansdowne was supported and fiercely opposed by many Zionist leaders. However, due to the demise of Herzl, the idea was not taken forward by other delegates of Zionist leadership.

Chaim Weizmann, a Russian based chemistry academic, spearheaded the Zionist movement after Herzl and later became Israel’s President in late 1940s. He became the driving force and galvanised all the leading Jews and Zionists in Britain and America. With his political efforts, he lobbied with all the leaders of the World Zionist Organisation, such as Nahum Sokolow, Ahad Ha’Am, and other leaders. He made an effort to convince his fellow Jews and Zionists in England that protectorate of English over the land of Palestine is the only solution for the Jewish national cause and the empire. For Weizmann, the British support to the Zionists’ cause seemed very imminent.⁶ His efforts in inducing the government of a powerful empire proved to be fruitful.

His deliberations with Lord Rothschild were very significant as the latter exercised enormous influence in the British government. In July 1917, the Zionist movement entered a very critical stage as a group of Zionist leaders such as Sokolow, along with Weizmann, decided to compose a Zionist statement. Beginning in July 1917, the Zionists started to work out the wording of the declaration, One pressed to seek “*as much as possible,*” including, in particular, the right to control the state machinery, promising the Arabs only cultural autonomy, but “*the state must be Jewish.*” A few days later, a smaller group drafted a single paragraph, to the effect that the British government should “*recognize Palestine as the national home of the Jewish people and*

⁴ Theodor Herzl, “The Jewish State”, in *Arab-Israeli Conflict and Conciliation: A Documentary History* ed. Bernard Reich, (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1995) pp.17-18.

⁵ Ibid., p.18.

⁶ Jehuda Reinharz, “The Balfour Declaration and Its Maker: A Reassessment,” *The Journal of Modern History* 64, No. 3, (September, 1992) pp.455-6.

*work closely with the Zionist Organization.”*⁷ In late October 1917, the Cabinet approved the final draft after several negotiations were held between Britain and the Zionist delegates.

After the Cabinet meeting in 1917, the British foreign secretary, Arthur James Balfour, wrote to the leader of the Jewish community, Lionel Walter Rothschild, and announced His Majesty’s Government would support the creation of a “national home for the Jewish people” in Palestine.

The letter, which included a pledge from the British, is as follows:

“His Majesty’s Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country.”

The Balfour Declaration revolutionized the Zionist Organization’s position with a formidable backing by a great power vis-a-vis the Arabs of Palestine and the non-Zionist majority of the world. Till then, Zionism’s main function was cultural-psychological, which had no political importance. The Balfour declaration created a new demographic situation in Palestine when the League of Nations mandate authorities transformed the Balfour Declaration into an international obligation, and the migration of Jews to Palestine intensified in the 1920s, and 1930s, after the rise of Hitler and Nazism in Germany.⁸

From the Arabs point of view, Jewish immigration was an invasion, and the Zionist movement was aggressive.⁹ The Balfour Declaration was the charter on which the subsequent activities of the Zionist movement were based. The contentious and controversial declaration caused a major political upheaval in West Asia as it transformed the landscape of the region.

⁷ Chinmaya R. Gharekhan ‘A document that still resonates,’ *The Hindu*, November 02, 2017, <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/adocumentthat-stillresonates/article19963179.ece>

⁸ Ismael. Y. Tareq and Ismael. S. Jacqueline (eds) “Government and Politics of the Contemporary Middle East: Continuity and Change,” (New York: Routledge, 2011). p.291.

⁹ Walter Laqueur, *A History of Zionism: From the French Revolution to the Establishment of the State of Israel* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1972), p.596.

Gandhi, Nehru and Zionism

Gandhi and Jews have been associated with each other since the late nineteenth century. Gandhi while he stayed in South Africa, learnt about Judaism and the need for a Jewish homeland. In South Africa, Gandhi made many Jewish acquaintances, including two of his oldest friends, who later became his lifelong companions, Hermann Kallenbach and Henry S.L. Polak,¹⁰ with whom he interacted in his pursuit of *satyagraha* in South Africa between 1893 and 1914. Gandhi reportedly told the *Jewish Chronicle* in London, that he sympathized with Jews for their spirit of brotherhood and vision.¹¹

Gandhi's critical stance against Zionism was primarily influenced by three factors. First, he wanted to dissociate himself from the Zionists territorial claims over Palestine and their interpretation of Zionism through the prism of political and religious claims. Second, he desired that Jewish aspirations for a separate homeland must not be against the Arabs. Gandhi never wanted to ignore the sentiments of the large Muslim population as they were supportive of Arab demands, and undoubtedly this had influenced his thinking towards Palestine. Third, the Zionist relationship with British imperialism.¹²

In 1931, Gandhi spoke with the *Jewish Chronicle* in an interview in which he regarded Zionism as “lofty aspiration, which should be realized internally and spiritually and not politically and territorially.”¹³ Later, in an article in 1938, he criticized Arabs and Jews for their intemperance for fighting against the British through violent methods.¹⁴

The Zionist leadership were torn between their support to Indian nationalists and the British support they needed for a separate homeland. In the early 1930s, Zionist leadership sought contacts with Indian nationalists such as Gandhi and Nehru to solicit

¹⁰ Chatterjee Kingshuk (ed.) *India and the Middle East: Problems and Prospects* (Kolkata: University of Calcutta); Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol.48 (New Delhi: Publications Division, 1958), p.105-6.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Nicolas Blarel, *The Evolution of India's Israel Policy: Continuity, Change, and Compromise Since 1922* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2015), p.45-47.

¹³ Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol.48 (New Delhi: Publications Division, 1958), p.105-6.

¹⁴ Ibid., p.136-8.

support as they were leading figures in India's freedom struggle.¹⁵

The Palestinian issue was deliberated by Gandhi and Nehru during their interaction with Jewish and Zionist representatives.¹⁶ Their perception also about the Palestine question changed as they learned more about the intricacies of the issue, which also influenced their thinking over time. The Jewish associations admired Gandhi for his moral character, non-violence, and his philosophical world view.¹⁷ In the words of Shimoni, "*Gandhi's unique moral character could not but evoke sympathy and admiration amongst Jews.*"¹⁸

The Islamization of the Palestine problem forced the Zionist leadership to establish contact with Mufti Hajj Amin al-Husseini (mufti of the third holiest place in Islam) For instance, in a letter to Gandhi, *Jewish Frontier*, editor Hayim Greenberg of the United States of America was apprehensive about anti-Zionist feeling within India's Muslim community.¹⁹ The head of the political division of the Jewish Agency, Moshe Sharett, wanted to persuade Gandhi about the Zionist viewpoint on the Palestine issue.²⁰

The first Zionist contact that Mahatma Gandhi encountered was with the Zionist officials Selig Brodetsky (head of World Zionist Executive's political division in London) and Nahum Sokolov (president of the World Zionist Executive) on October 15, 1931, during the First Round Table Conference held in London. With Polak's letter, the Zionist officials persuaded Gandhi with a limited objective to not "*bring the problem of Palestine into the discussion of the Round Table Conference or into the atmosphere surrounding these discussions, would meet with his (the Mahatma's) approval.*"²¹ However, as Gandhi was preoccupied with India's freedom struggle, he refused to get engaged in the issue of Palestine and agreed to the Zionist members request.²²

¹⁵ P. R. Kumaraswamy, *India's Israel Policy* (New Delhi: Columbia University Press, 2010), p.64.

¹⁶ Nicolas Blarel, *The Evolution of India's Israel Policy: Continuity, Change, and Compromise Since 1922* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2015), p.43-44.

¹⁷ P. R. Kumaraswamy, *India's Israel Policy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010). p.27.

¹⁸ Gideon Shimoni, *Gandhi, Satyagraha and the Jews: A Formative Factor in India's Policy Towards Israel* (Jerusalem: Leonard Davis Institute for International Relations, 1977), p.27-8.

¹⁹ Joseph Schechtman, 'India and Israel', *Midstream*, 12, 1966, pp. 48–71.

²⁰ Gideon Shimoni, *Gandhi, Satyagraha and the Jews: A Formative Factor in India's Policy Towards Israel* (Jerusalem: Leonard Davis Institute for International Relations, 1977), p.27-8.

²¹ P.R. Kumaraswamy *India's Israel Policy*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010) p.32

²² *Ibid.*, p. 33.

Following the outbreak of the Arabs revolt in Palestine in 1936, Moshe Shertok sent Immanuel Olsvanger, a Sanskrit scholar to India as the Jewish Agency's official emissary in Palestine along with the *Jewish Advocate's* editor in Bombay,²³ A. E. Shohet to meet Mahatma and secure his support for Jewish aspirations. In 1937, Gandhi's close friend Kallenbach visited India and secured a private statement from Mahatma on Jewish aspirations. In the words of Gideon Shimoni, although the Mahatma "*had indicated to Kallenbach his willingness to help Jews and Arabs get together, it is significant that he never made this offer public.*"²⁴

Though Gandhi supported the homeland for Jews, he desired it only with the Arabs consent. He emphasised the need for Jewish accommodation for Arabs. In later years, other Jewish individuals such as Hayim Greenberg, Judah Magnes, Louis Fischer, Martin Buber, and Sidney Silverman met Gandhi for his support for the Zionist cause.²⁵

However, in reaction to the Zionists claims over a separate homeland for Jews, Gandhi in his *Harijan* article on November 26, 1938, admitted that, he had written "several letters" that were received by him "*asking me to declare my views about the Arab-Jew question in Palestine and the persecution of Jews in Germany.*" He further observed: "*not without hesitation that I venture to offer my views on this very difficult question.*" In his article, while expressing his sympathies for Jews sufferings and persecution, he viewed them as "untouchables of Christianity." He further said, "*that there is a parallel between their treatment by Christians and the treatment of untouchables by Hindus is very close. Religious sanction has been invoked in both cases for the justification of the inhuman treatment meted out to them.*" He further argued, "*But my sympathy does not blind me to the requirement of justice. The cry for the national home for the Jews does not make much appeal to me. The sanction for it is sought in the Bible and the tenacity with which the Jews have.....where they are born and where they earn their livelihood?*"²⁶

²³ Gideon Shimoni, *Gandhi, Satyagraha and the Jews: A Formative Factor in India's Policy Towards Israel* (Jerusalem: Leonard Davis Institute for International Relations, 1977), p.31.

²⁴ Ibid., p.36.

²⁵ Ibid., 37-55; G. H. Jansen, *Zionism, Israel, and Asian Nationalism*, (Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1971), 177-179; Buber and Magnes, *Two Letters to Gandhi; The Jewish Advocate* (Bombay); Louis Fischer, *Gandhi and Stalin: Two Signs at the World's Crossroads*. (Delhi: Rajkamal Publications, 1947) p.42.

²⁶ Harijan, (November 26, 1938), in Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, *The Collected Works of Mahatma*

Several pro-Zionists criticized the ideas of Gandhi, and ended interactions with him.²⁷ For instance, *Jewish Advocate* based in Bombay's editor, A.E. Shohet, criticised Gandhi for his support to Arabs against Jews. *Jewish Frontier's* editor, Hayim Greenberg, said Gandhi ignored the Jewish homeland's existential necessity. In two open letters, the Austrian Jewish philosophers, Martin Bueber and Judah Magnes, Hebrew University's rector responded to Gandhi's article. Bueber admitted in his 1939 open letter that the Jews always did not do full "*justice to the Arab way of life.*"²⁸ Gandhi was sharply criticized by Bueber and Henry Polak for his suggestion on non-violent resistance (Satyagraha) by German Jews against the persecution by Nazis.²⁹

In 1939, when the World War II broke out, Kallenbach met Gandhi, along with Tel Aviv's town clerk, Joseph Nedivi. He explained to Gandhi about the contributions made by Jewish settlers to the agricultural and economic development of Palestine. However, Gandhi's opinion did not change after this meeting. Later, in March 1946, Gandhi met the American pacifist John Haynes and British MP, Sidney Silverman. A noticeable change in Gandhi's approach was witnessed in 1946 in meeting with his biographer, Louis Fischer, a journalist where he admitted that Jews had "*prior claim to Palestine.*"³⁰

Gandhi's official position towards the separate homeland for Jews in Palestine remained unchanged as he was unequivocal about the accommodation of Arabs in Palestine and their endorsement for the Jewish cause. He felt that the methods adopted by Zionists to achieve their objectives were contradictory to his satyagraha philosophy. His 1938 statement "*Palestine belongs to the Arabs in the same sense that England belongs to the English and France to the French*" resonated with Indian policy makers their justification of West Asia policy by India.³¹

Gandhi, Vol.19 (New Delhi: Publications Division, 1958).

²⁷ Gideon Shimoni, *Gandhi, Satyagraha and the Jews: A Formative Factor in India's Policy Towards Israel* (Jerusalem: Leonard Davis Institute for International Relations, 1977), p.49.

²⁸ Ibid., p.47-9.

²⁹ Ibid., p.48.

³⁰ Fischer, Louis, *Gandhi and Stalin: Two Signs at the World's Crossroads* (New York: Harper, 1947), p.42.

³¹ P.R. Kumaraswamy *India's Israel Policy*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), pp.42-3. Also See. Nicolas Blarel, *The Evolution of India's Israel Policy: Continuity, Change, and Compromise Since 1922* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2015), p.50.

Nehru never viewed the Zionist struggle as a national liberation movement. For Nehru, a Jewish settlement is possible only in an atmosphere of peace and goodwill and not if the Zionists came to Palestine intending to colonize and dominate the country at the cost of native Palestinian Arabs. Since the announcement of the Balfour Declaration, 1917, when the British promised the same land to both the Arabs and Jews, Nehru viewed this as contradictory.³² For him, Palestine was not “a wilderness, or an empty, uninhabited place,” but it was “already somebody else’s home.”³³ Given the efforts by Zionists to establish a Jewish state on the land of Palestine, Nehru criticized these moves by them as they wanted to achieve this objective by joining hands with the British.

In 1933, Nehru writing on the Palestine problem in book, *Glimpses of World History* said:

“Adjoining Syria is Palestine, for which the British Government holds a mandate from the League of Nations... The people inhabiting it are predominantly Muslim Arabs and they demand freedom and unity with their fellow Arabs of Syria. But British policy has created a special minority problem here that of the Jews and Jews side with the British and oppose the freedom of Palestine, as they fear that this would mean Arab rule. The two pull different ways and conflicts necessarily occur. On the Arab side are numbers, on the other side great financial resources and worldwide organization of Jewry. So, England pits Jewish religious nationalism against Arab nationalism and makes it appear that her presence is necessary to act as an arbitrator and to keep the peace between the two.”³⁴

On May 20, 1933, Nehru, who remained sensitive to the understanding of the predicament of Jews, he wrote:

“The nationalist movements of India and Egypt have adopted different methods but fundamentally the urge for national freedom is the same. And the way imperialism functions in its efforts to suppress these

³² Gopal, Krishan and Sarabjit Sharma, *India and Israel: Towards Strategic Partnership* (New Delhi: Authorspress, 2007). p.113.

³³ Jawaharlal Nehru, *Glimpses of World History* (New Delhi: Penguin, 2004{1934}). pp.762-63.

³⁴ Ibid.,pp.885-7.

*nationalist movements is also much the same. So, each one of us can learn much from the other's experiences.”*³⁵

Like Gandhi, Nehru's encounter with Zionists can be traced to the Brussels International Congress against Colonial Oppression and Imperialism in 1927.³⁶ In April 1930, on behalf of the Jewish Agency Executive Gershon Agronsky visited Bombay to convince Nehru. In 1936, Oslvanger from Jewish Agency, visited India. Though he failed to change Nehru's opinion towards the Jewish aspirations in Palestine, he shared a personal bonding which lasted long after the formation of Israel.³⁷ Similarly, Chaim Weizmann, who was one of the key architects in the Balfour Declaration, met Nehru in London on July 20, 1938, and subsequently tried to persuade him over the Zionists cause.

These early contacts and interactions between Zionist representatives and Indian nationalist leaders were very limited and did not have any major impact on the Indian National Congress (hereafter, INC) approach. Although Gandhi and Nehru were not unfavourable to the Jewish aspirations in Palestine, the experience of colonial domination and the Zionist movement's collaboration with the British authorities influenced Indian nationalists' thinking. The domestic considerations such as religious separatism fostered by the Muslim League, influenced its lukewarm attitude towards Zionism.

The Khilafat Movement

Gandhi saw the resentment by Muslims on the issue of Caliphate after his arrival on India's freedom struggle and the INC. He viewed this as a golden opportunity to forge Hindu-Muslim harmony and solidify nationalist feelings among the Muslim masses, the largest minority in India through mass-based politics. Clearly stating his political intentions, he said: “*intention is to 'buy' the Indian Muslims friendship at a critical moment of their history.*”³⁸ Despite the explicit religious nature, the solidarity

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ G.H. Jansen, *Afro-Asia and Non-Alignment*, (Faber and Faber, London, 1966), p.30.

³⁷ Gideon Shimoni, *Satyagraha and the Jews: A Formative Factor in India's Policy Towards Israel* (Jerusalem: The Leonard Davis Institute for International Relations, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem).p.30.

³⁸ Young India (March 23, 1921), in Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol.19 (New Delhi: Publications Division, 1958), p.472.

was expressed by INC and Gandhi with the Muslims as they had misgivings over their distinct Islamic identity, which otherwise could diminish in the Hindu-dominated Congress party and India.

The entire issue of the Khilafat unfolded when Turkey's Sultan, known as Caliph or Khalifa, joined Germany fighting against Britain. This placed Muslims in precarious situation as they were forced to choose between their fears of Treaty of Serves dismembering the Turkish empire and their allegiance to the British in 1920.

Gandhi and other leaders within the INC saw this as an opportunity to demonstrate solidarity with Muslims in India. The Congress party viewed these fears perceived by Indian Muslim community as an opportunity to forge closer political ties with them. In fact, for the first time, Indian nationalists showed interest in foreign affairs, which had a profound impact.³⁹ In December, 1923, INC President Mohammed Ali justified INC's support for the Khilafat struggle thus: "*The Congress which called itself 'Indian' and 'National' felt the need for Muslim participation, for it could not justify its title without it.*"⁴⁰ The Khilafat movement brought the people of West Asia, especially Muslims, closer to Indian nationalists as they fought against a common imperial power.⁴¹

In March 1920, Mohammad Ali, led a Khilafat delegation and met Lloyd George, Prime Minister of Britain, in London, and expressed their concern regarding the fate of the Turkish Sultan and dismemberment of the Turkish Caliphate.⁴² Further, Ali argued, the Caliph's inability to perform traditional functions due to the dismembered state of the Ottoman Empire and, in Turkey a constitutional reform was proposed by him to secure the "*security of life and property and opportunities of autonomous development of all communities, whether Moslem, Christian or Jewish....*"⁴³

Thus, for the Turkish question settlement, the INC stated it "*in accordance with*

³⁹ P.R. Kumaraswamy *India's Israel Policy*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), p.69.

⁴⁰ For the complete text of Mohammed Ali's presidential address to the Cocanada (now Kakinada) session, see A. Moin Zaidi and Shaheda Zaidi, "The Encyclopedia of Indian National Congress," (New Delhi: S. Chand, 1977-85) Vol.8, p.184-309.

⁴¹ Gopal, Krishan and Sarabjit Sharma, *India and Israel: Towards Strategic Partnership* (New Delhi: Authorspress, 2007), p.8.

⁴² Oliver-Dee, Sean, *The Caliphate Question: The British Government and Islamic Governance* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2009), pp. 109-117.

⁴³ Ibid., p.112.

*the just and legitimate sentiments of Indian Muslims and the solemn pledges of the Prime Minister of Great Britain failing which, it warned, there will be no real contentment among the people of India.”*⁴⁴ In Calcutta (now Kolkata), in September 1920, INC called for a special session, in which a resolution was passed which emphasised the importance of Khilafat struggle:

*“In view of the fact that on the Khilafat question both the Indian and Imperial Governments have signally failed in their duty towards the Muslims of India and the Prime Minister has deliberately broken his pledge word given to them, and that it is the duty of every non-Muslim in every legitimate manner to assist his Muslim brother in his attempt to resist the religious calamity that has overtaken him.”*⁴⁵

In the same session, the INC also adopted a non-cooperation plan which called for the boycott of functions held by government officials and renunciation of titles and honorary offices.⁴⁶ In 1921, the Congress Working Committee (hereafter, CWC) urged soldiers of India in West Asia who fought in World War I to abandon their cooperation with the army of the British.

The Khilafat movement mobilization faded away in 1922 and 1923, as many leaders associated with the movement were imprisoned. Gandhi and Ali brothers called off the non-cooperation movement after the outbreak of communal riots in Kohat in December, 1923.⁴⁷ The consequences of the INC aligning itself with Khilafat movement were not very favourable for it. The Hindu-Muslim alliance, which Gandhi despite his best efforts desperately wanted to forge, proved elusive. In the words of B.R. Nanda, a well-known historian, INC’s Khilafat solidarity *“really stemmed from the Congress leaders eagerness to appease Muslim opinion, and somehow to wean the Muslim from unquestioning loyalty to the Raj.”*⁴⁸

In 1922, through the mandate system, the British took over Iraq and Palestine by

⁴⁴ Resolution adopted at the Amritsar session of the INC. see A. Moin Zaidi and Shaheda Zaidi, “The Encyclopedia of Indian National Congress,” (New Delhi: S. Chand, 1977-85), Vol 7, p.531.

⁴⁵ Resolution adopted at the Calcutta session of the INC. Ibid., Vol.11, p.400.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 11;401.

⁴⁷ Richard E. Ward, *India’s Pro-Arab Policy: A Study in Continuity* (New York: Praeger, 1992), p. 4.

⁴⁸ B.R. Nanda, *Gandhi: Pan-Islamism, Imperialism and Nationalism in India* (Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1989), p.373.

dismantling the Ottoman Empire. Moreover, Turkish nationalists themselves under Mustafa Kemal Pasha, repudiated Pan-Islamism, abolished the Caliphate, and a new Turkish republic came into being in 1923, which ended the Khilafat movement in India.

Despite the fact that INC considered the Khilafat struggle as a driving force behind Hindu-Muslim unity and an anti-British nationalist alliance, it had a little bearing on its desired objective. The turn of events that unfolded changed the geopolitical landscape in West Asia and also influenced INC's policy towards the region.⁴⁹

Asian Relations Conference (1947)

Prior to India's partition in 1947, the United Nations General Assembly was called to address the Palestine issue. Palestine's Arab and Jewish delegations met at the Asian Relations Conference. Being mooted by Nehru, who was heading the interim government since September 1946, the conference was held between 23 March and 2 April 1947 in New Delhi. As decolonization was taking place, this conference assumed importance of global significance. India invited 32 delegations, which included the participation of a ten-member delegation from Palestine, which was headed by a Jerusalem's Hebrew University Professor, named Hugo Bergman.⁵⁰ An observer and six Arab nations represented the Arab League (Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Jordan).

The conference was crucial because Zionists promoted their goal of a Jewish homeland. During the negotiations in the conference, the speech by Bergmann was challenged by Arabs as he called for a "*Jewish 'old-new homeland' in Palestine while also explaining that their aim is not to dispossess Arabs.*"⁵¹

In the conference, Nehru argued that, "*Palestine is essentially an Arab country and no decision can be made without the consent of the Arabs and the issue would be settled between the two communities in cooperation and not by any appeal to or reliance upon any outsiders.*"⁵² Though India empathized with Jewish concerns, its support to Arab nationalism remained unwavering. Though Asian Relations

⁴⁹ P.R. Kumaraswamy (2010) *India's Israel Policy*, (New York: Columbia University Press) p.73.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p.64.

⁵¹ G.H. Jansen, *Zionism, Israel and the Asian Nationalism* (Beirut: Institute for Palestinian Studies, 1971), p.191-2.

⁵² *Asian Relations: Report of the Proceedings and Documentation of the First Asian Relations Conference*, New Delhi, March-April 1947, New Delhi, 1948, p.70.

Conference (ARC) deliberations did not result in assuaging Jewish concerns and obtaining support for Israel's creation, it had communicated the Jewish case explicitly to Indian nationalists which shaped the position of India in subsequent deliberations in the United Nations.

Role of United Nations towards Partition (1948)

In 1947, British wanted Palestine question to be addressed in the UN, Clement Attlee, persuaded Trygve Halvdan Lie to call a “*special session*” of the UN to study and ponder the “*Palestine problem*.” In light of this, the then-UN Secretary General requested a special meeting of the UN General Assembly (UNGA) after getting the required response from the member states. India supported the proposal of the British for the mediation of Palestine question through the UN.⁵³

Once member nations placed various views, the General Assembly adopted a resolution which constituted a Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP), including India, Czechoslovakia, Peru, Yugoslavia, the Netherlands, Canada, Australia, Guatemala, Sweden were other members. The main objective of the Committee was to “*ascertain and record facts and to investigate all questions and views relevant to the problem of Palestine*.” India's Ambassador to the United States, Asaf Ali, was chosen by Nehru to represent India at the first session. On the day before the First Special Session, Nehru gave a list of clear guidelines:

*“(1) To endeavour to obtain...India's membership on the Fact-Finding Committee; (2) to be most careful not to commit the Government of India to any views of substance without prior reference... (3) to support the Egyptian proposal for inclusion in the agenda an item relating to the termination of the Mandate and the declaration of Palestine's independence; (and) (4) to avoid raising issues which might affect relations between India and any other country.”*⁵⁴

The Committee's first meeting was conducted on May 26, 1947. The viewpoints of bitter arch rivals, i.e. The Jewish Agency for Palestine elucidated both

⁵³ UN document, A/AC.1./P.V.74 and Asaf Ali's statement in UN: Official Record of the First Special Session of the General Assembly, Vol. III, Main Committee 28 April-13 May UN document, A/C.1/136.

⁵⁴ Ministry of External Affairs telegram to Asaf Ali (April 24, 1947), quoted in P. R. Kumaraswamy, *India's Israel Policy*, (New Delhi: Columbia University Press, 2010), p.87.

Jews and Arabs. The Palestinians declined to cooperate with UNSCOP because they believed that an agreement to establish a separate Jewish nation had already been reached behind closed doors. As the Palestinian problem was deliberated by the UN, Asaf Ali strongly repudiated and underlined any “*exclusive linkage between religion and nation.*”⁵⁵ Though Asaf Ali opposed religion as the foundation for statehood, India was being partitioned along communal lines.

The committee completed the finalization of the report on August 31, 1947. The UNSCOP came up with two plans, which include: *Plan of Partition with Economic Union* popularly called *Majority Plan*. This plan was approved by eight members in the committee, which included: Canada, Czechoslovakia, Guatemala, Netherlands, Peru, Sweden and Uruguay. The majority plan proposed the partition of Palestine into two independent states, one Arab and the other Jewish, with an economic union between the two. The city of Jerusalem would be under the auspices of UN jurisdiction.

The *Federal State Plan*, otherwise called *Minority Plan*, was endorsed by three members (India, Iran, and Yugoslavia). The minority plan envisaged the creation of an independent federal state of Palestine which comprised Arab and Jewish states. Both the states would enjoy internal autonomy, constitutional safeguards for minorities, single Palestinian nationality and citizenship and, free access to the Holy places. Australia refused to endorse either plan. The discussions on the UNSCOP report were held in United Nations General Assembly from 25 September to 25 November 1947.

Prior to the UN vote, Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, the leader who headed the Indian delegation to the 1947 UNGA session, was unenthusiastic about the federal plan and forewarned New Delhi on October 8, 1947, that: “*The majority report satisfied the Jews. It is naturally opposed by the Arabs. The minority report, on the other hand, is acceptable neither to Jews nor Arabs. For us to advocate a Minority report would please no one and lead us nowhere.*”⁵⁶

However, speaking at the UNGA session on 11 October 1947, she argued that the peace in Palestine and West Asia is essential due to its geographical proximity with India. Being largely an Arab state, she suggested that wherever Jews had a clear majority, they should be given substantial autonomy in an independent Palestine.⁵⁷

On 29 November, 1947, the resolution was passed in the UN General Assembly

⁵⁵ ORGA, First Special Session, Vol.II, 29 April-7 May 1947, pp.38,42,95.

⁵⁶ P. R. Kumaraswamy, *India's Israel Policy*, (New Delhi: Columbia University Press, 2010), p.104.

⁵⁷ UNGA, *Second Session, Ad Hoc Committee on the Palestinian Question, 25 September-25 November 1947, Summary Records of Meeting*, 62.

(UNGA) in which the partition plan was endorsed by 33 states, which indeed was a majority, while India, voted against the partition plan which was a member of 13 delegations and seven non-Arab countries, and with 19 abstentions.⁵⁸ On 4 December 1947, in response to motion moved by Professor N.G. Ranga on withdrawal of support for a federal solution, Nehru informed the Constituent Assembly, that India's suggestion of a federal state “*was not only a fair and equitable solution of the problem but the only real solution of the problem.*”⁵⁹

Major powers like the USA and UK restrained themselves in UNSCOP negotiations. However, on the last day of the UNGA, Central Intelligence Agency (C.I.A) sent a report titled “*The Consequences of the Partition of Palestine,*” to President Truman stating that: “*The Jewish community in Palestine would collapse under Arab attack and warned that partition and war in the Middle East would do serious harm to American interests in the region.*”

In the wake of the 29 November UN vote, New Delhi made another fruitless attempt to reassess the federal plan solution. Benegal Narsing Rau, an adviser to India's Constituent Assembly and part of the Indian delegation to the United Nations, was tasked by Nehru with finding a solution, as India was included in a 12-member subcommittee to design a provisional post-Mandate government for Palestine. Nehru described the proposal drafted by Rau as “*a half-way house between the partition and some kind of federation*”⁶⁰ which gained Weizmann's interest as well. As violence intensified in Palestine, a Second Special Session of the UN General Assembly was convened to discuss the Arab-Jewish violence. Due to the apprehension of adverse diplomatic consequences, New Delhi advised its UN delegation not to go ahead with the plan. Instead, it advised, “*to persuade the Committee to adopt the cardinal principle of cooperation between Arabs and Jews.*”⁶¹ Irrespective of the violence, the British authorities decided to pull out by May 15, 1948.

⁵⁸ UNGA, Second Session, Vol.II, 110-128th meetings, 1424.

⁵⁹ India, *Constituent Assembly Debates*, Part I, Vol.2, No.5, (New Delhi: Parliamentary Publications, 1947-9), p.126.

⁶⁰ P. R. Kumaraswamy, *India's Israel Policy*, (New Delhi: Columbia University Press, 2010), p.106.

⁶¹ p.104.

Recognition of Israel and Initial Rumblings (1950)

Due to its Chinese recognition in 1950 and discriminatory policies towards the Jewish state by delaying the same, India found itself in a contradictory predicament over time. In due course, Israel was also recognized by a number of other Islamic nations. After over 28 months of hesitation and amid disputes and many stances, India finally granted Israel's request for recognition in September 1950 by announcing: "*The Government of India have decided to accord recognition to the Government of Israel.*" However, the recognition without relationship reaffirmed India's strategy of maintaining its distance from Israel without engaging in any diplomatic interactions and called into question New Delhi's approach towards Israel.

The ambiguous official statement by the Government of India over the recognition of Israel, elicited divergent opinions among Indian scholars as well. Two eminent Indian academics, B. N. Mehrish and K. P. Mishra offer contradictory views. In the words of K.P. Mishra, "*India had generally extended recognition without any reference to its de facto or de jure status*"⁶² Contrarily, in the words of B. N. Mehrish, "*in case India has accorded only de facto recognition ... that has not been followed by full diplomatic intercourse or the conferment of diplomatic immunities upon their representatives.*"⁶³ According to the aforementioned justifications, India's recognition of Israel was both de jure and de facto. India firmly supported Israel as a nation state in the early years of both countries' independence, despite its de facto non-recognition. The relations eventually normalised as a result of numerous circumstances and considerations, and India even extended de jure recognition in 1950.

As noted by P. R. Kumaraswamy, these include, firstly, the growing/rising amity between Pakistan and Arab nations, which were tightly interwoven with one another due to religious similarity. Second, since Israel had been around for two years, there was growing American pressure on India to acknowledge it properly. With regard to the recognition problem, the pro-Indian Congressman Emanuel Celler also had a significant impact on Indian leadership. Thirdly, nations that supported the Federal Plan, including Iran and Yugoslavia, also recognised Israel. Not only had these nations recognised Israel before India, but so had the three Islamic governments of Iran, Indonesia, and Turkey.

⁶² K.P. Mishra, "India's Policy of Recognition of States and Governments," *The American Journal of International Law* 55, No.2 (April, 1961):404-9.

⁶³ B.N. Mehrish, *India's Recognition Policy Towards New Nations* (New Delhi, 1972).

India voted against Israel's membership in the UN because it has never wished to acknowledge a state that was established via the use of force rather than through talks, despite the fact that Israel was accepted as a member on the UN platform. Chief Delegate of India, M.C. Setalvad, made this claim. Fifthly, India believed that by recognising Israel, it could play a mediating role or take a conciliatory stance in the Arab-Israeli conflict rather than adhering to the concept of non-recognition.⁶⁴

India adopted a wait-and-see attitude toward a state that already existed in light of the aforementioned circumstances. However, it is impossible to overlook the reality that domestic factors contributed to India's delaying of Israel's recognition. India's recognition strategy was severely hampered by its roughly 11 percent Muslim population as well as the influence of Arab governments.

Additionally, a large portion of the domestic population supported India's recognition policy. Significant Indian political organisations including Jana Sangh and Swatantra Party questioned the excessive holdup in India's recognition of Israel. The identical issue came up multiple times throughout the debates in the Constituent Assembly. H.V. Kamath brought up the issue of India's lack of recognition of Israel in August 1948. A resolution mandating Israel's quick recognition was also approved by the All India Hindu Mahasabha.

Dr. Walter Eytan visited India in 1952 after it recognised Israel, pleading with Nehru to establish diplomatic ties between India and Israel. Even if Mr. Eytan's journey to India did not result in a paradigm shift in India's attitude toward Israel, it did allow for the establishment of an "immigration office," which in January 1953 became an Israeli Consulate in Bombay (now Mumbai).

Gabriel Doron succeeded F.W. Pollack, who had been appointed honorary consul, as the first formal career diplomat and was granted the rank of regular consul. The Consular Staff had, however, been subject to travel limitations, which Israel did not appreciate. Despite the official recognition, relations with Israel were non-committal and low-key. An invitation was not extended by India to Israel to the NAM and Afro-Asian grouping which can be attributed to the fact there was resentment from the Arab nations. In the words of Efraim Inbar, "*India's reluctance to have full diplomatic relations were obviously related to the fact that the Arab states were numerous, while Israel was just one small country*"

⁶⁴ P. R. Kumaraswamy, "India's Recognition of Israel, September 1950," *Middle Eastern Studies* 31, No. 1 (January, 1995), pp. 124-138.

Bandung Conference (1955)

The preliminary informal meetings held in Bogor (Indonesia), and Colombo (Ceylon) is where the idea of Bandung Conference came into being.⁶⁵ For the conference, these two meetings laid the foundation. In April-May 1954, Sir John Kotelawala, Prime Minister of Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) convened the first informal gathering in Colombo. Asia's prime ministers, including those of Indonesia, Burma (now Myanmar), Pakistan and India, attended the summit. The leaders discussed the institutionalization of the Afro-Asian movement, the predominant international and regional situation, and the promotion of increased economic and cultural cooperation between the newly independent Asian and African nations.⁶⁶ As they discussed their future course of action in the meeting, a draft resolution was introduced by the Prime Minister of Pakistan Mohammed Ali which stated that against the international law, Israel was created.⁶⁷

By then, India had recognized Israel and hence opposed the resolution moved by Pakistan. Other Asian powers which recognized Israel such as Burma and Sri Lanka in 1954, and leaders from Indonesia also acknowledged the recognition of the Jewish state.⁶⁸ In spite of Pakistan's strong opposition, two paragraphs from the original resolution were deleted, and the final statement only mentioned Palestinian refugees.⁶⁹ A final communiqué was issued by five leaders without any direct condemnation of Israel but expressed their sympathy over the plight of Arab refugees and urged them to return to their original homes.

Islamabad was able to position itself as an ally of the Arabs due to Nehru's mediation for a compromise and oppose Pakistan's resolution on Palestine, which set

⁶⁵ G.H. Jansen., *Afro-Asia and Non-Alignment*, (London: Faber and Faber, 1966), p.250-53.

⁶⁶ Tan, Seng and Amitav Acharya (eds), *Bandung Revisited: The Legacy of the 1955 Asian-African Conference* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2008).

⁶⁷ G.H. Jansen, *Zionism, Israel and the Asian Nationalism* (Beirut: Institute for Palestinian Studies, 1971) p.250-1.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ For example, see the speech of Pakistan's foreign minister, Muhammad Zafrullah Khan, "Thanksgiving Day at Lake Success, New York, 27 November 1949," in Khalidi, Walid, ed., *From Heaven to Conquest: Readings in Zionism and the Palestine Problem Until 1948*, (Beirut: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1987) pp.709-722.

the stage for future clashes between the two nations over Israel.⁷⁰ A few months later, Israel question resumed again at the second preparatory meeting held in Bogor (Indonesia), which was attended by five Asian powers in December, 1954. The major objective of this meeting was to work out an agenda and formulate a basic framework for the Bandung Conference. The discussions about the list of Afro-Asian countries to be invited to the conference were also held during this meeting. The Bandung Conference was meant, “to promote goodwill and cooperation” among Afro-Asian countries and include them to “become better acquainted with one another’s point of view,” and hence an invitation was extended to “all countries in Asia and Africa, which have independent governments.”⁷¹

However, invitations to two countries, namely, Israel and China, became controversial. Initially, Nehru supported the inclusion of two nations, arguing that both are geographically located in Asian continent and independent. At the same time, New Delhi viewed that the absence of China and Israel would make Afro-Asian meeting incomplete.⁷² Of the twenty-six countries, eighteen that attended the Conference had not recognized China.⁷³ Israel lost China to the Arab states at the bilateral level and had to wait nearly 30 years to formally establish diplomatic ties with Beijing. China, also viewed that relations with the Arab world were very important for its UN membership. During the years of stagnation of ties with Israel, China established formal diplomatic ties with several Arab and Muslim countries.

However, on the Indian side, Nehru was aware that while a compromise or persuasion with the Arab states was conceivable on China, it was not possible on Israel. He was also concerned about the Arab states attitude in West Asia to Kashmir dispute as Pakistan tried to internationalize the issue by trying to obtain support from them based on commonality of religion.⁷⁴ Prior to the discussions at the Bogor summit, the Arab League Council decided in a gathering of Arab nations in Cairo that they would not

⁷⁰ Arthur G. Rubinooff “Normalization of India-Israel Relations: Stillborn for Forty Years”, *Asian Survey* 35, No.5 (May 1995):491.

⁷¹ For the complete text of the joint communique issued on December 29, 1954, see India, Ministry of External Affairs *Annual Report 1954-1955*, (New Delhi: External Publicity Division), p.55-58.

⁷² G. H. Jansen, *Zionism, Israel and the Asian Nationalism* (Beirut: Institute for Palestinian Studies, 1971) p.252-3.

⁷³ Hashim S.H. Behbehani, *China’s Foreign Policy in the Arab World, 1955-1975: Three Case Studies* (London, Routledge, 1981), p.4.

⁷⁴ Michael Brecher, *The New States of Asia: A Political Analysis* (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), p.130.

attend the conference if Israel is represented, which was stated in an official note to the five Asian powers.⁷⁵

During the deliberations in Bogor, Nehru was joined by his Burmese counterpart U Nu who had good relations with Israel. Burma supported extending an invitation to Israel and threatened to withhold Rangoon's participation and boycott the conference if Israel were not invited. Later, it became subdued and fell in line with the emerging consensus.⁷⁶ Indonesia and Pakistan vehemently opposed Israel's participation in the conference. Though Ceylon favoured Israel's participation, it opined that Arabs should be "*approached and reasoned with.*" However, the ultimatum issued by Arab states, left a choice for India and Burma to choose between the participation of Arab states and Israel, and they opted for the former. Both leaders Nehru and U Nu faced the threat of boycott from Arab states and ultimately bowed to their pressure and accepted their dictates over Israel.

According to Nehru's close associate V.K. Krishna Menon, India wanted to invite Israel, but only with the consent of the Arab countries.⁷⁷ Nehru felt that the major objective of the conference would be undermined if the nonattendance of Arab states and many Muslim countries (including Indonesia and Pakistan) took place it would have taken away the legitimacy and substance of the conference.⁷⁸ Though, Nehru was disappointed and felt uncomfortable over Israel's exclusion in the conference, he made sure that the conference would have a wider (if not full) representation. Further, Nehru felt that any policy against the wishes of Arabs might be unjustifiable, and Israel's exclusion was the only way forward.

During the Bogor discussions, the Indian decision was very pragmatic. Though Nehru wanted Israel to participate in the conference, the boycott by the Arab states due to the representation of Israel made India reconsider its decision. Also, the Pakistani factor had a significant bearing on India's policy towards Israel. Menon disclosed to Brecher that Nehru felt New Delhi could not remain indifferent to Islamabad, unlike other countries, because West supports Pakistan and India can't afford to have more

⁷⁵ Ran Kochan, "Israel in Third World Forums", in *Israel in the Third World*, ed. Michael Curtis and Susan Aurelia Gitelson (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1976), p.251.

⁷⁶ G.H. Jansen., *Afro-Asia and Non-Alignment*, (London: Faber and Faber,1966), p.174-75.

⁷⁷ S. Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru: A Biography*. 3 vols. (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 232.

⁷⁸ Nicolas Blarel, *The Evolution of India's Israel Policy: Continuity, Change, and Compromise Since 1922* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2015), p.122.

adversaries.⁷⁹ In the end, Israel was excluded from the Bandung Conference, while eight Arab countries (Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen) were invited to it. In addition to these eight Arab countries, Iran, Afghanistan, Turkey and Pakistan attended the conference in Bandung.⁸⁰ Twelve were Muslim majority countries out of the twenty-nine participants in the Conference.

In short, it can be inferred that Nehru wanted Israel's inclusion in the conference due to his ideological position that all independent Asian states must participate. At the same time, there were diplomatic compulsions to accept the views of many Arab states.

In January 1955, in Rangoon, David Hacohen, Ambassador of Israel to Burma, met Nehru and Krishna Menon and expressed disappointment over Bandung Conference and Israel's exclusion from it. Hacohen was informed by Nehru that, although he was concerned about the absence of the Jewish state, they were left with no choice and were compelled to take this decision due to certain diplomatic pressures, and the only option would have been to call off the conference. Sharett, Israel's Foreign Affairs Minister also criticised the resolution in Bogor that the status of Israel was not recognized and its "*rightful place at the conference.*"⁸¹

At the conference, a resolution was introduced on West Asia, which, stated the creation of Israel under the aegis of UN an "*immoral violation of human principles.*"⁸² The Arabs and Nehru exchanged views with each other in an important debate on the Palestine issue. In a statement made by Nehru, solidarity was expressed for the refugees from Arab states. He refrained from directly criticizing Israel and urged the Arabs to negotiate with Israelis to resolve the Palestine issue peacefully. Nehru criticized Ahmad Shukeiri's (Palestinian delegate in Syrian delegation) statement on the Arab-Israeli conflict not being solved through negotiations.⁸³

Though Arab delegates were open to negotiations, they wanted them only within the framework of UN resolutions on the refugees problem, the status of Jerusalem, and territorial question. As Israel had refused such negotiations, Arab

⁷⁹ Michael Brecher, *India and World Politics: Krishna Menon's View of the World*. (Bristol: Oxford University Press, 1968), p.80.

⁸⁰ Michael Brecher, *The New States of Asia: A Political Analysis*. (London: Oxford University Press, 1959), p. 133.

⁸¹ Nicolas Blarel, *The Evolution of India's Israel Policy: Continuity, Change, and Compromise Since 1922* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2015), p.122.

⁸² Richard E. Ward, *India's Pro-Arab Policy: A Study in Continuity* (New Delhi: Praeger, 1992), p.103.

⁸³ Jonathan Goldstein "The Republic of China and Israel," 1911-2003, *Israel Affairs* 10, No.1-2, pp. 223-53.

delegates paid little heed to Nehru's advice.⁸⁴ The Arab states and Pakistan were forced to withdraw their support for a resolution that would have directly condemned Israel since the Conference's voting procedure needed unanimity.

Nevertheless, the Bandung Conference had significant takeaways which included:

- (i) Despite being an Asian country, the conference culminated in long term institutionalization of Israel's exclusion by a majority of Afro-Asian countries and its diplomatic isolation from Asia. This was an important outcome as Israel's opportunity to participate in any Afro-Asian countries gatherings was wholly hindered.
- (ii) As a consequence of this, Israel was denied membership in the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) which, was launched in Belgrade (former Yugoslavia) in 1961 and the Group of 77. Henceforth, Israel was sharply criticised in all NAM declarations.
- (iii) In the aftermath of the diplomatic setback at Bandung and due to the *non-relations* with most of the Asian states, Israel looked towards fostering ties with Europe as major countries like India and China drifted away from Israel. Disappointed by unsuccessful diplomatic efforts, Israel looked towards Western powers for defending its security and economic interests.⁸⁵ In his memoirs, Eytan acknowledged that Israel suffered a humiliating diplomatic setback after the Afro-Asian Conference because it increased its isolation within the region.⁸⁶
- (iv) The conference became a major turning point in India's Israel policy though it was not opposed to the prospects of normalization as Nehru wanted to extend invitation to it for the Bandung Conference. However, he had to defer due to the boycott threat from Arab countries. As Bandung symbolized Israel's exclusion, hopes faded away from either any Afro-Asian group or India's role for moderation between Arabs and Israel.⁸⁷ Further, New Delhi was deterred from becoming more receptive to Israel's manoeuvres due to the Kashmir dispute with Islamabad. India believed that improved ties with Israel may undermine the Arab states' backing for New Delhi's position on Kashmir.

⁸⁴ Ran Kochan, "Israel in Third World Forums", in *Israel in the Third World* ed. Michael Curtis and Susan Aurelia Gitelson (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1976). p.251.

⁸⁵ Avi Shlaim "Israel between East and West, 1948-1956," *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 36, No.4, (November, 2004) pp. 657-73.

⁸⁶ Ibid., p.729.

⁸⁷ Prithvi Ram Mudiam, *India and the Middle East* (London: British Academic Press, 1994). p. 158.

(v) To enhance their interests in the strategically important region, the super powers tried to exploit the situation while the Arab countries felt that dependence neither on East nor West, must be avoided.⁸⁸ India was also concerned over American attempts to create a regional defence alliance in West Asia with Pakistan (a staunch supporter of Arabs) as an important player. It can be said that, to an extent, New Delhi succeeded in foiling these moves and convincing the Arab world not to join any military alliance sponsored by external powers.

Suez Canal Crisis (1956)

Another significant turning point in India's attitude toward West Asia is the Suez Canal crisis. India feared that the consequences of this crisis could affect New Delhi politically and economically for the following reasons: Firstly, it highlighted India's stakes in the security of West Asia while simultaneously deepening engagement with Egypt and other Arab states. Secondly, India reneged from its commitment to normalise ties with Israel. Thirdly, India had significant economic interests in the region. Suez Canal was very important for India because 70 per cent of its exports pass through this region, and any dispute here would directly affect India's economic life and development. In Lok Sabha, on August 08, 1956, in a statement, Nehru said: "*India was not a 'disinterested party' but a 'principal user of this waterway' whose 'economic life and development' was directly affected by the disputes.*"⁸⁹ Fourthly, as the main user of the Suez Canal, it reaffirmed India's position on freedom of navigation and security for canal users.

In July 1956, after the tripartite Bironi meeting in Yugoslavia, the USA and UK withdrew financial assistance for Aswan High Dam construction across the Nile. As a retaliatory measure, Egyptian President Nasser nationalised the Suez Canal. On the same day, Israeli shipping access to the Suez Canal and Straits of Tiran was closed by Egypt. This gesture by Nasser was viewed as defying European powers. Nehru concurred with Egypt's nationalisation move and in the Lok Sabha, he made a statement on 8 August, 1956 that it is within the framework of Egyptian laws.⁹⁰

Though India supported the nationalisation of the Suez Canal, it expressed

⁸⁸ Don Peretz, Non-Alignment in the Arab World, *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 362, Nonalignment in Foreign Affairs (November 1965), pp. 36-43.

⁸⁹ India, *Lok Sabha Debates*, Vol.7, Pt 2, (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1956),p.2536-44.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

displeasure over the *modus operandi* of the action. Regretting the unilateral move by Egypt, India feared that in the absence of a peaceful solution, this could escalate into a military confrontation. Nehru, in Lok Sabha, stated that the use of force by the British and French to settle the dispute is not the right way. He further asserted that Egyptian sovereignty must not be violated. Though India was not concerned about the legitimacy of nationalisation, Nehru wanted an assurance from Egypt that without any discriminatory measures, the Suez Canal would remain available to all.⁹¹ On 16 August, 1956, Nehru called upon all the countries to support the Constantinople Convention of 1888.⁹² Consequently, on September 20, 1956, the same was reiterated by India's defence minister Krishna Menon in London Conference who stated that nationalization move by Egyptian authorities was in compliance with the Egyptian laws.⁹³

As India believed in a peaceful solution, it wanted Egypt, France, and the UK to keep open the communication channel and find a mutually acceptable solution. India was disappointed over the absence of Egypt at the London Conference.⁹⁴ The Permanent Representative to the UN from India, Arthur Lall, who accompanied the Indian delegation led by Menon, was in contact with Egypt at regular intervals during the talks held at the London Conference. Ali Sabri, a personal advisor of Nasser, was a member of the Indian delegation.⁹⁵

Despite Egypt's desire for India to abstain from the conference, Nehru felt that the communication channel must always remain open, and dialogue was necessary to find a solution. He also viewed that the conference was an opportunity to present

⁹¹ Sarvepalli Gopal, "India, the Crisis, and the Non-Aligned Nations," in *Suez 1956: The Crisis and Its Consequences* ed. W.M. Roger and Louis and Roger Owen (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

⁹² On 29 October, 1888, the Convention of Constantinople treaty was signed by Austria-Hungary, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Russian Empire, Ottoman Empire, and United Kingdom. The major provision of the convention was to remain the Suez Canal open to all merchants and naval vessels in times of war and peace.

⁹³ For the complete text of Menon's statement at the London Conference, see U.S. State Department, *The Suez Canal Problem*, p.159-178.

⁹⁴ James Eayrs, "The Commonwealth and Suez, A Documentary Survey" (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), p.141-2.

⁹⁵ Interview with Arthur All (1990), United Nations Oral History Project, 27 June.

Available at: <http://www.unmultimedia.org/oral> history/2011/10/lall-arthur-samuel/ (accessed 15 October 2019).

Egypt's grievances on the global forum.⁹⁶ Urging Nasser to show restraint on the crisis in a telegram despatched to Egypt on August 5, Nehru said, that India will not accept any settlement without the consultation of Egypt.⁹⁷

From New Delhi's own bitter experience over Kashmir issue in the past, Nehru cautioned Nasser against taking up the matter at the UN. India was very clear in its policy that it would leave no stone unturned to defend Egyptian sovereignty, and any decision without considering Egypt was completely unacceptable.⁹⁸

Nehru pushed for a negotiated, peaceful resolution while attempting to prevent a war and wanted to preserve ties with both Egypt and West by pursuing a mediatory role. Any imposition of decision on Egypt by western powers could lead to conflict. In view of the above, a delegation from New Delhi decided to visit London.⁹⁹

At the London Conference, India's Krishna Menon suggested a five-point plan for the Suez Canal crisis (alternative to U.S. Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles plan) which included: (1) "Recognition of Egyptian sovereignty (2) Egyptian ownership of Suez Canal by recognising it as an integral part of Egypt. (3) Upholding freedom of navigation as per the 1888 Convention and efforts to update it. (4) Consulting associations must be formed on a geographical basis to protect the interests of users. (5) Egypt must transmit an annual report of the Egyptian Corporation for the Suez Canal to the UN."¹⁰⁰ In order to resolve the conflict, India tried to alleviate the concerns of Western powers while simultaneously securing Egyptian sovereignty due to the importance of the Canal.

Out of the twenty-two countries, (including India) that participated in the Conference, eighteen countries including, Iran, Pakistan, Turkey, supported Dulles's plan while Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Soviet Union supported India's proposals. Both Nehru and Menon feared that unless Egypt eased, the pivot would shift to the USA. As the

⁹⁶ Mohamed Hassanein Heikal, "The Cairo Document: The Inside Story of Nasser and His Relationship with World Leaders, Rebels, and Statesman" (New York: Doubleday, 1973). p.282.

⁹⁷ To Nasser, August 5, 1956, *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, Second Series (SWJNSS), 34, (New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, 1984–2017) p.336-7.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 337-38.

⁹⁹ Lok Sabha Speeches, *Jawaharlal Nehru, India's Foreign Policy: Selected Speeches*, September 1946-April 1961 (New Delhi: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1961), p.353-54.

¹⁰⁰ India, Lok Sabha, *Foreign Policy of India: Texts of Documents*, 1947-1959 (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1959), pp. 249-250.

efforts were underway from the Indian side for the resumption of dialogue to settle the dispute between conflicting parties, Egypt, France, and United Kingdom wrote to the UN requesting it to take the Suez Canal crisis into account.

As the threat of war receded, for the time being, Krishna Menon was sent by Nehru to the UN to hold discussions with other nations over the proposal of the establishment of the Canal User's Association. An agreement put forth by New Delhi stipulated that the Suez Canal was an essential component of Egypt and that the Egyptian Suez Canal Authority was responsible for running the Canal; the representatives of Canal users must deliberate with Egyptian Suez Canal Authority for maintenance; the cooperation between Canal Users and Authority, and in case of disputes, arbitration option was suggested; freedom of navigation across the sea in adherence to the 1888 Convention.¹⁰¹

Though the proposal attempted to address the concerns of several countries, it had a serious flaw; neither the interests of Israel nor its inclusion in the User's Association were taken into account. New Delhi failed to adequately address the discrimination towards Tel Aviv by Arab states as Israeli shipping was denied access to the Canal. Despite the fact that India advocated for universal freedom of navigation, this was a clear violation of the 1888 Convention and the UNSC resolution of 1951. On this question, India's Krishna Menon supported Egypt and voted against the UNSC resolution of 1951. A disillusioned and isolated Israel was indirectly pushed by India to side with Western powers as it failed to address the concerns and grievances of Israel.¹⁰²

Prior to the nationalisation, there had been statements from the Israeli side to integrate with the Asian concert of nations, For example, Golda Meir, Israel's Minister of Foreign Affairs, said that naturally, Israel sees itself as a vital component of the Asian continent.¹⁰³ But by October 1956, it was decided that its cooperation with Britain and France against Egypt was vital. In the end, if New Delhi viewed the Suez Canal crisis as one of *Asia versus the West*, imperialism *versus* nationalism, the West

¹⁰¹ Ibid. 247-259.

¹⁰² Michael Brecher, *India and World Politics: Krishna Menon's View of the World*. (Bristol: Oxford University Press, 1968), p.67-8, 77.

¹⁰³ Meron Medzini, "Reflections on India's Asian Policy", in *Israel in the Third World*, ed. Michael Curtis and Susan Aurelia Gitelson, 200-211. (New Brunswick, N.J: Transaction, 1976). Originally published in *Midstream*, 18, no.6 (June-July 1972), 25-35.

viewed it as internationalism *versus* nationalism, democracy *versus* dictatorship.¹⁰⁴

Following the negotiations between Egypt and the Western powers, Resolution 118 was unanimously approved by the UNSC (sponsored by Egypt, France and the UK). This resolution has a lot of similarities with the six suggestions offered by the Indian side about Egyptian sovereignty and unrestricted access to the Canal.¹⁰⁵

As these deliberations were underway for the peaceful settlement of the Suez Crisis, the then Prime Minister of Israel, Ben Gurion, ordered his chief of staff, General Moshe Dayan, to make plans to attack Egypt. Israel spearheaded this attack by taking over the control of the Milt Pass. Two days later, Israel allied itself with two declining colonialist powers, namely, Britain and France, as they took over the control of the Suez Canal. With this offensive move by Israel, India reacted very sharply, and a statement was issued by the Ministry of External Affairs on 31 October, 1956 which denounced the Israeli invasion as a “*flagrant violation of the United Nations Charter and.... the principles laid down by the Bandung Conference. This aggression is bound to have far-reaching consequences in Asia and Africa and may even lead to war on an extended scale.*”¹⁰⁶

As Britain and France joined the Israeli aggression Nehru hardened his stance towards Israel and viewed it as the colonialism of Europe yet again being reimposed on the Afro-Asian continent. Major political parties in India condemned this move by Israeli forces. Condemning the actions by Israel, Nehru, in a letter to the US secretary of state, called Israeli invasion as a “*clear, naked aggression.*”¹⁰⁷ Nehru, writing to Prime Minister of Britain, Anthony Eden, said:

“It seems to us that this is clear aggression and a violation of the United Nations Charter. For us in India and I believe, in many other countries of Asia and elsewhere, this is a reversion to previous and unfortunate period of history when decisions were imposed by force of arms by Western powers on Asian countries. We had thought that these methods were out-of-date and would not

¹⁰⁴ Jitendra Mohan, “India, Pakistan, Suez and The Commonwealth,” *International Journal* 15, No. 3 (Summer, 1960), pp. 185-199.

¹⁰⁵ United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), *Official Records: Twelfth Session, Supplement 2 (A/3648). Report of the Security Council to the General Assembly Covering the Period July 16, 1956 to July 15, 1957.*

¹⁰⁶ India, Ministry of External Affairs, *Foreign Affairs Record* 2, no.10 (New Delhi: External Publicity Division, October 1956) p.150.

¹⁰⁷ M.S. Rajan, “India in World Affairs, 1954-56” (London: Asia Publishing House, 1964), p. 151.

be used in modern age.”¹⁰⁸

In a similar tone and tenor, Nehru told his fellow Indian citizens, “*we are going back to the predatory methods of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. But there is a difference now. There are self-respecting, independent nations in Asia and Africa which are not going to tolerate this kind of incursion by colonial powers.*”¹⁰⁹ India was extremely disappointed and dismayed by Israel’s decision to support erstwhile colonial powers Britain and France. It viewed Israel as a colonial outpost of Western imperial interests. In the UN General Assembly, Krishna Menon said: “*We desire to state without any superlatives that we regard the action of Israel as an invasion of Egyptian territory, and the introduction of the forces of the UK and France as an aggression without any qualification.*”¹¹⁰

Nehru condemned this action against Egypt by Israel. For the first time, after the tripartite aggression of Egypt, Nehru ruled out diplomatic ties with Israel. Seeking USA’s intervention, In a letter to John Foster Dulles, Nehru reiterated that the entire future of relations between Asia and Europe was in jeopardy. The Indian government anticipated significant repercussions of the crisis on it politically and economically as any “*restriction of traffic through the canal or blockade or imposition of higher tolls would have [had] harmful results and might [have] even prejudice[d] the progress of the Second Five Year Plan.*”¹¹¹ India’s Permanent Representative to the UN, Arthur Lull, called upon the Henry Cabot Lodge, American Ambassador to the UN to halt the action against Egypt by British-French-Israel.¹¹²

The military operations in Suez Canal surprised Moshe Sharett, the former Israeli Foreign Minister, who visited New Delhi secretly, during the Israeli invasion of Sinai. At the Second Asian Socialist Conference, which was held in Bombay in November 1956, he served as the delegation’s leader for the Maipai party. The final draft of the Conference criticised Israelis Suez operation, which the Israeli delegation, refused to endorse. Coincidentally, Sharett himself was firmly against the Sinai

¹⁰⁸ Nehru to Eden, d.1.11.1956, cited in S Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru: A Biography* Volume II, 1947-1956, (New Delhi, 1979). p.286.

¹⁰⁹ P. R. Kumaraswamy, *India’s Israel Policy*, (New Delhi: Columbia University Press), p.197.

¹¹⁰ UN General Assembly, *Official Records*, 1st emergency special session, plen.mtgs. November 1-10, 1956, p.31.

¹¹¹ M. S. Rajan, “India in World Affairs, 1954–1956,” (London, Asia Publishing House, 1964), p. 151.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p.152.

campaign because he thought that this would lead to negative diplomatic ramifications in Asia for this move and on 30 October 1956 met Nehru (a day after the launch of Israelis actions in Sinai) and Indian Prime Minister directly criticized the military actions by Israel in Sinai.

Nehru recognised India's sentiments and sympathy towards Israel to establish full diplomatic ties and strengthen the cooperation in the field of science and technology. For example, Nehru widely acclaimed Israeli experts agricultural assistance in the deserts of Rajasthan state. Nevertheless, as a result of this aggression, any prospects for normalizing ties with Israel were dissipated. Despite, expression of interest from the Indian side for further cooperation, Nehru thought that there would be strong Arab resentment for the normalization of ties with Israel. On 20 November, 1956, commenting on the same in the Lok Sabha, Nehru said that though New Delhi sought to narrow the gap by bringing Israel and Arab states closer to each other, this may not be possible due to existing tensions and India's exchange of diplomatic personnel with the Jewish state may not be possible.¹¹³ Further, explaining New Delhi's stand on the Israeli question in United Nations General Assembly, Menon said that India holds a distinct view which is different from Arab nations.¹¹⁴

On 22 December 1956, Anglo-French troops completed their withdrawal from Egyptian territory, and the crisis began to de-escalate. Contrarily, Israeli forces had not withdrawn. At UNGA, Indian delegation led by Krishna Menon, criticized this attitude of Israel.¹¹⁵ In follow up to this, on 19 January and 2 February 1957, India co-sponsored two resolutions deploring Israel's non-compliance with UN resolutions and withdrawal of troops.¹¹⁶

Finally, in March 1957, Israel withdrew its troops by fulfilling its armistice obligation. On 25 March, 1957, speaking in the Lok Sabha on a motion on international situation, Nehru said that this move by Israel may ease the existing tensions in region particularly in Gulf of Aqaba and Gaza. However, he forewarned that

¹¹³ India, *Lok Sabha Debates*, Vol.9:45 (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1956), p.595.

¹¹⁴ United Nations, *Official Records of the Eleventh Session of the General Assembly* (New York: United Nations General Assembly, 1957), p.329.

¹¹⁵ United Nations, *Official Records of the Eleventh Session of the General Assembly*, (New York: United Nations General Assembly, 1957), A/PV/651.

¹¹⁶ Richard Edmund Ward, *India's Pro-Arab Policy: A Study in Continuity* (New York: Praeger, 1992). p.56-7.

other problems in the region will not be solved.¹¹⁷ Condemning the military operation by Israel, Krishna Menon, on 26 March 1957, in Lok Sabha, stated that through its invasion UN Charter was not only violated by Israel but also through any kind of civilized law.¹¹⁸

India claimed at the UN that there was a legal dispute between Israel and Egypt regarding access to the Gulf of Aqaba. India declared the entire Gulf of Aden, an inland sea and claimed Egyptian sovereignty over its seas.¹¹⁹ Reiterating India's position that legal rights cannot be claimed through military invasion, Krishna Menon, in the Rajya Sabha debates, said: "*The issue of freedom of passage of Israeli ships should be submitted to the jurisdiction of international courts.*"¹²⁰ Arguing further about the Gulf of Aqaba in the United Nations, he said: "*various states have held that the gulfs and bays indenting their territories with mouths wider than that of the Gulf of Aqaba as territorial.*"¹²¹ New Delhi's position on the Gulf of Aqaba was very important because India supported Egypt's decision to bar Israeli vessels from the Gulf of Aqaba.

If we had to sum up, Suez Canal Crisis of 1956 and its impact on India's relations with Israel, it could be summarised in the following points:

1. First, although India had sympathy towards Israel and sought to foster diplomatic ties, several factors came in the way of normalising relations with Israel. India supported Arab demands, in return, hoping to obtain diplomatic support or at least their neutrality on the Kashmir dispute and other international issues. When Arab nations supported New Delhi's move for the integration of the enclave of Goa in the Indian Union, its pro-Arab policy became apparent. Portugal's unwillingness to cede control of the India's west coast enclaves of Daman, Diu, and Goa led to the suspension of diplomatic relations between India and Portugal in 1955. Egypt agreed to carry out consular functions and protect Indian interests in areas under Portugal's control in India

¹¹⁷ India, *Lok Sabha Debates*, Vol.2, (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1957), p.2801.

¹¹⁸ India, *Lok Sabha Debates*, Vol.1, No.8, (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1957), p.800-3.

¹¹⁹ United Nations, *Official Records of the Eleventh Session of the General Assembly*, (New York: United Nations General Assembly, 1957), A/PV/651.

¹²⁰ India, *Rajya Sabha Debates*, Vol. 16, No.8, (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1957), p.850.

¹²¹ Charles B. Selak Jr. "A Consideration of the Legal Status of the Gulf of Aqaba." In *The Arab-Israeli Conflict*, ed. John Norton Moore. (Princeton. N.J. Princeton University Press, 1972).p.711.

in 1958.¹²² The Israeli press sharply criticized the integration of Goa in the Indian Union, thereby, condemned its action. In the following year, UAR supported India on Kashmir as it refused to sponsor the resolution introduced by Pakistan in the UN.¹²³ In 1962, Egypt voted against a Kashmir-related resolution at the UN.

2. Second, India supported Nasser's move towards nationalisation of the Suez Canal to partly receive support from Egypt on any disputes in the future. In the conflict over the Suez Canal between Egypt and Western powers, India wanted to preserve ties with both and played a crucial role in resolving the crisis.

3. Third, India became highly critical of Israel's aggression against Egypt as the Jewish state allied with Britain and France. This action by Israel reinforced its image as a colonial outpost of Western powers and linked Israel with Western imperialism. As a writer, succinctly put it, "*Israel's actions in 1956-7 seemed to confirm pre-independence statements that had linked Zionism and British imperialism.*"¹²⁴ In an interview, Menon argued that, due to Israel's invasion of Suez Canal with British and French, it placed itself as an *imperial power* in the region and due to India's traditional anti-imperialist view and its rivalry with Pakistan, India's upgradation of diplomatic ties with Israel may not be possible.¹²⁵

4. Fourth, India had significant economic interests in West Asia due to the air space and sea lanes, which were vital for India's economic development. New Delhi's dependence on these routes was linked to the Arab countries friendship. For example, before the Suez Crisis in 1955, New Delhi transported roughly 650,000 tonnes of cargo through the Canal.¹²⁶ When India's West Asia policy was discussed in Parliament, Krishna Menon said that our policy towards the region was based on self-interests and it is in India's interests it wanted the Suez Canal to remain open.¹²⁷ In a joint address to

¹²² India, Ministry of External Affairs, *Foreign Affairs Record* 4, No.7 (New Delhi: External Publicity Division, July 1958); Najma Heptullah, *Indo-West Asian Relations: The Nehru Era*, (New Delhi: Allied, 1991), p.95.

¹²³ A. K. Banerjee, "India and West Asia.: Changing Images Reflect Shifts in Regional Balance of Power," *The Round Table*, 77, No.305 (1988) p.26–38.

¹²⁴ Nicolas Blarel, *The Evolution of India's Israel Policy: Continuity, Change, and Compromise Since 1922* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2015), p.130.

¹²⁵ Michael Brecher, *India and World Politics: Krishna Menon's View of the World*. (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), p.78,80-1.

¹²⁶ India, *Lok Sabha Debates*, Vol.1, No.8, (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1957),p.800-3.

¹²⁷ *Ibid*.

the Parliament of India, the then President, in May 1957, Dr. Rajendra Prasad applauded the Suez Canal's reopening to traffic.¹²⁸

Thus, the Suez Crisis signalled a decline in India's relations with Israel, and the likelihood of their engaging in diplomatic relations diminished. Following the Suez Crisis, Israel's condemnation by India, and its deteriorated relations with Arab neighbours in the region conflicted India's mediatory role, if any, between the two antagonists.¹²⁹

For instance, in March 1959, Krishna Menon, talking to the press in US, said that normalization of ties with the Jewish state by India may complicate the West Asian crisis, thereby, not reducing the tension in the region.¹³⁰ The same was reiterated by Nehru to Yoga Allen, an Israeli spokesperson, that due to series of unfortunate events in West Asia, India could not establish diplomatic ties with Israel which may deteriorate the situation further in the region.¹³¹

Even though Nehru was quite clear about his government's view on the Jewish state, a number of domestic and global events also had a significant impact on this choice. The relations between Beijing and New Delhi drew the world's attention. By 1959, the Chinese tried to exert its influence at all levels in the Arab world. New Delhi's rival (Islamabad) tacit understanding with Beijing was very obvious. At this juncture, India was not keen to lose the good-will it had obtained in the Arab world by dragging Israel into Indo-Arab relations.¹³² Additionally, the rapprochement between New Delhi and Tel Aviv was hampered by Israel's growing relationship with the United States on the one hand and New Delhi's Cairo-centric policy, which made Egypt the gateway to its interaction with West Asia, on the other.¹³³ Therefore, India's policy toward West Asia became more friendly to Arabs and less hostile to Israel.

Despite India's decision to defer diplomatic ties with Israel, the Jewish state

¹²⁸ India, Lok Sabha Debates Vol.1, No 3, (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1957),p.57-8.

¹²⁹ Nicolas Blarel, *The Evolution of India's Israel Policy: Continuity, Change, and Compromise Since 1922* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2015), p.134.

¹³⁰ Ibid., p.129.

¹³¹ *The Hindu*, 22 March 1959.

¹³² R.K. Srivastava, "India-Israel Relations," *The Indian Journal of Political Science*, 31, No.3 (July-September, 1970) p. 248.

¹³³ Prithvi Ram Mudiam, "India and the Arab-Jewish/Israeli Dispute: A Reappraisal," in *India in World Affairs: Towards the 21st Century* ed. Mangesh Kulkarni and Usha Thakkar (New Delhi, Himalaya Publication House, 1994), p.210

continued to make efforts to engage (at least informally) with India. For example, in a meeting convened by Chester Bowles, American diplomat in Washington, Nehru met Abba Eban, Israeli diplomat and Jewish World Congress's president Nahum Goldmann. However, there was no breakthrough in the meeting, and Goldmann failed to convince Nehru, and the status quo remained. It was judged by Goldmann that attitude towards the Jewish state by Nehru was *ambivalent*.¹³⁴

Though there were no major changes in India's Israel policy, the contacts (private and official) continued between the two countries. For instance, from Jerusalem's Hebrew University, a professor named L.A. Meir, was invited to the All India Universities Conference held in Calcutta in January 1956. In October 1958, Levi Eshkol, Israeli Finance Minister, visited India and met his counterpart Moraji Desai during the International Monetary Fund and World Bank conventions in New Delhi. In October 1959, Mordechai Ben-Tov, visited New Delhi upon the invitation extended by Indian government.¹³⁵ These interactions clearly demonstrated that the Jewish state was not as insignificant as it appears to be in India's foreign policy.

After 1956, Asia became a challenging region for Israel, notwithstanding its diplomatic triumphs in Africa. Moshe Sharett, Israel's Foreign Minister from 1948 to 1956, was aware that Israel needed to redouble its efforts in Asia after the majority of Afro-Asian nations denounced its military action in the Sinai.¹³⁶ Israelis disappointment with Nehru was very intense, and Ben Gurion, Prime Minister of Israel made no secret of it by stating that Nehru failed to fulfil his promise made to the Israel's Foreign Ministry Director General over normalization of relations with the Jewish state.¹³⁷

Ben Gurion was very skeptical about improvement in Indo-Israeli relations in Nehru's regime and thought that there was no window of opportunity for diplomacy. China and India, as the two most populous states in Asia were destined to become global powers, Ben Gurion believed that relations with Beijing and New Delhi were

¹³⁴ Nahum Goldmann, *Sixty Years of Jewish Life*, (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston 1969), p. 310.

¹³⁵ Itzhak Gerberg, *The Changing Nature of Israeli-Indian Relations: 1948-2005* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 2008), p.236.

¹³⁶ For the Zionist diplomatic efforts towards India before the UN partition vote, see Moshe Yegar, No. 1, pp. 45–56.

¹³⁷ Prithvi Ram Mudiam, *India and the Middle East*, (London: British Academic Press, 1994), p.160.

very vital for Israel.¹³⁸ He believed that Asian nations could emulate Israeli practices in agriculture, water management, and nation building issues that Israel was effectively tackling.¹³⁹ Israel established legations in Philippines and Japan, in Ceylon, a Charge d' Affaires, in Nepal, Laos, and Cambodia, non-resident missions, as well as embassies in Thailand and Burma. In 1960, a technical aid deal with Nepal was signed, and trade with Asia gradually increased. However, China and India remained significant gaps in Israel's foreign policy. Ben Gurion criticised Nehru after reviewing its place in world politics over his neutrality between Israel and Arabs. Ben Gurion sharply criticized Nehru for not forging diplomatic ties with the former but maintaining close relations with the Arab states.¹⁴⁰ It must be emphasised that financial and personnel issues were never a major factor in India's decision to normalize ties with Israel. It was never deemed significant enough for India to take into account for full-fledged diplomacy.¹⁴¹

During her tenure as Foreign Minister of Israel Golda Meir (1956-66), as Indo-Israel ties stagnated, she called Nehru and New Delhi as hypocrites.¹⁴² In 1959, due to India's estranged ties with Israel, Israeli Foreign Office officials were advised to stop pursuing the issue of diplomatic relations with India. According to the Deputy Director-General of the Asian and African division of Israeli Foreign Ministry, Yaakov Shimoni, though Israel desired to exchange ambassadors and persuaded India¹⁴³ regarding the same, any such efforts with its Indian counterpart has not yielded any dividends. A month later, the director further asked that no discussion be held on the relocation of the Israeli Consulate from Bombay to New Delhi.¹⁴⁴

¹³⁸ Moshe Yegar, *The Long Journey to Asia. A Chapter in the Diplomatic History of Israel*, (Haifa: Haifa University Press, 2004 [Hebrew]), pp. 66-67.

¹³⁹ Shimon Amir, *Israel's Development Cooperation with Africa, Asia and Latin America*, (New York: Prager, 1974).

¹⁴⁰ "Israel's Security and Her International Position," *Government Year Book*, Jerusalem, 1959-1960, p.75. See also Moshe Pearlman, *Ben Gurion Looks Back*, (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1965), pp.178-79.

¹⁴¹ G.H. Jansen, *Afro-Asia and Non-Alignment*, (Faber and Faber, London, 1966), p.213.

¹⁴² Medzini, Meron (ed.), *Israel's foreign relations - Selected documents 1956-66*. (Jerusalem: Ministry for Foreign Affairs, 1970), p.283.

¹⁴³ Gerberg, Itzhak, *The Changing Nature of Israeli-Indian Relations: 1948-2005* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 2008), p.238-9

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

Belgrade Conference (1961)

From Bandung to the Belgrade Conference, several major developments took place in West Asian politics (i) Suez Canal crisis and Israel's collaboration with Britain and France (ii) Israel's growing partnership with Western powers and its allies (iii) increasing friendship between India and Egypt.

Following the Suez Canal crisis, there was a significant change from India's position, which made it difficult for India's normalization of ties with Israel. For instance, India's anti-Israel initiatives on several global platforms became a defining narrative in this estranged partnership. India consistently supported Arabs in their disputes with Israel. For example, Nehru endorsed the formation of the United Arab Republic (UAR) by Egypt and Syria in February 1958. Nehru alluded to the UAR as the legitimate will of two Arab countries while addressing the parliament, and criticised Israel for interfering with it.¹⁴⁵

In August 1958, speaking in the Lok Sabha, Nehru endorsed Nasser's leadership of the Arabs when he said that the growth of Arab nationalism in West Asia is very significant under the Egyptian leader of Nasser.¹⁴⁶ On 10 April 1960, Nasser embarked on a visit to India, where India and Egypt jointly issued a statement which said that the Palestinian question must be resolved within the framework of the resolutions of the UN and principles adopted in the Conference held at Bandung.¹⁴⁷

In Belgrade, at the Non-Aligned Movement Conference, held in September, 1961, the Bandung decision to exclude Israel was institutionalized which India supported. After that, Israel lost an opportunity to explain its position/views on issues of regional or international importance on Afro-Asian platforms. Speaking at the press conference in Belgrade, Nehru expressed his disappointment over Israel's involvement in the Suez canal crisis and establishment of diplomatic ties may not be feasible now.¹⁴⁸ At the Non-Aligned meeting, Nehru concurred with Nasser's view that Israel is a major threat to Arab countries. All these moves by Nehru reflected India's growing

¹⁴⁵ Nicolas Blarel, *The Evolution of India's Israel Policy: Continuity, Change, and Compromise Since 1922* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2015), p.134.

¹⁴⁶ Jawaharlal Nehru, *India's Foreign Policy: Selected Speeches, September 1946-April 1961* (New Delhi: The Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 1961), p.281.

¹⁴⁷ Nicolas Blarel, *The Evolution of India's Israel Policy: Continuity, Change, and Compromise Since 1922* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2015), p.134.

¹⁴⁸ Itzhak Gerberg, *The Changing Nature of Israeli-Indian Relations: 1948-2005* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 2008), p.238-9.

partnership with Egypt.

Despite India's position that regional and bilateral disputes should not be included on the conference's agenda, the West Asian conflict was mentioned. India declined to back any resolutions that carried criticism of Israel. Nehru said that, in addition to Israel, other nations engaged in imperialist practices but were not denounced for it. The efforts of Yugoslavia's Tito and Burma's U Nu to alter the Conference's final document, which decried the birth of Israel, were supported by Nehru. Though Arabs favoured a strong position on Israel, other countries such as Burma, which had good relations with Israel, adopted a moderate path. In the end, the conference adopted a resolution which called upon the Jewish state to implement the resolutions of the UN on refugees from Arab states. On December 22, 1960, during the question hour in the Rajya Sabha, Nehru explained to the members about India's position on Israel and reiterated that it will not establish any diplomacy with Israel.¹⁴⁹

It was Nehru's clear assessment, that any move by India to upgrade its ties with Israel would have had negative repercussions in West Asia, as India being a key player in global politics was under constant pressure from Arab states to downgrade its ties with Israel.

India and China War (1962)

Following the Belgrade Conference in 1961, which heralded the NAM, along the contentious Himalayan frontier, war broke out between Beijing and New Delhi in October-November 1962. Nehru addressed written messages to a significant number of leaders when the war began, including Ben Gurion, Prime Minister of Israel and the Arab states leaders. As India unequivocally condemned Israel's aggression against Egypt in 1956, it hoped for diplomatic reciprocity from Egypt; however, Cairo remained neutral during the crisis. Few West Asian states such as Kuwait, Iran, Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Jordan endorsed New Delhi's position that Beijing was an aggressor. Lebanon favoured India's cause but officially remained neutral.¹⁵⁰ Military assistance was offered by Turkey. Syria and Iraq remained neutral. Iraq had close ties with the People's Republic of China, and Abdul Karim Kassem of Iraq, called upon New Delhi and Beijing to "*revert to peaceful methods.*"¹⁵¹ Syria, which had

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., p.84.

¹⁵⁰ M.S. Agwani, "The Reactions of West Asia and the UAR," *International Studies* 5, No.1-2, (July-October, 1963): 75-9.

¹⁵¹ *Iraq Times*, Baghdad, 20 November 1962

assumed power following the coup d'état in 1961, was dissatisfied with New Delhi's delay in recognising it.

Egypt's Nasser planned to mediate between New Delhi and Beijing.¹⁵² On October 26, Egypt established a four-point plan calling upon Beijing and New Delhi to (i) cease fighting; (ii) withdrawal of Chinese forces they held before the armed clashes began on October 26, 1962. (iii) demilitarize the zone between Beijing and New Delhi; and (iv) begin negotiations to settle the dispute peacefully.¹⁵³

However, Zhou Enlai, the Foreign Minister of the People's Republic of China rejected the proposal. According to Chinese, the September reference was unacceptable and not a practical way to reach a peaceful resolution. On October 31, 1962, in his response to Zhou Enlai and Nehru, Nasser recommended that as a starting point for negotiations, India and China return to their 20th October position. At the Colombo Conference, where Burma, Cambodia, Ghana, Indonesia, Sri Lanka were present, UAR suggested a compromise and, Egypt remained neutral.¹⁵⁴ After the outbreak of war between Beijing and New Delhi, Nehru wrote to all leaders seeking their support for India.

In his response to Nehru's letter, Ben Gurion expressed hope that direct negotiations would put an end to the war and tensions between the two nations, allowing both to use their resources to advance the development they both required. He added that Israel offered both nations full cooperation and sympathy in their efforts to resolve issues between neighbouring governments through peaceful methods, and he reminded Nehru about its commitment to a resolution between itself and other neighbours in West Asia.¹⁵⁵ Nehru responded to the Israeli Premier's letter on November 18, 1962, expressing his concern about the situation near the China border. In the letter, Nehru also stated that India wants to settle the dispute peacefully.

Despite India's attitude toward normalisation and criticism of Israel's aggression against Egypt in 1956, New Delhi turned to Israel and sought military aid. Israel's Foreign Affairs Minister, Golda Meir, agreed to sell India powerful mortars and mortar ammunition on Ben Gurion's recommendation. New Delhi mainly sought light

¹⁵² Muhammad Hassanein Heikal, *The Cairo Document: The Inside Story of Nasser and His Relationship with World Leaders, Rebels, and Statesmen* (New York: Doubleday, 1973), p.294.

¹⁵³ Text of the proposal in U.A.R. News (UAR Embassy, New Delhi), November 1962.

¹⁵⁴ Richard. E. Ward, *India's Pro-Arab Policy: A Study in Continuity* (New York: Praeger, 1992), p.92-93.

¹⁵⁵ David Ben Gurion, *Israel: A Personal History* (London: New English Library Ltd, 1972), p. 667.

mortars of 81 and 120 millimetres from Israel. India asked Israel on the delivery of the weapons aboard ships without the flag of Israel, reply by Ben Gurion was, “*No flag, no weapons.*” Jarden, Israeli cargo ship eventually made it to Bombay with “*automatic rifles, mortars, grenades, etc.*”¹⁵⁶

Israel made this diplomatic move without any conditions, such as the exchanging of ambassadors, despite India’s unfriendly attitude towards Israel should be recognised. Although, New Delhi’s indifference towards Israel, was neither a novelty nor an exception. In the late 1940s, India, while opposing Israel’s recognition, sought agricultural assistance. In the subsequent years, it received military assistance from Israel during the border conflicts against Beijing in 1962 and Islamabad in 1965 and 1971. According to the Arab journalist, Mohamed Hassanein Heikal, Nehru ended the military dealings as soon as Nasser raised his objections.¹⁵⁷

By obtaining military assistance covertly from the Jewish state, Nehru set a new precedent without the normalization of ties but refused to publicly acknowledge the security aid provided. After India’s defeat by China, Israel used back door diplomacy to negotiate with India, hoping that it would pave the way for bilateral cooperation.

Unlike agricultural assistance in the 1940s, the military aid brought in a new dimension to the Indo-Israeli relationship. For instance, General J.N. Chaudhuri, then-chief of the Indian Army, invited General David Shateel, his Israeli counterpart, in January 1963, (head of the Israel Defence Forces military operations branch) and the Chief of the Military Intelligence for a stopover in Delhi while they visited Burma.¹⁵⁸ Much to Israel’s disappointment, this was leaked by Indian media and downplayed by the Government of India.

Shastri Years (1964-66)

After the demise of Nehru, upon the assumption of office by Lal Bahadur Shastri, war broke out between New Delhi and Islamabad in 1965 which tested India’s Israel policy. Prior to the war, Shastri embarked on a visit to Cairo to attend the second Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) summit, which was hosted by Egyptian President Nasser. In the summit, he reiterated India’s support to Arab’s claims on Jordan waters

¹⁵⁶ Prithvi Ram Mudiam, *India and the Middle East* (London: British Academic Press, 1994), p.162.

¹⁵⁷ Muhammad Hassanein Heikal, *The Cairo Document: The Inside Story of Nasser and His Relationship with World Leaders, Rebels, and Statesmen* (New York: Doubleday, 1973), p.297-8.

¹⁵⁸ Nicolas Blarel, *The Evolution of India’s Israel Policy: Continuity, Change, and Compromise Since 1922* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2015), p.134.

and the refugees in Palestine. Unlike the Belgrade Summit in 1961, the NAM resolution in Cairo was harsher on Israel.¹⁵⁹

As one scholar put it, “*the NAM summit in Cairo embraced a narrow agenda by calling the Palestinian problem as a struggle against racism.*”¹⁶⁰ Following the Cairo summit, New Delhi hosted an official reception to the delegation led by Nasser along with the newly formed Palestine Liberation Organization in July 1965. This meeting took place during New Delhi’s initial skirmishes with Islamabad. Unlike the past, India adopted a more aggressive posture towards Israel in the Cairo summit. While Nehru acted in a restrained manner over the Arab-Israeli dispute, Shastri overdid his predecessor unconditionally endorsing the Arabs position and demands.¹⁶¹

When the conflict erupted between India and Pakistan in September 1965, there was a lack of diplomatic reciprocity from Arab states to India. For most of the Arab countries, backing India in the war would have to mean opposing Islamic Pakistan. For instance, countries like Jordan, which supported India against China in the 1962 war, sided with Pakistan in 1965. In the UN, it upheld Pakistan’s interests and harshly criticised India.

Pakistan received financial help from Saudi Arabia, weapons, ammunition and jet fuel were among the military supplies delivered by Iran and Turkey. Iran also offered access to its bases in Mehrabad and Zahedan to the Pakistani air force for refuelling and protection from the Indian bombers.¹⁶² Iran’s assistance to Pakistan was understandable, as both Iran and Turkey are members of the Central Treaty Organisation (CENTO).¹⁶³ Iran and Turkey were required to assist Pakistan because they were signatories to the Baghdad Pact. However, Egypt’s neutrality over the conflict received India’s appreciation at the Casablanca Arab Summit in September

¹⁵⁹ India, Ministry of External Affairs, *Documents of the Gatherings of Nonaligned Countries, 1961-79*, (New Delhi: Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India), p.21.

¹⁶⁰ P. R. Kumaraswamy, *India’s Israel Policy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010) p.159.

¹⁶¹ Joseph B. Schechtman, “*India and Israel*,” *Midstream* (New York)12, no. 7, August-September 1966, pp. 55-56.

¹⁶² S.M, Burke, *Pakistan’s Foreign Policy: An Historical Analysis* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973),p.190.

¹⁶³ India, Ministry of External Affairs, *Annual Report* (New Delhi: External Publicity Division of the Ministry of External Affairs, 1965-66), p.36-37; *Annual Report* (New Delhi: External Publicity Division of the Ministry of External Affairs, 1966-67), p.31.

1956 as Nasser adopted a balanced position towards a pro-Pakistan resolution.¹⁶⁴

Like in the past, along with New Delhi's pro-Arab policy, India's informal interactions with Israel continued even during the tenure of Shastri's regime. For instance, Shastri approved the visit of Raghbir Singh Panjhazari (Member of Parliament, Rajya Sabha), a member of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Security, to visit Israel in July 1965 to know about its agricultural policies, prison services, and security framework, etc.¹⁶⁵ In an interview with a leading newspaper in Israel, Shastri lauded Israel's accomplishments in the agricultural sector and did not completely rule out the potential of technical cooperation in the near future.¹⁶⁶ From the Israeli side, Yigal Allon, the Labour Minister of Israel, was authorised to visit New Delhi.¹⁶⁷

Against the backdrop of India's conflict with Pakistan in 1965, India once again turned back to Israel for military assistance during the war. On 7 October 1965, in an address to the UNGA, Golda Meir, Foreign Affairs Minister of Israel praised the efforts of Secretary-General and United Nations for a ceasefire resolution in South Asia, She criticised India and Pakistan for resorting to local wars to resolve their territorial disputes.¹⁶⁸ The non-committal stand of Israel was understandable, given its desire not to appear at a disadvantage in its relations with China and Pakistan in the future.

According to Yaakov Morris, Israeli Consul General, New Delhi received M-58 160 mm heavy mortars from Israel for its war against Islamabad. He recalled the Israeli support to India on Kashmir in the UN by reiterating that it belonged to India. He further said that Israel would appreciate India's efforts to bring Arabs and Israel for direct negotiations to the conference table. He provided transit services for trade between India and the West via Israel, which saved New Delhi Rs. 38 crore annually in freight costs.¹⁶⁹ However, without any significant changes, Shastri's tenure was a continuation of Nehru's policy towards Israel.

¹⁶⁴ *India, Rajya Sabha Debates*, Vol.54 (New Delhi: Rajya Sabha Secretariat, 1965), col.2127.

¹⁶⁵ Itzhak Gerberg, *The Changing Nature of Israeli-Indian Relations: 1948- 2005* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 2008).p. 88.

¹⁶⁶ Nicolas Blarel, *The Evolution of India's Israel Policy: Continuity, Change, and Compromise Since 1922* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2015), p.154.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p.157.

¹⁶⁸ GAOR, 20 Session, 1352 Plenary Mtg, p.8

¹⁶⁹ Yaakov Morris's interview in *The Statesman*, 28 October 1970.

India's Israel Policy : Pro and Anti-Israeli Sentiments

However, despite the military assistance and covert contacts between Israel and India during two wars against China and Pakistan in 1962 and 1965, there were no conciliatory gestures in India's policy towards Israel. The structural factors (leadership change at the domestic level and two conflicts at the international level) and the absence of diplomatic reciprocity from Arab states had not brought any significant shift in India's Israel policy.¹⁷⁰ For instance, The Israeli Consul was denied permission by the Indian government to host its National Day event in New Delhi in April 1964. This request was turned down by New Delhi since it would have gone beyond what his duties as the Bombay Consul were.

By the early and mid-1960s, the chorus was growing within India to normalize ties with the Jewish state. Though they failed to get the desired outcome, many opposition political parties in India, such as Bharatiya Jana Sangh (BJS), Praja Socialist Party (PSP), and Swatantra Party (except Communist parties and Muslim League) who were traditionally pro-Israel, advocated for India's normalization of relations with the Jewish state and demanded a policy revision as they criticised India's overtly pro-Arab policy. They condemned the responses of Arab nations to the 1965 crisis.

Several writers and journalists like Nirad Chaudhuri, Kushwant Singh, and Frank Moreas, as well as academics and historians Manohar Lal Sondhi and Romila Thapar, supported normalization of ties with Israel and joined the Indian Friends of Israeli Society. Many of India's leading national dailies and interest groups have formally requested an ambassadorial exchange with Israel.¹⁷¹ Many Israel's friends in India called for a closer collaboration with Israel in the fields of aeronautical, ballistic, and nuclear technologies and also establishing agriculture cum defence settlements in Rajasthan deserts on the pattern of Israeli Kibbutzes.¹⁷² While some criticised Arabs diminishing support to India, others argued New Delhi could support Arabs without being antagonistic towards Israel.

On a more informal level, Arab states were enraged by the founding of the Indo-Israeli Friendship Society in August 1964 to encourage ties between New Delhi and Tel Aviv. The Arab League delegate and the ambassadors of Lebanon, Iraq and

¹⁷⁰ Nicolas Blarel, *The Evolution of India's Israel Policy: Continuity, Change and Compromise since 1992*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 158.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., p.159.

¹⁷² *The Times of India*, 24 May 1966.

Morocco left a luncheon hosted by the Ministry of External Affairs in October 1964 because Miss Romila Thapar, a board member of the Indo-Israeli Friendship Society, was there to honour a Lebanese newspaper editor. The Ministry of External Affairs summoned the Ambassadors for their undiplomatic action.¹⁷³

Following the famine in 1966, India had asked the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) and the United Nations (UN) to make a global appeal for aid. In the same year, in May, Mr. C. Subramaniam, Food and Agriculture Minister, conveyed to the Lok Sabha that it declined the Israeli offer to supply fertilizers to India. This move by India evoked criticism from all quarters. On being asked about the same, he replied, “*India declined the offer because of ‘political considerations,’ We had to take into account other reactions. In the judgment of the Government, we thought we need not accept it.*”¹⁷⁴

Criticizing New Delhi’s move, the leading Indian national daily *Times of India*, in its editorial column, said: “*India’s move is a deplorable lack of finesse... there is no reason to believe that they would have attributed sinister motives to such an innocent and marginal contact with Israel.*” In parallel, through regular communications, India reaffirmed its support for the Palestinian refugees.

At the outset, Bharatiya Jan Sangh (BJS), a right-wing Hindu party, was a vocal opponent of India’s Israel policy as it argued that New Delhi’s unconditional support to Arab countries at the expense of Israel is completely unacceptable. Balraj Madhok, BJS co-founder and Indian Friends of Israeli Society president expressed his resentment over Arab countries support to Pakistan and taking India’s support for granted.¹⁷⁵ The BJS also questioned India’s non-diplomatic ties with Israel but diplomacy with nations like China and Pakistan, with which New Delhi had a direct conflict. At the Vijayawada convention, BJS passed a foreign policy resolution that demanded full diplomatic ties with Jewish state¹⁷⁶ and India can play a key role in the stability of West Asia.

It had also accused INC’s acceptance of the divisions of British India, Germany, and Korea but adopted double standards on Palestine’s partition.¹⁷⁷ In its party

¹⁷³ Nicolas Blarel, *The Evolution of India’s Israel Policy: Continuity, Change and Compromise since 1992*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 153.

¹⁷⁴ *The Hindustan Times*, 11 May 1966.

¹⁷⁵ Balraj Madhok, “India’s Foreign Policy: The Jana Sangh View”, *India Quarterly*, 23: No.1, (January-March 1967):3-7.

¹⁷⁶ *Organiser* Vol. XVIII No. 25. Feb. 1, 1965. p. 13.

¹⁷⁷ Bharatiya Jana Sangh (BJS), *Party Documents 1951-1972*, Vol.3: 34-5.

manifesto, BJS promised if it is voted to power, it desires to establish diplomatic relations with Israel.¹⁷⁸ Another popular right-wing organization, Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh (RSS) had admiration towards Israel and its Jewish culture. It wanted India to establish diplomatic ties with Israel. Unlike INC, most of the Hindu nationalists favoured diplomatic relations with Israel.

The Praja Socialist Party (PSP) had fraternal ties with the Mapai party (Labour party in Israel). The representatives of both the parties met at various international summits regularly. These parties viewed Israel “*as a beacon of democratic socialism in West Asia.*”¹⁷⁹ However, it must also be added that the Indian Socialists opposed the partition of Palestine. For instance, H.V. Kamath, well known socialist, discussed the question of Israel’s recognition as it figured prominently in Constituent Assembly debates. The Indian United Socialist Organization (USO) passed a resolution in March 1950 regretting that the Indian government did not recognise Israel.¹⁸⁰

At the first Asian Conference in Rangoon in January 1953, PSP representatives met the Israeli delegation. Later, during the Suez Crisis, In 1956, Moshe Sharett travelled to India to take part in the Second Congress of Asian Socialists, which was held in Bombay. The conference condemned Israel’s action against Egypt.

In order to take part in the Socialist Conference in Haifa, the PSP delegation travelled to Israel. Prominent Socialist leaders such as Ashok Mehta and Jaya Prakash Narayan visited Israel in April 1953 and September 1958. Praja Socialist Party considered building an Israeli liaison office in New Delhi during Narayan’s visit. Five Bhoodan movement activists who were part of the PSP delegation attended training sessions at the Afro-Asia Institute for Trade Unions and Cooperation Activities in 1960 to learn about the Kibbutz and the Moshav, Israeli development settlement cooperations. The PSP had sharply criticised the episode involving Israeli President Zalman’s visit to Nepal in March 1966, as he made a brief stopover in New Delhi and Calcutta. As a result, the PSP, in its October 1966 manifesto advocated for the normalisation of ties with Israel.

Another liberal and right-wing Swatantra Party, too, has been in disagreement with India’s Israel policy and pushed for diplomatic relations with Israel. Being a right wing party, it openly advocated market oriented economic reforms within India. The

¹⁷⁸ Bharatiya Jana Sangh (BJS), *Election Manifesto* (New Delhi, Bharatiya Jan Sangh, 1967)

¹⁷⁹ M. S. Agwani, “Contemporary West Asia,” (New Delhi, Har-Anand Publications, 1995), p.220-21.

¹⁸⁰ Itzhak, Gerberg *The Changing Nature of Israeli-Indian Relations: 1948-2005* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 2008), p.148.

Swatantra Party praised Israel's model of economic development and pushed for India's economic links with Israel. The Swatantra Party had pro-Western leanings, notably pro-American policies, and remained skeptic of India's support to Arab states as they relied on Soviet military assistance in their confrontation with Israel. Its leaders, such as K.M. Munshi, C. Rajagopalachari, N.G. Ranga, M.R. Masani have been long-time advocates of friendly ties with the Jewish state. Rajah Hutheesing, a well-known economist and party leader, visited Israel in 1960. Swatantra party, in its manifesto in 1967 called the absence of diplomatic ties with Israel as an "*utterly indefensible position.*"¹⁸¹

Simultaneously, there were also parties such as the Samyukta Socialist Party and Communists who openly advocated the anti-Israeli view. The SSP was highly critical of Israel and its economic policies. The party Chairman Madhu Limaye, speaking at the third annual conference of the SSP in Banaras, said: "*Israel's socialism is essentially evil and reactionary character. It is so theocratic in ethos and constitutes the 'oriental' wedge of European society into the heart of West Asia.*"¹⁸² On the other side, Communist parties in India were equally anti-Israel, and their view had been similar to that of the Soviet Union. Communist parties supported Arab countries against Israel as they regarded it as an imperial outpost like China and the Soviet Union did.

In sum, though the opposition to India's Israel policy existed, it was divided. Some political parties such as BJS, PSP, and Swatantra questioned India's Israel policy and the results of its pro-Arab policy. Due to the absence of support from Arab states, they stressed upon the gains from engaging with Israel. On the other hand, parties, such as Communists and Socialists, toed the line of the government towards West Asia. Despite the parliamentary opposition, there was no regular group or lobby in the formal sense which challenged India's Israel policy. Hence, there was no reversal or compromise in India's policy towards Israel, and the prolonged absence of relations continued.

From Indian side, although, domestic politics influenced India's Israel policy the opposition parties which advocated formal diplomatic ties with Jewish state in the early 1960s and 1970s through their electoral manifestos and resolutions, have not influenced the existing policy substantially. From Israeli side, though it sent several officials in the aftermath of India's recognition to persuade it to open the diplomatic

¹⁸¹ Swatantra Party, *Election Manifesto* (Bombay: Swatantra Party, 1967)

¹⁸² Mankind (Hyderabad), vol. 3, no. 10, May 1959, p. 872.

ties, did not yield any dividends.

Since its creation in 1948, Israel's two political parties i.e., the Labour and Likud dominated its political landscape and left their imprint on its diplomacy. Towards achieving the objectives in international politics of the Jewish state, they had a different approach from each other. Israel's external policy was moving within the three concentric circles after its establishment. First, its relations with neighbouring Arab states in the region; second, relationship with the newly emerged states in Asia and Africa; third, its place within the global politics.¹⁸³

Since its establishment in late 1940s to 1970s, the Labour party which was in power played a key role in determining its policy towards its neighbours and other powers. For instance, Labour party is willing to give certain concessions towards Palestinians unlike the Right Likud which viewed the region as the zone of turmoil which is unstable and war prone. However, both viewed *military means* is the only option for the Jewish state towards the Arab-Israeli conflict.¹⁸⁴

The Labour party, Mapai, which dominated Israel's political landscape in the initial years wanted to forge diplomatic ties with several countries including India in Asia, it failed to achieve desired outcome, Burma was an exception. However, it was observed by Gerberg, most of the Israeli political parties had relatively less interest in Asia except for The Mapam (United Workers) party and Achdut Haavoda (Unity of Labour) party due to their keen interest in pro-Soviet communist policies in certain countries of Asia.¹⁸⁵ As India continued to follow pro-Arab policy, their interest to engage with India was dissipated over a period of time.

¹⁸³ Leo Kohn, "Israel's Foreign Relations", *International Affairs*, (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944), Vol. 36, No.3, (July 1960), p.330.

¹⁸⁴ Efraim, Inbar, *Israel's National Security Issues and Challenges Since the Yom Kippur War* (Routledge, New York), p.138-39.

¹⁸⁵ Itzhak Gerberg, *The Changing Nature of Israeli-Indian Relations: 1948-2005* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 2008), p.251.

Chapter 3

The Arab-Israeli War Of 1967 And India's Subdued Relations With Israel Till 1980s

In assessing India's Israel policy, the war between Israelis and Arabs in 1967 was one of India's significant involvement in West Asian politics. The peace had not lasted long with the end of the Suez crisis in West Asia with the withdrawal of the invading forces and stationing of UNEF forces on Israeli-Egyptian borders. In May 1966, due to tensions on the Syria-Israeli border, and Palestinian attack against the Jewish state from bases in Jordan resulted in another conflict between Arabs and Israel. As the situation deteriorated, U Thant, former UN Secretary General, urged Israel and Syria to call the Mixed Armistice Commission. After the acceptance by both the countries on 25 January 1967, the Israeli-Syrian Mixed Armistice was reconvened for the first time after 16 February 1960.

As there was no breakthrough at the summit, the crisis in West Asia worsened as a result of Nasser's decision to assist Syria from the Sinai Peninsula by the withdrawal of troops of UNEF. This action by Nasser led to the entire withdrawal of the United Nations peacekeeping force. Meanwhile, to hold talks with UAR leaders, U Thant left for Cairo on 21 May, and he complied with Egypt's decision to withdraw the troops. From the Israeli side, there was sharp criticism towards U Thant's actions; the Foreign Minister of Israel, Abba Eban observed: "*The UNEF's withdrawal is a fire brigade which vanishes from the scene as soon as the first smoke and flames appear.*"¹

On 25 May 1967, outlining New Delhi's view in both the houses of Parliament, the Minister of External Affairs, Mr. Mahomedali Currim Chagla observed that, since the establishment of Israel, it led to the tension between the Jewish state and the Arab nations. This was similar to Nehru's statement in Lok Sabha in 1958, where he said that: "*Ever since Israel came into existence it has been a source of constant irritation to the Arab countries.*"² This pronouncement by Mr. Chagla caused much resentment

¹ *New York Times* 24 May 1967.

² India, *Lok Sabha Debates*, Vol.18, series 2, (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1958) p.869-880. Also. P. R. Kumaraswamy, *India's Israel Policy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), p.205.

and led to an acrimonious debate in the parliament as it challenged the legitimacy of Israel by questioning its very existence.³

At the outset, India was concerned about the Egyptian demand for the withdrawal of UNEF because New Delhi was the largest contributor to the troops of UNEF. India did not oppose it because it was consistent with its stance since the establishment of the UN peacekeeping force in 1956. For instance, Arthur S. Lall, UN Secretary General, on 06 November, 1956, addressed a letter to India's Ambassador, observed that UNEF has to function on Egyptian soil, for which the consent from the same is required.⁴ The Indian position was reiterated by Krishna Menon, informed the Parliament in 1957, where he observed that New Delhi would send troops to the Egyptian territory provided they don't violate the sovereignty of Egypt.⁵

Therefore, on May 21, 1967, Indira Gandhi backed Egypt's decision by asserting that it had every right to withdraw UNEF because Israel had rejected having UNEF forces stationed on its border.⁶ As this eventually culminated in a UN debate over the right of Egypt to unilaterally ask for such withdrawal, in May 1967, G. Parthasarathy, the Indian ambassador to UN, reiterated India's position that without the approval of Egypt, the Indian troops would not remain in the UNEF.⁷ Adding further, he said, the decision by Egypt to move its troops into Sinai is seen as "defensive" and "precautionary", move by India.⁸ These statements by Indian officials, once again reflected India's pro-Arab policy, in conflicts between Arabs and Israel.

New Delhi's posture to the closure of Israeli shipping access to the Gulf of Aqaba and the Straits of Tiran (Israel's only link with the Indian Ocean and Red Sea) by Egypt was no different. India backed Egypt's assertion that it had sovereign rights over the Gulf of Aqaba, which was a part of its territorial seas. India and Egypt foresaw a threat of Israeli aggression based on the intelligence reports from the Soviet Union. The Egyptian government's justification for the blockade in the Gulf of Aqaba to stop

³ Arthur G. Rubinoff, "Normalization of India-Israel Relations: Stillborn for Forty Years," *Asian Survey*, 35, No.5 (May 1995):496.

⁴ James Eayrs, ed. *The Commonwealth and Suez: A Documentary Survey*. (London: Oxford University Press, 1964). p. 360.

⁵ India, *Lok Sabha Debates*, Vol.1, No.8, (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1957), pp.800-83.

⁶ Nicolas Blarel, *The Evolution of India's Israel Policy: Continuity, Change and Compromise since 1992*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 164.

⁷ G. Parthasarathy's statement in the UNSC, 29 May 1967, UN Document, S/PV/1343.

⁸ Ibid.

strategic weaponry from reaching Israel through these waterways was also supported by India.⁹ On 25 May 1967, in a statement to the Lok Sabha regarding the closure of Gulf of Aqaba, M.C. Chagla observed that India remains clear in its view since 1957, it is an inland sea to which entry lies within Saudi Arabia and UAE territorial waters.¹⁰

On May 29, 1967, in a statement in the Security Council, Shri G. Parthasarathy, said that use of force by any state must not lead to the violation of UAR's sovereignty over the Strait of Tiran. At the UNGA in March 1957, G. Parthasarathy and M.C. Chagla acknowledged the stance adopted by India and Krishna Menon and justified UAR's right to close the Gulf of Aqaba.¹¹ To justify India's position in this matter, Mr. Chagla referred to the remarks made in 1957 by Mr. Dulles, and Foreign Secretary of UK, Mr. George Brown, in 1967.

A Six-Day War broke out between Israel and other Arab nations like Syria, Jordan, Egypt on June 5, 1967. Israel won the conflict and seized control of Egypt's Sinai Peninsula and Gaza Strip, Syria's Golan Heights, East Jerusalem and West Bank. A day after the Israeli raids in Arab countries, on 6 June 1967, Indian Prime Minister, in her address in the Lok Sabha, accused Israel of escalating the conflict in West Asia to a full scale war. It was further stated by her that, India, a non-permanent member in the UNSC, would make efforts for a ceasefire.¹²

Speaking at the UN, the same day, G. Parthasarathy demanded an urgent Israeli troop pullout and an immediate end to hostilities in West Asia.¹³ India's support to Arab states was once again reiterated by the Minister for External Affairs, Mr. M.C. Chagla in his speech to the UNGA on 21 June 1967, in which he criticized the Jewish state for violation of all the resolutions adopted by UNGA and General Armistice Agreements which concerns India.¹⁴

Invoking Nehru's views from November 1956, he reaffirmed India's support for Egypt's right to withdraw the UNEF troops. Chagla also expressed concern over the Israeli government attack on UNEF soldiers and had registered an official complaint in

⁹ India, *Lok Sabha Debates*, Vol.3, series 4, (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1967), cols 875, 891.

¹⁰ India, *Lok Sabha Debates*, Vol.3, No.3, (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat), pp.871-6.

¹¹ G. Parthasarathy's statement in the UNSC, 29 May 1967, UN Document, S/PV/1343.

¹² India, *Lok Sabha Debates*, Vol.4, series 4, (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1967) p.3315.

¹³ G. Parthasarathy's Speech to the UNSC, 6 June 1967, UN Document S/PV 1348.

¹⁴ Minister of External Affairs of India M.C. Chagla's speech to the Fifth Emergency Special Session of the General Assembly on 21 June 1967, UNGOAR session 22, plen metg, 1530.

the UN. He advocated strengthening the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) and the appointment of a special representative to ease tensions in West Asia by the secretary-general.

In the wake of war, M.C. Chagla on July 18, 1967, made a statement in lower house of the Indian Parliament and can be summarized as follows: (i) A nation was not allowed to start a war simply because it perceived a threat to its security. If such a threat did exist, the Charter outlined a number of peaceful measures that were available to it, as well as the option to approach the Security Council. (ii) No aggressor should be able to keep what he has gained via his hostility. (iii) It was not permitted for a nation to annex another State's territory in order to negotiate with greater clout. (iv) Armed confrontation cannot be used to create rights, resolve territorial disputes, or change boundaries.¹⁵

The following declaration was of utmost importance while the United Nations Security Council (of which New Delhi was a member) on November 22 was debating UN Resolution 242, upheld the above mentioned principles, and voted for the British sponsored resolution which was reasonably accepted by all the countries which stated that territory must not be acquired by war.

India's policy during the war was its opposition to Israel's acquisition of territory through force by resorting to pre-emptive strikes. On various international forums, India urged that Israeli forces leave the pre-June frontiers in order to advance the issue' resolution and find a settlement.

After 1967 crisis, India's official policy towards West Asia attracted massive criticism from parliamentary opposition parties, the press and the wider public. Not only this, there was an internal dissent over the government's response within the Congress party, to the Arab-Israel conflict.¹⁶ In contrast to India's official policy towards war, All India Congress Committee (A.I.C.C.) adopted a resolution on June 20, 1967, that did not condemn Israel.¹⁷

The Prime Minister continuously emphasised the killing of Indian soldiers in her speeches on numerous forums, yet it was not included in the resolution (UN and Parliament of India). Commenting on internal dissent within the party, Mr. M.C.

¹⁵ India, *Lok Sabha Debates*, Vol.7, series 4, (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1967), p.12702.

¹⁶ P. R. Kumaraswamy, *India's Israel Policy*, (New Delhi: Columbia University Press), p.206.

¹⁷ For the text of the AICC resolution, see A. Moin Zaidi and Shaheda Zaidi, "The Encyclopedia of Indian National Congress," (New Delhi: S. Chand, 1977-85) Vol.19, p.356–357.

Chagla said: “*I found that not only the opposition but even a section of our own party was opposed to our policy.*”¹⁸ It was also reported that within the Indian Cabinet, ministers like Moraji Desai and Swaran Singh criticized government’s policy though Indira Gandhi denied it. Even, the Indian foreign office expressed its reservations over New Delhi’s policy towards the region.

On the day war broke out in West Asia, numerous opposition groups, including the Bharatiya Janata Party, the DMK, the PSP, the SSP, and the Swatantra Party, wrote a letter to the Prime Minister and called for a neutral and an objective approach to the conflict.¹⁹ The PSP leader, Nath Pai, sharply criticized Mr. M.C. Chagla’s statement in Lok Sabha as it failed to reflect New Delhi’s concerns on the outbreak of war between Israel and Arab nations.²⁰ Several opposition parties were also in disagreement with Government over who escalated tensions into an armed conflict in West Asia. For instance, PSP leader, Acharya Kripalani, stated that it would be unfair to call Israel an aggressor.²¹

Apart from the parliamentary reaction, the leading Indian national dailies were highly critical of the government’s policy. For instance, the editor of the Hindustan Times stated that the Arab states have to be persuaded for a settlement rather than United Nations imposing a solution to the conflict.²² Another leading daily, *The Statesman*, famous editor, Inder Malhotra, though supported India’s pro-Arab policy, expressed disappointment with the Egyptian ally that had not proved to be a *dependable asset*. He observed that the government should have discouraged Nasser from the withdrawal of UNEF and *hostile actions* such as the closure of the Gulf of Aqaba for Israeli shipping.²³ He thought the government support to ceasefire resolution and withdrawal of Israeli forces to pre-June frontiers was very impractical. He criticized India for failing to consider Israel’s security needs against a ring of surrounding neighbours who were at war with Israel.

Undeniably, though not for the first time, there was substantial and widespread

¹⁸ M. C. Chagla, *Roses in December : An Autobiography* (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1973), p.426.

¹⁹ India, *Lok Sabha Debates*, Vol.6, No.40 (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat,1967), cols. 12132-38.

²⁰ Nicolas Blarel, *The Evolution of India’s Israel Policy: Continuity, Change and Compromise since 1992*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2015).p. 174.

²¹ India, *Lok Sabha Debates*, Vol. 4:7, series 4, (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1967), pp.12383-93.

²² Nicolas Blarel, *The Evolution of India’s Israel Policy: Continuity, Change and Compromise since 1992*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2015) p.172.

²³ Ibid.

opposition to India's policy. The opposition was pessimistic, and the idea that India's blatantly pro-Arab state West Asia strategy ought to be altered was gaining ground. The lack of diplomatic reciprocity from Arab states or their neutrality during the 1965 conflict was criticized. For instance, because Syria was a competing candidate, the majority of Arab nations voted against New Delhi's election to the UNSC in 1966.²⁴ Israel, on the other hand, backed India's candidature in spite of its frequent criticism of the Jewish state policies against Arabs.

Rabat Conference (1969)

A fire broke out in Jerusalem's Al-Aqsa Mosque on August 21, 1969, the third holiest place for Muslims in Jerusalem, which was caused by an Australian Christian visitor named Michael Rohan. Most of the Arab countries in West Asia called for demonstrations and protests and squarely blamed Israel for this incident. India was no exception to this. On August 29, 1969, in Calcutta, ten million Muslims abstained from work.

New Delhi was forced to react officially on two counts. First, it gives an opportunity for Islamabad to win sympathy from Arab states. Second, it had the largest minority population of Muslims in its borders. In this regard, Minister for External Affairs, Dinesh Singh informed the Lok Sabha that it would endorse his statement in strongly condemning this act and held Israel accountable due to its continuous violation of the United Nations resolutions and occupation of Jerusalem.²⁵ Indira Gandhi, addressing a crowd in Delhi on September 09, called the incident as a sacrilege of the holy shrine and a deplorable act.²⁶ Samar Sen, India's ambassador to the UN, accused Israel in escalating tensions in West Asia due to its illegal occupation of territories in Arab states and Jerusalem.²⁷

Within three days after the incident, the Foreign Ministers of Arab countries met at Cairo on August 24, 1969. Due to the Arab states uproar over the incident, the Muslim countries agreed to hold a summit at Rabat (Morocco) in September 1969 to condemn the Israeli actions. Initially, UAR (Egypt and Syria) considered that only Arab countries meeting had to be convened. However, in due course of time, it was

²⁴ India, *Lok Sabha Debates*, Vol.49, (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat), p.5667-8.

²⁵ India, *Lok Sabha Debates*, 32:26, (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1969), p.251-68.

²⁶ Nicolas Blarel, *The Evolution of India's Israel Policy: Continuity, Change and Compromise since 1992*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2015) p.180.

²⁷ Samar Sen's Statement to the UNSC, 10 September 1969, UN S/PV/1508.

considered to invite all countries. King Hassan of Morocco and King Faisal of Saudi Arabia were given the task to decide the modalities of the meeting.

The Al-Aqsa mosque incident brought two major developments in the politics of West Asia. First, Nasser's monopoly over Arab nationalism was challenged by other Arab countries and later led to the demise of Nasserism, which was the aim of the two sponsors, Morocco and Saudi Arabia. Second, the Muslim countries grouping in Rabat culminated in the birth of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). Prior to the Rabat Conference, two preparatory meetings were held with the representatives from Arab countries (Saudi Arabia and Morocco), Asia (Malaysia and Iran), and Africa (Somalia and Niger). For the condemnation of Israel over Al-Aqsa mosque incident in Jerusalem, Rabat summit was held from September 22 to 24, 1969.

India expressed its desire to participation in the Summit as it did not want to leave any stone unturned for Islamabad to openly criticize as it had the third largest Muslim population after Jakarta and Islamabad and it was equally concerned over the developments in Palestine.

India, however, was unable to meet the criteria adopted for invitees. The criteria included: (a) nations with a majority of Muslims (b) nations with a Muslim head of state. Due to the lack of written invitations from Arab countries, officially, the Government of India protested this move, and letters were sent to Arab countries ambassadors organizing the conference by saying that this is a discriminatory move against India. Later, due to the lobbying efforts of Arab states such as Egypt and Malaysia, which were friendly towards India, to represent India's Muslim minority, an official delegation was allowed by King Faisal.

Due to the eleventh hour invitation, India had no delegation present in Rabat. Therefore, it decided that, Gurbachan Singh, its Morocco Ambassador, would represent it until Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed's delegation arrives the next day.²⁸ The Pakistani president, Yahya Khan, expressed resentment over King Faisal's request to allow the Indian delegation at the summit. The legitimacy of India's representative, Gurbachan Singh, was questioned, as he was a Sikh and not Muslim²⁹ and complained that India's delegation includes four members from non-Muslim community.³⁰

²⁸ Gurbachan Singh suggested an alternative participant to the meeting from the Indian side, Dr. Abdul Alim, the vice chancellor of the Aligarh Muslim University who was in Morocco for another event. However, this suggestion was rejected by foreign minister of Morocco as he was not an official representative.

²⁹ Indrani Baghchi, "Why India Didn't Make It to OIC", *Times of India*, 25 February, 2008.

It was stated by former foreign secretary, J.N. Dixit, although India was one of the invitees to the Rabat Conference, it failed in utilizing this opportunity as it claimed itself to be asserting its secularism by sending Ambassador in Morocco who belongs to Sikh community for its representation. This move by India backfired, thereby giving an opportunity for Pakistan for India's exclusion. The President of Pakistan argued that if the conference sole criteria was to include large Muslim population, then it should have extended invitation to Albania, China, Israel, and the USSR.

Much to New Delhi's embarrassment, the information minister of Rabat conference in a message conveyed that Pakistan and other countries such as, Teheran, Amman, and Ankara, opposed New Delhi's participation. Algeria, Egypt, Libya, and Sudan supported Indian participation. Pakistan president Yahya Khan, decided to boycott the summit when the deliberations were resumed on 23 September and paralyzed the proceedings on 24 September.³¹ Amidst these deliberations, the communal rioting in Ahmedabad provided additional ammunition to Pakistan, which was joined by Jordan in protesting against India's presence at the meeting.³² Saudi Arabia and Morocco convinced Pakistan for its participation in the Conference.

In the conference, two mediating sessions, suggested delegation from India must accept an observer status or physically refrain itself from participating in the conference meeting. To convince India to change its position, initially, Moroccan delegation persuaded New Delhi, and the second was by the members of the delegation from countries such as, Afghanistan, Egypt, Malaysia, and Nigeria.³³

In response to these moderation efforts, Indian delegation head, underscored that it must be regarded as one of the members of the Conference because all the participant countries invited it unanimously. In a statement, Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed (head of the Indian delegation), expressed dissatisfaction over the discourteous attitude

³⁰ There was no specification that only Muslims could form the delegation, For instance, Lebanese delegation had one Christian

³¹ A. Appadorai, and M.S. Rajan, *India's Foreign Policy and Relations*, (New Delhi, South Publishers, 1985) p.373.

³² Arthur G, Rubinooff, "India's Normalization of Relations with Israel", *Asian Survey* 35, (May 1995):498.

³³ Nicolas Blarel, *The Evolution of India's Israel Policy: Continuity, Change and Compromise since 1992*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2015).p. 214.

of the Conference.³⁴ The Pakistani president agreed to come to the conference only in the absence of the Indian delegation. Hence, India was refused entry to the conference hall, and a final resolution was passed without India's representation. Much to India's displeasure, a final joint statement was issued, which referred to India's Muslim community (and not the state of India). However, the document was not signed by the Indian delegation.³⁵

The Rabat conference fiasco was a significant setback in India's policy towards Arab states as it was invited to attend and subsequently compelled to withdraw its participation by sponsors themselves to pacify Pakistan. The opposition parties and the Indian media questioned India's credentials to participate in a conference, which was a religious grouping. Despite not being a Muslim majority nation and head of state not a Muslim, India's desire to attend the conference was it should not be excluded from the Summit because it has world's third largest Muslim community population. Though India wanted to present the fire incident by approaching it through the framework of secularism and not by the Islamic prism, the strategy severely backfired.³⁶ It is also interesting to note that Ba'athist Iraq, and Syria, in West Asia which are otherwise called as secular regimes in the region stayed away from the Conference.³⁷

A month after the Rabat fiasco, on 3 October 1969, India's Foreign Affairs Minister, Dinesh Singh met Abba Eban during the UNGA in New York. Though India continued its pro-Arab policy, it convinced Abba Eban that it was not hostile to the Jewish state.

India-Pakistan War (1971)

New Delhi's Arab policy was once again tested due to its war against Islamabad. In its wars against Beijing (1962) and Islamabad (1965), West Asian countries have not extended their support to New Delhi. The war against Pakistan highlighted two strands in India's pro-Arab policy: First, Arabs commitment to Islamabad and New Delhi's engagement towards West Asia since it attained independence. Second, New Delhi expressed its disappointment that the West Asian countries over their failure in understanding the escalation of crisis in Bangladesh. However, pro-Arab policy of

³⁴ A. Appadorai, and M.S. Rajan, *India's Foreign Policy and Relations*, (New Delhi: South Publishers, 1985) p.372.

³⁵ Gurcharan Singh, *The Middle East and Indian Diplomacy* (Pearl River, NY: Alover Press, 1975).

³⁶ P. R. Kumaraswamy, *India's Israel Policy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010). p.214.

³⁷ Ibid. p.214.

India was not altered, and had not led to any significant change within New Delhi's political leadership. In 1971, many West Asian countries sympathized with the East Pakistani (now Bangladesh) refugees. Iran and Iraq and several other Arab nations viewed the war at New Delhi's behest. In the UNSC, countries like Tunisia and Saudi Arabia criticized India's interference in Pakistan's internal affairs.

Being a non-permanent voting member at the UNSC, Syria supported Pakistani position and voted for condemning India in three draft resolutions sponsored by it. On 15 December 1971, Syria introduced a draft UNSC resolution, which urged India to withdraw its troops. Most draft resolutions introduced in the UNSC condemning India were vetoed by the UNSC.³⁸

On 7 December 1971, a resolution was introduced by Sudan and Tunisia, which called for the withdrawal of armed forces from India, and for assistance to help the Bengali refugees. In the debate, Resolution 2793 was adopted, Saudi Arabia warned India that the present conflict could lead to rise in religious intolerance and said it could have adverse consequences for sixty million Muslims in India.³⁹

Besides, moral and political support, Pakistan also obtained military aid and monetary support from West Asian countries during the war. Abu Dhabi, Kuwait, and Riyadh provided over \$200 million. Iran and Jordan supplied Pakistan with weaponry. Jordan and Saudi Arabia provided Pakistani air bases safe from Indian strikes. Due to Soviet retribution, Iran and Turkey did not let the Pakistani air force utilise its air bases like in 1965.

India was disappointed by Arab countries political support and military aid to Pakistan during the 1971 conflict, particularly that of Egypt, which was India's closest partner in the region. In Lok Sabha, a statement by External Affairs Minister Swaran Singh, New Delhi expressed its disappointment, with the Arab countries' political stance but chose to downplay it. He reiterated that New Delhi's relations with West Asian nations is not only extended to political and cultural but also growing economic relations between the two.⁴⁰ By contrast, India had not mentioned the political and military aid it obtained from Israel. India only acknowledged the medical assistance

³⁸ Nicolas Blarel, *The Evolution of India's Israel Policy: Continuity, Change and Compromise since 1992*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2015), p.184.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ *Lok Sabha Debates*, Vol.14, No.32, (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1972),p.227-8.

provided by Israel to help the refugees.⁴¹ Like in 1962 and 1965 wars, Israel once again offered military assistance to India and the latter accepted it.

A resolution was passed by Knesset on June 23 and expressed sympathy for the Bangladesh struggle.⁴² In his address, Abba Eban, Foreign Minister of Israel, described the repression by Pakistan as “*a human tragedy amounting to genocide.*” and expressed Israel’s “*deep shock at the terrible acts perpetrated by the Pakistani Army.*”⁴³ Though New Delhi encouraged Arab countries to recognise Bangladesh as a political reality, they remained cautious in accepting Bangladesh as an independent state. In February 1972, Israel was among the first nations to recognise Bangladesh.⁴⁴

Despite the absence of diplomatic relations between New Delhi and Tel Aviv, India approached Israel seeking help. On July 6, 1971, D. N. Chatterjee, India’s ambassador to France, initiated the process to obtain military aid from Israel by mentioning it in a note sent by India’s external affairs ministry which regards Israel’s military aid is valuable and suggested that New Delhi should engage with Tel Aviv. Subsequently, Indira Gandhi sought military assistance from Israel particularly Israeli-made ammunition and 160mm mortars.

P. N. Haskar, Indira Gandhi’s personal secretary, reached out to Israel for military aid through his acquaintance from London, Shlomo Zabłudowicz (then deputy commissioner during Haskar’s tenure in London). Acting upon Haskar’s request, the Israeli government was contacted by Zabłudowicz and assured Haskar of help from Israel.⁴⁵ Despite military assistance by Israel, India had not upgraded its diplomatic ties with it.

After the 1971 war against Pakistan, Indira Gandhi won the election with an overwhelming majority, while parties in opposition, such as the Jan Sangh and

⁴¹ *Rajya Sabha Debates*, Vol.75, 31 (New Delhi: Rajya Sabha Secretariat, 1971) pp.123-4, India, *Rajya Sabha Debates*, Vol. 77, (New Delhi: Rajya Sabha Secretariat, 1971), 8; *Rajya Sabha Debates*, Vol. 77, (New Delhi: Rajya Sabha Secretariat, 1971),p.68.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p.68.

⁴³ India, Ministry of External Affairs, *Bangladesh Documents*, vol.2 (New Delhi: External Publicity Division of Ministry of External Affairs, 1971) p.154.

⁴⁴ Nicolas Blarel, *The Evolution of India’s Israel Policy: Continuity, Change and Compromise since 1992*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2015), p.186.

⁴⁵ Itzhak, Gerberg, *The Changing Nature of Israeli-Indian Relations: 1948- 2005* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 2008). p.89, 218-9, Also see, Srinath Raghavan, 1971: *A Global History of the Creation of Bangladesh* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University press, 2013). p.182-3.

Swatantra party, which had earlier criticised India's West Asia policy, lost. The opposition that existed between June 1967 war and the Rabat conference of 1969 was practically diminished by these elections. Israel too was facing opposition and international isolation due to its occupation of Arab territories.⁴⁶ Hence, India persisted with its pro-Arab policy and continued to vote against Israel in the UN.

Yom Kippur War (1973)

The fourth conflict between Arabs and Jews began in the month of October in 1973, following the three main wars of 1948, 1956, and 1967. Egyptian and Syrian armies led Arab states coalition and attacked Israel on the Jewish Yom Kippur holiday. The October war once again demonstrated India's unremitting support to Arab states. On October 15, 1973, in Rajya Sabha, the External Affairs Minister, reiterated New Delhi's sympathy for the Arab states and yet again accused Israel for the tensions in West Asia and its illegal occupation of settlements in Arab states.⁴⁷ In External Affairs Ministry annual report, India's policy was reiterated that the solution to conflict in West Asia is only through Israel's forces withdrawal from the occupied territories.⁴⁸ On October 9, 1973, India's Permanent Representative, Samar Sen speaking at the UNSC demanded the Israeli forces withdrawal from the territories it occupied, and stated that the Council shall not suggest ceasefire as the solution which would be unfair for the Arab states as those territories are illegally occupied by Israel.⁴⁹

India supported Egypt and Syria's war and demanded Israel's disengagement from Arab territories. India backed two UN ceasefire resolutions, condemned Jewish state for its failure to evacuate its troops from occupied territories, called for the military observers from the UN, including the creation of an emergency force.⁵⁰

Justifying India's position on October War 1973, while speaking in Upper House of Indian Parliament, Swaran Singh, External Affairs Minister, stated that Israel's occupation of Arab states territories needs to be condemned and New Delhi

⁴⁶ P. R. Kumaraswamy, *India's Israel Policy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010). p.216.

⁴⁷ India, *Rajya Sabha Debates*, Vol.86, (New Delhi: Rajya Sabha Secretariat, 1973), p.92.

⁴⁸ India, Ministry of External Affairs, *Annual Report 1973-74*, (New Delhi: External Publicity Division of Ministry of External Affairs), p.45.

⁴⁹ Ambassador Samar Sen's statement in the UNSC, 9 October 1973, UN S/PV/1744.

⁵⁰ Statement by the MEA expressing satisfaction over the acceptance of the UNSC Resolution, 22 October 1973, *Indian and Foreign Review*, 1 November 1973; Ambassador Sen's statement at the UNSC, 25 October 1973, UN S/PV/1750; Ambassador Sen's statement in the UNSC, 2 November 1973, UN S/PV/1754.

continues to support Arab states in this regard. In further support to the Indian policy, and global condemnation of Israeli aggression, he stated that due to the acts of Israeli aggression in West Asia, it attracted criticism from various countries in Africa, Europe, and Japan.⁵¹

Indira Gandhi stated on October 8, 1973, that India supports Arab states for two reasons. First, India and Arab states are old friends. Second, India condemns the Israel's aggression on Arab states and illegal occupation of their territories in violation of UN resolutions. The total support for the Arabs by India was also partly reflected from the Arab threat of an oil embargo promulgated during the 1973 war.

After the 1973 war, India's economic interests in West Asia were enhanced due to New Delhi's growing energy, and oil needs. The remittances from Indians residing in the West Asian countries and trade routes too became a major consideration in India's West Asia policy. India pursued a broader engagement with various West Asian countries, and moved away from its Cairo-centric policy towards the region. After 1973 war, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and Iran emerged as new players in West Asian politics.

On November 10, 1975, At 2400th plenary meeting when India voted for the resolution No.3379 in General Assembly in UN which described, "Zionism as a form of racial discrimination." India argued that, "*in its impact on the people in the Middle East suffering from the consequences of Zionist occupation, Zionism was clearly a form of racial discrimination.*"⁵²

In January 1975, S.K. Singh, India's Ambassador to Lebanon, and Yasser Arafat, Chairman, PLO signed documents that granted the representatives from Palestine certain diplomatic immunities and privileges. India recognised Palestine Liberation Organization and permitted it to open an office in New Delhi on January 10, 1975. Another significant reason over India's recognition of PLO include the close personal relationship shared by Yasser Arafat and Indira Gandhi.

India's permanent ambassador to the UN requested the UNGA to invite the PLO, which represents the voice for Palestinians, in October 1974. By this time, all the Arab states recognized PLO.⁵³ India voted for the PLO being given the observer status

⁵¹ Rajya Sabha Debates, Vol. 86, (New Delhi: Rajya Sabha Secretariat, 1973), pp. 256–7.

⁵² India, Ministry of External Affairs, *Annual Report*, 1975-76, (New Delhi: External Publicity Division of the Ministry of External Affairs), p.76.

⁵³ India's Permanent Representative R. Jaipal's Statement at the UNGA, 14 October 1974, UN A/PV/2268.

at the UNGA meeting.⁵⁴ In the UNGA deliberations, India's Foreign Secretary, expressed its solidarity with Palestinians rights and recognized it as the sole representative.⁵⁵

However, India's recognition of PLO was also influenced by domestic pressures. For instance, The Indo-Arab Friendship Society from Bihar's State Council pushed India to recognise the PLO as it represents the aspirations of Palestinians. A resolution to this effect was passed unanimously at a public meeting in Patna. The Indo-Arab Society of Allahabad in its meeting, which was addressed by the League of Arab States Mission, Chief Representative, New Delhi made a similar request to the Government of India. Another critical factor in India's recognition of PLO was to counter the Chinese influence who have been closely associated with the Palestinian movement since the early 1960s. After the 1967 war between Israel and Arabs, Zhou Enlai, Chinese premier in a letter addressed to the president of PLO, extended support to the rights of Palestinian refugees. In 1970, Yasser Arafat was given a warm welcome by the Chinese.⁵⁶

PLO's recognition by India was also influenced by its desire to counter the growing influence of its two neighbours, i.e., Pakistan and China. For instance, the PLO mission in Karachi received diplomatic recognition which was opened by Pakistan in 1975.

Simultaneously, China having established diplomatic relations in 1965 with the PLO, an embassy was opened in Peking in 1974. These subtle gestures towards PLO by India's rivals Islamabad and Beijing pushed New Delhi in UNGA to co-sponsor the 3379 Resolution in November 1975.⁵⁷

As these developments unfolded, India's policy towards Israel deteriorated further, by New Delhi refusing visas to Israeli passport holders. India also denied permission to a several number of Israeli athletes, scientists and other figures to the multilateral gatherings and other events hosted by New Delhi.

⁵⁴ India is the first non-Arab country to permit the PLO to open an office in New Delhi.

⁵⁵ Indian Foreign Secretary Kewal Singh's Statement at the UNGA, 21 November, 1974, UN A/L.741. Add,1.

⁵⁶ India was the second non-Arab state to recognize the PLO, after China in 1965.

⁵⁷ P.R. Kumaraswamy, *Beyond the Veil: Israel-Pakistan Relations* (Tel Aviv: Jaffee Centre of Strategic Studies, Tel Aviv University, 2000). p.34.

Israel and Janata Government

With a coalition of various political parties a new government came into being and Congress, which was ruling until then, lost the elections in 1977. Similarly, there was also change in Israeli politics because for the first time, the Likud party won the elections. Moshe Dayan, the new Minister for Foreign Affairs, showed keen interest in strengthening Israel's position internationally and wanted Israel to upgrade its relations with estranged actors such as India and China.

As a result of change in regimes in both the countries, hopes were rekindled to revise the existing policy. Moraji Desai's government consisted of noncommunist parties such as BJS and PSP, which demanded a reversal of India's Israel policy.

However, the External Affairs Minister in Moraji Desai's Cabinet, a former Jana Sangh leader, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, reiterated New Delhi's traditional policy towards its engagement with countries in West Asia, by stating that India recognises Israel's right to exist, but the Palestinian state creation is necessary for peace and stability in West Asia.⁵⁸ Further, speaking in Parliament, by reiterating New Delhi's traditional pro-Arab policy, Vajpayee stated that the new government not only maintains ties with Arab states but also strengthens economic partnership with them.

In July 1978, in Belgrade, addressing the Non-Aligned Countries Foreign Ministers Conference, he stated that the Palestinians right to have a state for themselves must be recognized through the withdrawal of territories occupied by Israel.

During Moraji Desai's tenure, Moshe Dayan, the Foreign Minister of Israel, secretly visited India. Dayan met both Moraji and Vajpayee. After Yigal Allon's visit to an international conference in India a significant Israeli politician first visited India in 1965. Moraji Desai conceded that diplomatic relations between India and Israel should have been done after New Delhi's recognition in September 1950. Moraji explained how politically risky his meeting with Dayan was. In Dayan's words, "*If the news of my visit to him (Moraji Desai) now were to be published, he said, he (Moraji Desai) would be out of office.*" "*Now, when his [Morarji's] help was needed on behalf of peace, he could do nothing, since he had no diplomatic relations with Israel; and once peace was attained, and India were to establish such relations, its help would no longer be necessary*"⁵⁹ was Dayan's take on the meeting.

⁵⁸ India, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, *Annual Report 1977-78*, (New Delhi: Policy and Planning Division of the Ministry of External Affairs, 1978)

⁵⁹ Moshe Dayan, *Breakthrough, A Personal Account of the Egypt-Israel Peace Negotiations*

Without disclosing Dayan's visit, Moraji Desai played a mediatory role by suggesting ways of settling the Arab-Israeli dispute. In deliberations with Hosni Mubarak, Egypt's Vice President, and Hafiz al Assad, President of Syria in India's capital, he shared his ideas about the ongoing Arab-Israel conflict and Israel's view of the same. During Janata government's tenure, New Delhi continued to maintain contacts with Tel Aviv. For instance, a meeting was held between Moraji Desai and Israeli Defense Minister Ezer Weizmann. The Israelis offered military assistance to India in this meeting which included: Mirage III, the Merkava tanks, and the Kaffir jet fighters.

India pledged its support for the agreement between Tel Aviv and Cairo known as Camp David Accords in September 1978. Though India welcomed the peace talks between Israel and Egypt, it was critical over the limitations of the Accords. This Accords between the two was opposed by Iraq, Syria and the PLO which led to Egyptian isolation in the Arab world. Egypt left the Tripoli Arab League Conference in December 1978.

However, India refused the pressure exerted by Arab states to expel Cairo from the NAM. At the NAM conference held in Havana in September 1979, India joined the Arab states and condemned the Camp David Accords. Vajpayee's criticism of Camp David Accord was threefold: (i) Palestinians rights and the creation of a separate homeland for them was not mentioned (ii) Jerusalem status was not discussed (iii) Palestinians representative, PLO was not recognized.⁶⁰

In 1980, after Indira Gandhi's return to power, one of her major decisions towards India's West Asia policy was to confer the diplomatic status on Palestine Liberation Organization in March 1980. In Parliament, P.V. Narasimha Rao said, the solution to the West Asian crisis can be achieved only by engaging with Palestine and PLO which is very essential.⁶¹ Further, New Delhi's PLO office became an embassy with full diplomatic privileges. India also expelled Yossef Hassin, Israeli Consul based in Bombay. Speaking with the Bombay based weekly *Sunday Observer*, he said: *"Indian politicians are afraid of the Arabs, they are afraid that Iraq will cancel their contacts, Saudi Arabia will stop accepting labourers....India is always asking for floor at the UN and other international forums to denounce Israel and prove to the Arabs that you are doing more than Pakistan. That way you think you will impress the*

(New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1978).

⁶⁰ *Hindustan Times*, 11 October 1978; *Times of India*, 1 October 1978.

⁶¹ India, *Lok Sabha Debates* 7:3, (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, 1980), p.313-4.

Arabs..”⁶²

Two major factors influenced India’s pro-Arab policy during mid 1970s-80s. First, apart from the rejection of Camp David Accords in 1979 and Arab solidarity, India’s desire to have close ties with Arab countries also had energy and expatriate community considerations. For instance, from mid-1970s onwards, due to various political and economic factors, New Delhi diversified its oil imports. For instance, Riyadh became New Delhi’s major economic partner in West Asian region due to energy imports. New Delhi’s imports from Riyadh rose to 4,214 USD million in 1975 to 33,696 USD million in 1985. The Indian migrant population in West Asian countries also increased substantially from 1975 to 1987 i.e., from 2,66,255 in 1975 to 9,57,000 in 1987. The remittances from the migrants also significantly rose to 57.8% in 1984-85 from the West Asian countries to India.⁶³

In 1982, ninth Asian Games were hosted by New Delhi, with Israel’s exclusion. A new Asian Olympic Council was formed despite the Jewish state being a member state of Asia, which later institutionalised Israel’s exclusion from the Asian Games. India stated that it could not guarantee Israeli athletes adequate protection for its participation in the Games and that security of the sportsmen is an important factor in deciding the nations that have to participate in the Games. Israeli passport holders, citizens, and sportsmen were denied entry to conferences and contests organised by New Delhi under Indira Gandhi’s increasingly stringent visa policies.⁶⁴

Rajiv Gandhi Years

Rajiv Gandhi signalled a fresh approach in dealing with Israel and initiated talks despite obstacles within India. For instance, following electoral victory by Rajiv Gandhi, a radio station from Israel stated that the Shimon Peres government asked a British Jew to look into the possibility of meeting with the new Indian Prime Minister.⁶⁵ During the fortieth UNGA, Rajiv Gandhi met his counterpart, Shimon Peres, in 1985. However, this meeting has not brought any major changes in India’s Israel policy. An important outcome was that Israel posted a regular vice-consul at Bombay after India expelled Yosef Hassin in 1982.

⁶² *Sunday Observer* (Bombay) June 27, 1982.

⁶³ Deepak Nayyar, *International Labour Migration from India: A Macro Economic Analysis*, Working Paper No.3, Asian Regional Programme on International Labour Migration, U.N. Development Programme, New Delhi, 1988, p.4.

⁶⁴ P. R. Kumaraswamy, *India’s Israel Policy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), p.223.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p.227.

In 1980s, during the Cold War, Rajiv Gandhi desired to foster ties between New Delhi and Washington. The relations between them were frosty since the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan in late 1970s and Washington's military assistance and economic aid to Islamabad in the early 1980s. Towards the end of Cold War, USA sent more than USD 5 billion to Pakistan as military and development aid.

During his trip to the USA in June 1988, Rajiv Gandhi met Morris Abrams, the leader of a strong coalition of 38 Jewish associations named as Conference of Presidents of Major Jewish Organizations. He later interacted with the executive directors named, Malcolm Hoenlin from ADL Abe Foxman, and Ira Silverman, from the American Jewish Committee.

Upon the request of Democrat of New York City, Stephen Solarz, and Asian and Pacific Affairs subcommittee head, the Jewish lobby urged Rajiv Gandhi to loosen India's limits on Israel's visa requirements to which he responded favourably, and the vice-consul's title was changed to consul in Bombay.⁶⁶ The Israeli vice-consul in Bombay, Amos Radian, was promoted to his pre-1982 position, and Giora Becher took his place (the first Israeli sent to Bombay as consul since 1982).⁶⁷ According to an Indian official: "*The decision was taken much earlier. The meeting with Jewish leaders in New York was a fait accompli and we could hardly say no.*"⁶⁸

In the meeting that transpired between Jewish lobby organisations and Rajiv Gandhi, there was speculation in Israeli media that Rajiv Gandhi pledged to upgrade official ties with Israel.⁶⁹ Hoping for a possible diplomatic breakthrough between India and Israel, Yitzhak Shamir and Peres commenting on informal talks between Rajiv Gandhi and Jewish groups said that relations between Jewish state and India may improve, however, there may not be any major breakthrough between the two.

In January 1989, Joseph Hadass, Israeli Foreign Ministry, Asia's deputy director general, came to New Delhi and met the External Affairs, Narasimha Rao on an invitation from Indian authorities. To avoid domestic criticism and controversy, an Indian official stated that Hadass visited New Delhi not as Israel's official

⁶⁶ "Jewish Leaders and Solarz Meet Gandhi", *India Abroad* (June 17, 1988); Akbar, "New York Diary", *Telegraph* (Calcutta), (June 12, 1988).

⁶⁷ Ramesh Thakur, *The Politics and Economics of India's Foreign Policy* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1994)

⁶⁸ *Haaretz* (July 15, 1988), in FBIS-NES (July 19, 1988): 45; *India Today* (September 30, 1988); 155.

⁶⁹ Nicolas Blarel, *The Evolution of India's Israel Policy: Continuity, Change and Compromise since 1992*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2015), p.227.

representative but in his own capacity as a tourist.⁷⁰

At the same time, a three-member delegation of the ADL (Anti-Defamation League) of B'nai B'rith comprising of the ADL National Chairman Burton Levinson, National Coordinator, Jess Hordes and Chief of the ADL's Washington Bureau Abraham Foxman and Congressman Solarz visited New Delhi. Alfred Gonslaves, Foreign Secretary and P. K. Singh Joint Secretary in MEA, met Narasimha Rao.⁷¹

Though there was a speculation that the delegation argued in favour of improved Indo-Israeli relations, the ministry of external affairs denied these reports and said that there was no connection between the visit of Mr. Solarz and relations with Israel.⁷² As a sign of goodwill after the meeting, India expanded the jurisdiction of the consulate over India's southern state, Kerala, which has a large Jewish population.

Another significant development between Indo-Israeli ties during Rajiv Gandhi's tenure was in July 1987, Davis Cup tennis tournament was hosted by India. During the tournament, Rajiv Gandhi allowed the Israelis to play against the Indians in New Delhi ending the decades long sports boycott. In October 1988, the International Hotel Association's conference was inaugurated by Rajiv Gandhi, where an Israeli was elected president.⁷³

Though Rajiv Gandhi had favourable conditions at the domestic level to revise India's traditional policy towards Israel, the pro-Palestinian stance still enjoyed a base of support in India, and New Delhi was concerned about the adverse reactions from Arab states. However, unlike other former Indian Prime Ministers, Rajiv Gandhi met with his Israeli counterparts and held discussions with pro-Israeli circles on various international fora. However, Rajiv Gandhi was constrained in forging ties with Israel due to its raids on the PLO's headquarters in Tunis in 1985 and Palestinian Intifada in 1987.⁷⁴ The Iran-Iraq war, and the conflict in Afghanistan became major security concerns and eroded any domestic support for pro-Israeli policy by India and fell short of normalization.⁷⁵ Tel Aviv's involvement in Sri Lanka's ethnic conflict, and

⁷⁰ Ibid., p.228.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² India, Ministry of External Affairs, *Foreign Affairs Record* 35, no.10 (New Delhi: External Publicity Division of the Ministry of External Affairs), p.1

⁷³ P. R. Kumaraswamy, *India's Israel Policy*, (New Delhi: Columbia University Press, 2010), p.231.

⁷⁴ Nicolas Blarel, *The Evolution of India's Israel Policy: Continuity, Change and Compromise since 1992*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2015), p.225.

⁷⁵ G. P. V. Somaratna, "Renewal of Ties Between Sri Lanka and Israel," *Jerusalem Journal of*

Pakistan's attempts to use India's position on the Afghan conflict to its own advantage limited Rajiv Gandhi's maneuverability in foreign policy and restricted further rapprochement with Israel.

However, the Soviet Union's disintegration and the Cold War's culmination brought about dramatic changes in global as well as West Asian politics, which made it imperative for P. V. Narasimha Rao's government to upgrade diplomatic relations with Israel and start a new chapter in Indo-Israeli relations.

Chapter 4

Upgradation Of India's Diplomatic Ties With Israel: Context And Compulsions

The fourth chapter dwells upon the shift in India's policy towards Israel in the post-Cold War period. First, it aims to trace the geopolitical and geoeconomic changes in global politics that necessitated India to rethink its policy towards Israel in the post-Cold War context. Second, the study focuses on the internal (domestic) and external (international) factors that played a role in shaping India's policy towards West Asia in general and Israel in particular. Third, it also highlights the changes that India embarked upon in its diplomatic odyssey towards Israel.

After the end of the Cold War in the early 1990s, which resulted in the disintegration of the Soviet Union, New Delhi lost a long-standing and time-tested strategic partner. Not only India lost a major defence supplier, but also the Indian economy was in shambles with the crisis due to the balance of payments. The Gulf War in West Asia in 1991 and the geopolitical risks had a ripple impact which impelled India to readjust itself to the changing global situation. As New Delhi ushered in a dawn of new global political order, the main elements that significantly influenced India's foreign policy were *appearance of American unipolarity, rise of additional power centres*, and the fact that the *international politics shifted from Europe to Asia*.¹ This era of global politics can also be described as *de-politicization* and *de-ideologization* in international politics.² The core parameters of India's foreign policy, i.e., non-alignment and socialism, faced challenges from the changes that occurred in the international strategic scenario.

The ideological rivalry between Western and Eastern blocs and Israel's affinity towards the West also drifted Tel Aviv away from the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) led by Third World countries, G-77, and other forums. The end of the Cold War

¹ Jaswant Singh, "Against Nuclear Apartheid," *Foreign Affairs* 77, no. 5 (September-October) 1998, p. 47.

² R.S. Yadav, ed., *India's Foreign Policy towards 2000 A.D.* (New Delhi: Deep & Deep Publications, 1993) p.24.

significantly altered India's customary anti-Israeli policy in the post-Cold War dynamics as it weakened NAM, ideological hostility with the West, and the decline of communism.³ As these developments unfolded, a twin pronged approach was adopted by India to react to these new strategic factors that were playing at a global level and also take corrective measures to revive the stagnant economy which plunged into the balance of payments crisis as there was pressure from global monetary bodies like World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) to open the Indian economy for a global market.

India's Policy Shift and Path Towards Normalization (1991-92)

India's Response to the Gulf War

After the defeat of the Congress government, a coalition government was formed under the leadership of Vishwanath Pratap Singh. As New Delhi entered an era of coalition politics in the late 1980s and early 1990s, the period was also marked by internal political turmoil, social tensions, and economic stagnation. Externally, tumultuous relations with immediate neighbours like Nepal, the foreign policy fiasco in Sri Lanka, and the war in the extended neighbourhood (Persian Gulf) were major concerns in India's foreign policy outlook.

Given the above background, it is no surprise that V.P. Singh government had not attempted any major diplomatic contact with Israel, though this political dispensation included the members of Janata Dal who were associated with The Praja Socialist Party (PSP) of Jayaprakash Narayan had close ties to the Israeli Labour Party, which ruled Israel at the time.⁴ I.K. Gujral, the new external affairs minister, therefore, continued India's traditional conservative approach by reiterating India's pro-Arab policy posture.

However, the Gulf War, which started with invasion of Kuwait by Iraq became a significant diplomatic challenge for India after the Cold War, that the new coalition government had to deal with. The war unfolded at a time when India was reeling under an economy which was ailing and required oil to meet its economic needs.

Due to the intervention of US, India was granted an assistance of \$1 billion to meet its

³ Krishan Gopal and Sarbjit Sharma, *India and Israel Towards Strategic Partnership*, (New Delhi: Authors Press, 2007) pp.264-65.

⁴ Nicolas Blarel, *The Evolution of India's Israel Policy: Continuity, Change and Compromise since 1992*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 232.

oil requirements and became the first developing country to avail this loan.⁵ India's imports of crude oil were impacted by the Gulf War nearly 40 per cent, and it had to negotiate with other countries in West Asia like United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, and Iran to meet the deficit. During the Gulf War crisis, India's crude oil imports from Iraq (22 million tonnes) and Kuwait (1.5 million tonnes) were suspended. The cost of crude oil climbed from US \$ 14 to US \$ 30 per barrel as a result, which decreased India's foreign exchange reserves and caused an increase in its oil import bill of up to US \$100 million.⁶

The flow of remittances from the 180,000 Indian citizens living in Kuwait and Iraq was impeded by the Gulf War.⁷ On August 3, 1990, highlighting the concerns about expatriates in the conflict ridden zone, Mr. I.K. Gujral, in an interaction with media, stated, "*We are closely watching the changing situation and the Indians living in that region are safe.*"⁸ As the Gulf War was underway in 1990, Gujral was sent to Baghdad by V.P. Singh to ensure the well-being and repatriation of the expatriate community based in Iraq and Kuwait. He met Saddam Hussein, the then President of Iraq on 20 August, 1990,⁹ the first foreign head of state who was not Arab to have met the leader. After the visit by India's Foreign Minister, between mid-August and 20 October, India undertook a massive evacuation and brought more than 150,000 citizens back home via Baghdad and Amman.¹⁰

India's principal economic partner during the Cold War was Iraq with whom it had friendly relations, consistently endorsed India's position on Kashmir, unlike other West Asian countries such as Saudi Arabia, Iran, and UAE, which generally supported the Pakistani position. In the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Iraq was one of the West Asian countries to assure India of its veto if Pakistan brought up the

⁵ Ramesh Thakur, "India After Nonalignment," *Foreign Affairs* 72, no. 3 (Spring 1992)

⁶ R.K. Khilnani, *Reconstructing India's Foreign Policy* (New Delhi: Commonwealth Publishers, 2000) pp.194-195.

⁷ The above-mentioned figure was stated by Prime Minister V.P. Singh to the Lok Sabha on 20 September 1990.

⁸ I. K. Gujral, *Matters of discretion—An autobiography*. (New Delhi: Hay House India, 2011).

⁹ "Inder Kumar Gujral Dead, but His Doctrine Still Relevant," *The Economic Times*, December 2012, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/inder-kumar-gujral-dead-but-his-doctrine-still-relevant/articleshow/17433487.cms>.

¹⁰ J. K. Baral & J.N. Mohanty, "India and the Gulf Crisis: The response of a minority government," *Pacific Affairs* 65, No.3 (1992), pp.368–384.

Kashmir issue for vote.¹¹ By contrast, before Iraq invaded Kuwait, the Kuwaiti government was supportive of the Pakistani side on the Kashmir issue.¹² The Indian government flip-flopped in responding to the Persian Gulf crisis because New Delhi took a view that Arab problems can be solved by Arab countries themselves. India widely condemned the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, and it called for the immediate withdrawal of its forces.

New Delhi viewed the Gulf War crisis as another *regional conflict* and wanted no other external force to intervene and escalate the crisis. This was also a period where the tensions between India and Pakistan had escalated. New Delhi supported United Nations resolutions on the withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Kuwait, and repeatedly expressed its opposition to any “*unilateral action outside the framework of the U.N.*,”¹³ On September 28, 1990, the then Foreign Minister of India I.K. Gujral, in an address to the UN General Assembly plenary session, which was held immediately after the end of the Cold War, decried the foreign military presence in the region and expressed New Delhi’s displeasure by stating that multilateralism necessitates the participation of every nation and capitals of major powers cannot make decisions.¹⁴

V.P. Singh government wanted a peaceful settlement and opposed the use of force to solve the conflict,¹⁵ and asserted that the sovereignty of Kuwait must not be violated, and Iraq needs to withdraw its troops in compliance with the UN Security Council resolutions. He further stated that, India which had cordial relations with Iraq and Kuwait would like to end the Gulf crisis with non-military resolution.¹⁶

The former Indian representative at the United Nations, Chinmaya R. Gharekhan, pointed out that India had never used the word *condemn* regarding Iraqi’s invasion of Kuwait though he advised the ministry to condemn Saddam’s action and that India’s

¹¹ J. Mohan Malik, “India’s Response to the Gulf Crisis: Implications for Indian Foreign Policy,” *Asian Survey* 31, No. 9 (September 1991): 848.

¹² Richard E. Ward, *India’s Pro-Arab Policy: A Study in Continuity* (New York: Praeger, 1992), p. 141.

¹³ *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 6 September 1990.

¹⁴ PMUN (Permanent Mission of India to the United Nations) (1990): “Speech by Mr. I K Gujral”, 45th Session, 13th Plenary Meeting, 28 September.

¹⁵ Nicolas Blarel, *The Evolution of India’s Israel Policy: Continuity, Change and Compromise since 1992*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 233.

¹⁶ India, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, *Annual Report, 1990–91* (New Delhi: External Publicity Division of the Ministry of External Affairs).

interests in Gulf Cooperation Council far outweighed the Indian interests in Iraq.¹⁷ The ambiguous stand of India also evoked widespread criticism on the global platform for not condemning the action of Iraq when other powers like the USSR, China, USA had unequivocally condemned the same.¹⁸ In November 1990, the Joint Declaration of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) called upon Iraq to leave Kuwait and comply with UNSC resolutions. India supported UN Resolution 678, which directed Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait by 15 January 1991, otherwise use of force would be called for. From the Iraqi side, the position was very clear that it would not consider leaving Kuwait until the Arab-Palestinian issue was solved.¹⁹

As the crisis escalated, the Indian government headed by Chandrashekhar provided logistical support to USA for operations and refueling of planes from the Indian Ocean base of Diego Garcia.²⁰ This move by the Chandra Shekhar government faced a political backlash from opposition parties like Congress wherein they stated that India had betrayed a trusted friend like Iraq and neglected the cause of Palestinians. V.N. Gadgil, its spokesman, said on 28 January 1991 that “*this minority government had no right to make the refueling decision.*”²¹

However, BJP supported the Chandra Shekhar government on refueling decision as India remained committed to UN resolutions on the Gulf conflict and would abide by the same under the auspices of the U.N. charter. It also expressed concern over the Iraqi missile attack on Israel. The left parties also questioned the Chandra Shekhar government for its pro-U.S. policy and America’s hegemonistic approach towards West Asia.²² The diplomatic efforts put forth by India for a peace proposal to end the war were of no avail as these were not taken seriously by Iraq or U.S.A. Though India had sent its then Foreign Minister Vidya Charan Shukla to Belgrade and his deputy Digvijay Singh to Algeria, Jordan, Zimbabwe, it yielded no result.

¹⁷ Chinmaya R. Gharekhan, 01, “Revisiting the war that changed West Asia forever,” *The Wire*. July 2015, <http://thewire.in/4727/revisiting-the-war-that-changed-westasia-forever/>

¹⁸ J. Mohan Malik, “India's Response to the Gulf Crisis: Implications for Indian Foreign Policy,” *Asian Survey* 31, No. 9 (September 1991):848.

¹⁹ Lawrence Freedman and Efraim Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict: Diplomacy and War in the New World Order* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993)

²⁰ I. K. Gujral, *Matters of discretion—An autobiography*. (New Delhi: Hay House India, 2011)

²¹ J. K. Baral and J. N. Mahanty “India and the Gulf Crisis: The Response of a Minority Government,” *Pacific Affairs* 65, No. 3 (Autumn, 1992):368-384.

²² *The Economic Times* (Calcutta), 4 February 1991.

The Kuwait crisis proved to be a major turning point in the history of West Asian politics. First, the crisis brought a major shift in India's West Asia policy. The crisis signalled that India's traditional anti-West (USA-led alliance) posture would wither away, and rapprochement with USA was in offing. Second, India's interests in West Asia could no longer be looked at through the prism of the Palestinian cause due to the changed international security architecture within the region. During the Cold War years, India's engagement with West Asia was twofold, which included support for the Palestinians cause and distancing from Israel. The Palestinian factor was weakening through the platform of the Madrid Peace Conference initiated by US Secretary of State James A Baker with the limited participation of the USSR. The Palestinians support for Saddam Hussain's invasion had weakened the Palestine cause in the region, as the Arab states support for it became fainter.²³

India's Initial Moves Towards Engagement

Prior to the normalization of ties in 1992, there were initial foreign policy gestures by the Indian government towards the Jewish state. During the tenure of the Chandrashekhar government, in April 1991, a tennis tournament was attended by the junior Israeli national tennis team. Indian national television network (Doordarshan) broadcasted the match between them. The then Prime Minister of India, Chandrashekhar, hosted Israeli Consul Giora Brecher in July 1991 in New Delhi.²⁴

The Minister of State for Commerce and Law, Subramanian Swamy, persuaded Chandrashekhar, to forge ties with Israel and honour India's commitment which was made 40 years ago as New Delhi had recognised Israel *de jure* in 1950.²⁵ Despite the reluctance of the Prime Minister of India, Swamy met his counterpart, Moshe Nissim, Israel's Commerce Minister during the World Trade Organisation Conference held in December 1990 in Brussels. Thus, there were no major changes in India's Israel policy due to the fragility of coalition governments and internal political waggling. However, the Gulf War issue, which marked a pivotal juncture in India's West Asia policy, was

²³ Md. Muddassir Quamar, P.R. Kumaraswamy, "The Kuwait Crisis of 1990-91: The Turning Point in India's Middle East Policy," *Contemporary Review of the Middle East* 6, No.1, (January 2019):75-87.

²⁴ Itzhak Gerberg, *The Changing Nature of Israeli-Indian Relations: 1948- 2005* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 2008). p.151.

²⁵ Subramanian Swamy had already expressed this opinion on the need to establish diplomatic relations with Israel in an article in 1982, "The Secret Friendship Between India and Israel," (Swamy, 1982).

something that both V.P. Singh and Chandra Shekhar had to cope with. The reassessment of India's foreign policy became one of the major priorities for the new government under P.V. Narasimha Rao's leadership after the parliamentary elections in 1991.

International politics underwent a significant upheaval following the end of the Cold War as a result of the USA's preeminence in the world order, which reshaped the strategic environment globally. India's foreign policy and attitude toward the altered global landscape, in which new geopolitical and geoeconomic priorities developed, were significantly shaped by the sole superpower. Jyotindranath Dixit, who served as India's foreign secretary at the time, claimed that four elements were particularly important in altering India's attitude toward Israel: The 1991 Gulf War, the Arab states stance on the Kashmir issue between New Delhi and Islamabad, need for weapons by India from Israel and its experience in fighting terrorism, and the negotiations between Israel and PLO that led to the signing of a peace accord are just a few of the factors that contributed to the conflict.²⁶ In addition to the factors mentioned above, India introducing economic reforms moved it closer to the US and the global economic system in which the US dominated.

Yitzhak Rabin, Israel's prime minister at the time, famously said that his country was no longer "a nation that inhabits alone" in 1992.... The world has stopped being our enemy... Even our enemies and the countries that have denounced and battled us in the past now consider us a respectable and honourable place. Since he was instrumental in establishing diplomatic connections between Tel Aviv and New Delhi, Rabin has been widely credited for supporting India's position on contentious topics like Kashmir and the fight against terrorism. When J.N. Dixit, then India's foreign secretary, came to Israel, he met with him face to face in his capacity as Israel's prime minister. Despite the past animosities, Israel's efforts to build bridges with some UN members with whom it had previously been at odds received a significant boost when the Cold War ended.

Additionally, a significant development in India's West Asia policy occurred when the Cold War came to an end, from the region's core during the Cold War (Egypt, Iraq, and Palestine) to the periphery (Iran, Israel, and Saudi Arabia).²⁷ Due to its

²⁶ J. N. Dixit, *South Block Years: Memoirs of a Foreign Secretary*, (New Delhi: UBS Publishers' Distributors, 1996).

²⁷ Bansidhar Pradhan, "Changing Dynamics of India's West Asia Policy", *International Studies*, Vol.41, No.1, (February 2004), p.15.

diverse interests with various partners in the region, including Saudi Arabia and Iran's oil, Israel's military equipment and technology, and remittances from the nearly six million expatriate community in the Gulf, New Delhi pursued a more pragmatic and balanced approach towards West Asia after the Cold War.

More generally, due to the changed global politics, the non-relations with Israel as a policy was revised by many other countries such as China, Russia, and the newly emerged Central Asian Republics (CAR). In early 1992, two Asian powers, Beijing and New Delhi, established diplomatic ties at the ambassadorial level with Israel.²⁸ Explaining the significance of Israel establishing diplomatic relations with three major countries, Russia, China, and India, the head of Israel's Foreign Ministry's Asia and Africa desk stated that the isolation of Israel in global arena was the major objective of Arab states and ending the same for the Jewish state was a significant achievement diplomatically.²⁹

The Palestinian revolt of the late 1980s and early 1990s, known as the Intifada, prompted Israeli and Palestinians to meet in Spain, in 1991. Oslo Peace Accords, the result of these discussions, were signed in 1993. Both saw this as a significant step towards ending their decades long conflict. However, an extreme Jewish nationalist assassinated former Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, who had been leading Israel's efforts to pursue peace with Palestinians. Against the above, Benjamin Netanyahu was able to ascend to prominence in Israeli domestic politics and eventually became its Prime Minister in 1998. He has been an outspoken opponent of the Oslo Accords. Netanyahu was never in favour of any "so called concessions to Palestinians," including those involving the status of Jerusalem as the capital or the relocation of Palestinians within Israel. Stanly Johny pointed out that, "Netanyahu's three Nos were identical to the Arab-Israeli war of 1967: no pull back from Golan Heights, no debate on Jerusalem, and no discussions under any preconditions."³⁰

Prior, to India's normalization of ties with Israel, hectic parleys and deliberations were held between them in the early 1990s. In an interaction with the media, Yitzhak

²⁸ Efraim Inbar, "Israel's Strategic Environment in the 1990s," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 25 No.1, (2002) 21–38.

²⁹ Peter Ford, "Israelis Scramble to Keep Up with Pace of New Diplomatic Ties," *The Christian Monitor*, 12 February, <https://www.csmonitor.com/1992/0212/12011.html>.

³⁰ Stanly Johny, "The comeback king," *The Hindu*, November 06, 2022.

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/benjamin-netanyahu-the-comeback-king/article66101432.ece>

Shamir, Israel's Prime Minister, and Moshe Aron, Foreign Minister had desired that both countries might come together for establishing diplomatic relations as both were the "*largest and smallest democracies*."³¹ On a visit to Cairo (the only Arab country which had diplomatic ties with Israel) Madhavsinh Solanki, former External Affairs Minister from India categorically stated that it had not planned any move to forge ties with Israel.³² However, in October 1991, by linking it to the West Asian peace process, the External Affairs Minister expressed the hope that there could be a possibility for the normalization of ties with Israel without mentioning any definite time period for the same.³³ In an interaction with the parliamentary consultative committee, he stated that "*full diplomatic ties were conditional upon genuine progress in the peace process in West Asia*."³⁴ At the same time, BJP (the principal opposition political party), in its convention in October 1991, advocated full level diplomatic engagement and normalization of ties with Israel.

In late 1991, India's national broadcaster Doordarshan broadcast special programmes on the West Asia peace process and the need for India's diplomacy with Israel. In the third week of November 1991, the then Prime Minister of India, P.V. Narasimha Rao, met a well-known Jewish leader, Joseph Liebler, [the co-chairman of the World Jewish Congress's governing board who is from Australia] wherein, deliberations were held over New Delhi forging ties with Tel Aviv. The estranged partner of India, i.e., the USA in the Cold war years played a key role in these negotiations and exerted pressure on India to alter its policy towards Israel. In an interaction with the media, Liebler opined that Prime Minister Rao's response was very "positive and pragmatic."³⁵

Meanwhile, a parliamentary debate took place in the upper house (Rajya Sabha) in the Parliament of India's normalization of ties with Israel due to the changing political landscape of West Asia. Several opposition leaders, including

³¹ The Statesman (Delhi), March 20, 1989.

³² Punyapriya Dasgupta, "Betrayal of India's Israel Policy," *Economic and Political Weekly* XXVII, No.15 &16, (April 11-18, 1992):767.

³³ Itzhak Gerberg *The Changing Nature of Israeli-Indian Relations: 1948- 2005* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 2008). p.158.

³⁴ Nicolas Blarel, *The Evolution of India's Israel Policy: Continuity, Change and Compromise since 1992*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 233.

³⁵ Bansidhar Pradhan, "Establishing Ties with Israel: Prudence or Pressure?" *Link* 34, no. 23, 19 January 1992, p.29.

Pramod Mahajan, Ram Jethmalani (Bharatiya Janata Party), Subramanian Swamy (Janata Party), Yashwant Sinha (Samajwadi Janata Party), R.K. Karanja (nominated), participated in the debate. Replying to the debate, the then Minister for External Affairs, Eduardo Faleiro, stated that there had been a liberalization in ties between India and Israel and stated that no commitment can be given from the government's side over the normalization of ties. Elucidating his remarks, he stated that, Madrid Conference was a very significant breakthrough for the peace process in West Asia. After nearly forty years, the conflicting parties i.e., Israel and Palestine, and other Arab states such as Jordan, Syria are negotiating with each other for a solution to the conflict. In view of these developments in West Asia, Faleiro stated that New Delhi would cautiously wait for the progress in the impending conflict in West Asia.³⁶

Transition from No-Relationship to Diplomatic Warmth

Changes that occurred in India's Israel policy were visible in the transitory phase from the Cold war to the post-Cold war period, due to the dynamics of global politics. In December 1991, the head of the consular department in the External Affairs Ministry in New Delhi met Giora Becher, the Israeli Consul in Bombay (the first Israeli consul sent to Bombay as consul since 1982). After few days, the West Asian department in MEA had directly contacted him.³⁷

As stated earlier, the USA, played an active role in shaping India's Israel policy, and in the second week of January 1992, a high-level official meeting was held in the Indian embassy in Washington between Joseph Hadass (Israeli representative), Director General of the MFA with Lalit Mansingh, the Indian Embassy's deputy chief of mission in Washington. In an interview with Lalit Mansingh by Nicholas Blarel, an academic, it was conveyed by Hadass to Mansingh that it was India's prerogative to establish diplomacy with Israel and play a constructive role in changed West Asia.³⁸

As these contacts were underway between India and Israel, Yasser Arafat embarked on an visit to New Delhi from January 19-20, 1992. On 20th January 1992, after Palestinian President Arafat's discussions with India's Prime Minister and

³⁶ Itzhak, Gerberg, *The Changing Nature of Israeli-Indian Relations: 1948- 2005* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 2008). p.141.

³⁷ Nicolas Blarel, *The Evolution of India's Israel Policy; Continuity, Change and Compromise Since 1922*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2015): p. 243.

³⁸ Ibid., Nicolas Blarel Interview with Lalit Mansingh, p.244.

External Affairs Minister, in which we made it clear that the peace process in West Asia was a welcome step, and India fully endorsed this move. It was also stated that India categorically supported the people of Palestine in their right for self-determination.

In Narasimha Rao's words, "*our hearts were still with the struggling and suffering Palestinian people and with the martyrs of Sabra and Shatila and the intifada, our heads were adjusting to the dictates of fast changing world.*"³⁹ Arafat conveyed to Rao that though Palestinians were not initially optimistic about the peace process, they were hopeful of a peaceful resolution when talks were scheduled to take place in Moscow on 28-29 January, 1992. Arafat wanted India's participation in the peace process, to which Rao readily agreed and assured India would do whatever possible to support the cause of Palestinians.⁴⁰ In a public statement during the media interaction, commenting on India's desire to normalise ties with Israel, Arafat stated that, he shall cease to interfere in India's upgradation of diplomatic ties and exchange of ambassadors with Israel.⁴¹

As India continued to negotiate with Israel through back door diplomacy, from Moshe Yegar's first-hand accounts, the then deputy director general of Israel's foreign ministry and head of its Asia, Africa and Oceania Department, was in contact with Giora Becher, (the Israeli consul in Bombay) The Consul Giora Becher flew to New Delhi to hold talks with the then Foreign Secretary J.N. Dixit on 22 January, 1992.⁴² In an interaction with the media, when Moshe Yegar was in Beijing on January 23, 1992, to take part in the inaugural ceremony for the diplomatic rapprochement between Beijing and Tel Aviv, he stated that New Delhi's participation in the West Asia process in Moscow was possible only when India established full diplomatic relations with Israel. The same stand was reiterated by Israeli Foreign Affairs Minister, David Levy on January 26, 1992.⁴³ He added that, "*India must make up for lost time.*"⁴⁴ According

³⁹ Bansidhar Pradhan, "Seeking Clarity in Arafat's Message", *Link* 34 (25), 2 February 1994, pp. 30-31.

⁴⁰ India, Ministry of External Affairs, *Foreign Affairs Record*, 38:1, (New Delhi: External Publicity Division of the Ministry of External Affairs)January 1992

⁴¹ *Times of India*, 22 January 1992.

⁴² Yegar, Moshe, "The Normalization of Relations Between India and Israel: I", *Indian Defence Review*, 14 November, 2010.

⁴³ Yegar, Moshe, "The Normalization of Relations Between India and Israel: II", *Indian Defence Review*, 16 November, 2010.

⁴⁴ Nicolas Blarel, *The Evolution of India's Israel Policy; Continuity, Change and Compromise Since 1922* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2015), p.245.

to Nicolas Blarel, though India wanted to initially find an intermittent solution for upgrading diplomatic ties with Israel, Tel Aviv was not ready to accept any diplomatic arrangement except the normalization of ties with New Delhi.⁴⁵

In the memoirs of Jyotindranath Dixit, it was stated that, on January 23, 1992, discussions were held with senior ministers in Narasimha Rao's cabinet over India normalizing ties with Israel. The immediate concern that was expressed by the then Minister for Human Resources Development Arjun Singh, was over the Muslim factor and its support to the Congress party. Arjun Singh forewarned Rao of adverse consequences if New Delhi gave a major thrust to India's Israel policy.

While India dismantled its old no relationship policy with Israel, as there was no protest from the Muslim community domestically, the calculated risk paid off.⁴⁶ Subsequently, Arjun Singh was one of the senior most cabinet ministers to visit Israel in 1994 to sign bilateral agreements for the first time to lay a roadmap for future interactions between Israel and India.⁴⁷ Further, it was argued by J.N. Dixit that, Arafat supported India's decision to upgrade its diplomatic ties with Israel which made it easy for it to push for normalizing ties with Israel.⁴⁸

From the Israeli side, the first-hand accounts of Joseph Hadass, (the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Deputy Director General) who was in Moscow in the last week of January 1992 for West Asian peace talks, stated that, he received a call from MEA that New Delhi had decided to upgrade its diplomatic ties with Israel and publish a press communiqué jointly.

In the words of Joseph Hadass, "*I was asked to get in touch with your Prime Minister in order to agree on the text, which I did willingly. You can imagine my impatience and excitement waited for the evening, to see a personal dream coming true.*"⁴⁹ On January 29, 1992, a formal communique was released on normalisation of ties between the two. Consequently, the same was publicly announced in Jerusalem, Moscow, and New Delhi. The then Ambassador to Oman, Sri Ranjit Gupta, revealed that, diplomats in the Arab states were briefed by Indian officials over its decision to

⁴⁵ Ibid., p.243.

⁴⁶ P. Stephen Cohen, *India: Emerging Power* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004), p.247-8.

⁴⁷ P. R. Kumaraswamy, "The Maturation of India-Israeli Ties", *Middle East Quarterly* 20, No.2, (Spring 2013):39-48.

⁴⁸ Jyotindra Nath Dixit, *My South Block Years: Memoirs of a Foreign Secretary*, (New Delhi: UBS Publishers Distributors, 1996), p.312.

⁴⁹ Joseph Hadass, "Evolution of the Relations Between India and Israel," *India Quarterly* 58, no.2, (2002):15-32.

upgrade ties with Israel and they were informed to apprise the same to local officials of the respective Arab states.⁵⁰

Hours before he embarked on visit to New York to attend the UN Security Council meeting, the Narasimha Rao government finally reversed a four-decade-long policy of non-relations with Israel, and it was regarded as a significant foreign policy move by India in the post-Cold War global order. It was no longer necessary to choose sides in the Israel-Palestine issue in West Asia in order to preserve friendly relations with both.⁵¹ As discussed earlier about the US factor in Indo-Israel relations, Moshe Yegar, argued that, India's decision to upgrade diplomatic ties with Israel can play an important role to facilitate India's need for economic aid from global financial institutions like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.⁵² In the aftermath of the establishment of diplomatic ties, a former US Democratic Congressman, Stephen Solarz, observed that, "*India as 'the largest democracy' and Israel as 'the most stable democracy in West Asia' have much in common.*"⁵³

In an interview to *The Week*, J.N. Dixit reacted sharply to the displeasure expressed by a few Arab member states for normalisation of ties with Israel by India, "*What have the Arabs given us, if I may ask? Did they vote for us in the Kashmir issue? Were they supportive of us when we had the East Pakistan crisis in 1971?*"⁵⁴ In his memoirs, J.N. Dixit argued that, "*close relations with Israel*" served to "*counter moves by those Muslim countries, which were inclined to go against Indian interests instigated by Pakistan.*"⁵⁵ The lack of reciprocity from Arab states compelled Narasimha Rao's government to alter India's policy vis-a-vis Arab countries. After India's upgraded ties with Israel in 1992, a former Egyptian Ambassador to India and Head of the Egyptian Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee wrote in *Al-Ahram*, that Arab countries made a flaw over India-Pakistan conflict in the Cold War years by

⁵⁰ Ranjit Gupta, "Oral History: India and Israel," *Contemporary Review of Middle East* 5, No.1, (2018), 68–73.

⁵¹ P.R. Kumaraswamy, "Looking West 2: Beyond the Gulf," in *Handbook of India's International Relations* ed. David Scott (London: Routledge, 2011), p. 186.

⁵² Moshe Yegar, "The Normalization of Relations Between India and Israel: II", *Indian Defence Review*, 16 November, 2010.

⁵³ Krishan Gopal and Sarbjit Sharma, *India and Israel Towards Strategic Partnership*, (New Delhi: Authors Press, 2007) p.274-5.

⁵⁴ J.N. Dixit's interview to *The Week* (February 9, 1992) p.37.

⁵⁵ Jyotindra Nath Dixit, *My South Block Years: Memoirs of a Foreign Secretary*, (New Delhi: UBS Publishers Distributors, 1996), p.312.

viewing it solely through Islamic prism. He added that Arab nations had ignored India's position in the region and that it was in their best interests to cooperate with both India and Pakistan without taking sides.⁵⁶

However, Yaacov Shimoni, the former Director General for Asian Affairs in the Israeli Foreign Office, wrote about this in a Jerusalem Post piece, and commented that, India's diplomacy with Israel was delayed by forty four years and change in India's policy towards Israel was due to the changed global strategic environment compulsions like USA's supremacy and Chinese rise and not a sincere rational decision by Indian side towards Israel.⁵⁷

Internal Criticisms Towards Policy Shift

The shift in India's Israel policy in 1992 was not unanimously accepted, with dissenting voices calling the move as immature, ill conceived, hasty, and longed for the past and continued ideological hangover without taking into account the changed global order. This diplomatic posture by the Rao government faced opposition from within his party. For instance, Rajiv Gandhi's close associate and former diplomat Mani Shankar Aiyar, criticized the diplomatic overture of the Indian government towards Israel, and that decision was taken hastily without discussion in the party. He also stated that the Indian Parliament was not taken into confidence, and it's very premature to announce such a major foreign policy decision.⁵⁸

From the opposition side, most of the right-wing political parties supported India's move, such as Shiv Sena, Hindu Mahasabha, and so did BJP leaders like L.K. Advani, A.B. Vajpayee, and Murli Manohar Joshi (then president of BJP). Murli Manohar Joshi opined that, due to the concern of the Congress party over minority vote, it delayed full diplomacy with Israel.⁵⁹ Writing in one of the leading Indian national dailies, *The Indian Express*, Advani pointed out, that BJP always exerted pressure in favour of the establishment of diplomatic ties with Israel by India.⁶⁰ Other prominent Muslim leaders from Janata Dal and V.P. Singh opposed India's decision,

⁵⁶ El-Feki, Mustafa. "An Indo-Arab Blunder?" *Al-Ahram Weekly*. No. 730. (17 Feb 2005). <<http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2005/730/in1.htm>>

⁵⁷ *The Telegraph*, May 29, 1992.

⁵⁸ Rubinoff, Arthur G. "India's Normalization of Relations with Israel", *Asian Survey*, 35: (1995) 487-505.

⁵⁹ *Statesman*, January 31, 1992

⁶⁰ L.K Advani, "Should Indo-Israel Ties be Strengthened? A Defence Tie Up Will Benefit India", *Indian Express*, May 24, 1993.

and described it as a “*total sell out of India’s foreign policy due to International Monetary Fund pressure.*”⁶¹

Communist leader Indrajit Gupta questioned India’s diplomatic relations with Israel. Communist Party of India’s national secretary, Chaturannan Mishra, was of the view that “*decision was taken in haste.*”⁶² A statement issued by the CPI(M), stated that India upgrading its diplomatic relations with Israel was an explicit endorsement by India of Israeli’s occupation of Arab territories and a departure from traditional India’s foreign policy postures in global politics.⁶³ In an interview with the President of Indian Union Muslim League, Member of Parliament from Ponnani Parliamentary constituency in Kerala, Arthur G. Rubinoff, argued that, MPs from the Muslim community felt that recognition of PLO by Israel should have preceded New Delhi’s normalisation of ties with Tel Aviv.⁶⁴ Though there were varied reactions from various quarters towards India’s decision to engage fully with Israel, India left no stone unturned to address the repercussions and garner support domestically and internationally on this key foreign policy change.

From Nadir to Zenith: Towards Constructive Dialogue Between India and Israel

In the changed context of post-Cold War developments, India sought to assert itself as an emerging power in global politics, and hence New Delhi desired to strengthen and deepen its engagement with Israel. In the words of Talmiz Ahmed, “India had freedom and opportunity to cosy towards Israel in the aftermath of the Cold War. Especially, India also endorsed the emergence of CARs. The move by India was conveyed to Yasser Arafat as it got an opportunity to take Palestinian interests to Israelis.”⁶⁵

⁶¹ J. P. Sharma, “A Study of Evolution in India- Israel Relations,” (1948-92), *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* Vol. 53 (1992), pp. 593-597.

⁶² Sreekantan Nair, *Dynamics of Diplomacy Delayed: India and Israel*, (Kalpaz Publications, New Delhi, 2004) p.132.

⁶³ J.P. Sharma, “A Study of Evolution in India- Israel Relations (1948-92),” *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, Vol. 53 (1992), pp. 593-597.

⁶⁴ Rubinoff, Arthur G. ‘India’s Normalization of Relations with Israel’, *Asian Survey*, 35: (1995), 487-505, In an interview with MP Ebrahim Sulaiman Sait, New Delhi, January 1994.

⁶⁵ Personal Interview, Mr. Talmiz Ahmad, Former Indian Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, Oman, and the UAE, Distinguished Fellow at ORF, Zoom, 07 May, 2022.

The disappearance of bipolar politics, the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the emergence of America as a unipolar power, the decline of multilateralism, rise of globalisation, regionalism, and economic slowdown posed major challenges for India in the new global order. To counter these challenges, India had to move away from the inhibitions of the past.⁶⁶ As a leading Indian scholar of West Asia, stated that, “*Engagement, not isolation, and constructive dialogue, not condemnation, became the new mantra.*”⁶⁷

There was a change in Israel’s strategic thinking, too in the late 1980s and early 1990s given the changes in the external environment. The Labour party returned to power in Israel in 1990, and it had to rethink Israel’s place in the changed global order. The Labour party had four major postulates on Israeli security matters. “firstly, new perceptions in the leadership of Israel over the changing contours of new international and regional systems, secondly, a reassessment of national power, thirdly, the greater aversion towards the use of the force by Israeli leadership, fourthly, deprioritizing the self-reliance concept.”⁶⁸

Various international developments also altered the Jewish state’s strategic outlook like the defeat of Iraq by US led coalition forces, the negotiations between Arab states and Israel after the Madrid Peace Conference, the collapse of the Soviet Union (a friend to Arab states against Israel), the peace accord between PLO and Israel in September 1993. It is no surprise that the late Israeli Prime Minister, Yitzhak Rabin, in his assessment of the changed regional and global environment, argued that, “*we live today in a period in which the threat to the existence of Israel has been reduced.*”⁶⁹

In a statement to the Lok Sabha, P.V. Narasimha Rao, outlined his foreign policy priorities to suit the changed global realities. In the post-Cold War era, Rao outlined India’s foreign policy priorities which, included “(i) Prevention of any threat to India’s unity and territorial integrity (ii) ensuring geopolitical security by creating a durable environment of stability and peace in “our region”; (iii) creating a framework conducive to the economic well-being of the people by encouraging a healthy external

⁶⁶ Muchkund Dubey, *India’s Foreign Policy: Coping with The Changing World*, (New Delhi: Orient Black Swan, 2016).

⁶⁷ P. R. Kumaraswamy, *India’s Israel Policy*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010) p. 236.

⁶⁸ Efraim Inbar, *War and Peace in Israeli Politics, Labour Party Positions on National Security*, (Boulder, CO: Lynnee: Rienner, 1991).

⁶⁹ Address by Yitzhak Rabin and Mordechai Gur in Yehudah Mirsky and Ellen Rice, eds... *Towards a New Era in Israel-U.S.* (Washington D.C: The Washington Institute, September 1992) 1-2, 29-30.

economic environment; (iv) and trying to restore, internationally, the centrality and criticality of development in the evolution of political and economic policies all over the world.”⁷⁰

From the Israeli side, it capitalised on culmination of Cold War politics, which marked the end of the international political isolation of Israel. It began nourishing relations with several Asian countries such as China, Cambodia, Laos, and Malaysia. After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, it established diplomatic relations with other East European states and newly emerged Central Asian Republics (CARs) and emerged as an important influence in global politics.⁷¹ After the peace conference in Madrid in 1991, several outer ring (in Israeli strategic parlance, called the second ring) countries such as Mauritania, Oman, Qatar, Tunisia also established diplomatic ties with Israel. On 7 May 1992, in an Independence Day address to the nation, Israeli Prime Minister, Shamir remarked that isolation of Israel ended as it established formal diplomatic ties with two major powers in Asian continent i.e., China and India, and other countries in Africa, Russia, the Baltic States, and the new republics. He desired that establishment of ties with them is very significant for the Jewish state.⁷²

Commenting on the post-Cold War convergence of strategic interests between the two, a leading Israeli scholar, Efraim Inbar, stated that, due to the shared interests between India and Israel in several areas such as radical Islam, nuclear proliferation and state sponsored terrorism can lead to cooperation between the two.⁷³ According to former Foreign Secretary, J.N. Dixit, India, which must contend with both internal and external challenges, might benefit from Israel’s experience in counter-terrorism.⁷⁴

On February 24, 1992, in an address to the both houses of the Parliament, President Venkatraman stated that, India decided to normalize its relations with Israel due to the changed situation in West Asia and it looks forward for a broad based relationship with it.⁷⁵ New Delhi welcomed the peace process in West Asia and discussions between Israel and Arab states. After the discussion was held in Rajya

⁷⁰ Rao’s statement in the Parliament on 18 December 1991. Lok Sabha Debates.

⁷¹ Efraim Inbar, “Israel and India: Looking Back and Ahead,” *Strategic Analysis* 41, no.4, (June 2017):369–383.

⁷² Israel’s Foreign Relations, Selected Documents, Independence Day message by Prime Minister 7 May, 1992, Vol.11-12; 1988-1992.

⁷³ Efraim Inbar, “Israel’s Strategic Environment in the 1990s,” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 25, no.1, (2002) 21–38,

⁷⁴ J. N. Dixit, *My South Block Years: Memoirs of a Foreign Secretary*, (New Delhi: UBS Publishers' Distributors, 1996) p.310.

⁷⁵ India, *Rajya Sabha Debates*, (New Delhi, Rajya Sabha Secretariat, 1992), p.20-21.

Sabha, CPI (M) MP E. Balanandan, moved an amendment to the President's address by saying that India failed to address the Palestinian rights issue.⁷⁶

After the heated discussion in both the houses of Parliament on the President's address, Narasimha Rao asserted that the decision was taken in this regard after due consultations. *"When members talk of recognising Israel, I do not know what honourable MPs mean, Because we recognised Israel long ago when Panditji was alive.....we have a situation where India's participation in Middle East for the sake of fighting for the cause of Palestinians has become more important than anything else....."* On the question of inordinate delay or wait and watch policy or a premature decision, he answered by saying, *"India could have been the only country left out, that kind of solution is unacceptable to us."* By emphasizing that India's pro- Israel policy need not mean anti Palestine, he stated that, *"We stand by the Palestinians cause as strongly as ever before and this cause will be fully served by the decision taken by India and perhaps not so well otherwise."*⁷⁷

The Ministry of External Affairs provided an explanation of the Indian government's choice to normalise relations with Israel in its Annual Report for 1992–1993,

*"India's establishing diplomatic relations with Israel was in conformity with the emerging trend in international relations of more and more countries including Arab countries having contacts with Israel. The Chairman of the PLO Mr. Yasser Arafat, also acknowledged the political realism of the step taken by India. India was invited to become a participant in Middle East Peace Process and was invited to become a member of all the five working groups discussing different aspects of structuring new agreements on the Middle East-Palestine question. India has been a participant in these proceedings since inception."*⁷⁸

The Indian Prime Minister, who was heading a minority government, took a bold decision despite amateurish backlash by some opposition parties by stating that support for the Palestinian cause does not mean isolating Israel in international politics.

⁷⁶ India, *Rajya Sabha Debates*, Motion of Thanks on President's Address, (New Delhi, Rajya Sabha Secretariat, 1992), p.341-42.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ India, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, *Annual Report*, 1992–93. (New Delhi: Policy Planning and Research Division).

Due to the normalisation of ties, India became a party to negotiations of the turbulent West Asian peace process, a role it was denied earlier. Without a doubt it can be stated, Narasimha Rao was crucial in changing India's perspective towards Israel. According to Joseph Leibler, Co-Chairman, World Jewish Congress,

*“The international situation has no doubt changed considerably but my gut feeling is that even if Indira Gandhi or Rajiv Gandhi were in office today, they would still be wearing blinkered glasses. In contrast, [Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao], though an elder statesman, comes out as a refreshingly pragmatic and unorthodox politician.”*⁷⁹

After the normalization, in March 1992, a diplomatic office was opened in New Delhi, and in August 1992, an embassy was established in New Delhi, which was opened by Giora Becher, Israeli Consul in Bombay. The consulate office in Mumbai was upgraded to Consulate General. In addition, in Kolkata, an Honorary Consulate was opened. On May 15, 1992, New Delhi opened an embassy in Tel Aviv. As Jerusalem was considered a disputed territory, it preferred to open in Tel Aviv.⁸⁰

Like other major Asian powers, China established diplomatic relations with Israel in the post-Cold War era. On 24 January 1992, the Deputy Prime Minister of Israel, David Levy, visited Beijing, which marked a major breakthrough in Chinese foreign policy by putting an end to Cold War years of hostility and securing Chinese diplomatic recognition.⁸¹ Commenting on China establishing diplomatic ties with Israel and India's non-relations with it, Mr. David Levy stated that, *“The Indian Government must make up for the time lostthe time has come that India should also, ...have established diplomatic relations.”*⁸² He further added that, *“India must not discriminate against Israel because this is something that is against itself as it is putting shackles on its own hands... and New Delhi must emulate the example of China, and fifteen new Republics of former Soviet Union... , it is not a matter of favour, it is a privilege for us but it is also a privilege for India and suppose it will happen very*

⁷⁹ Kumaraswamy, P.R. *India's Israel Policy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), p.224.

⁸⁰ Kumaraswamy, P. R. (2007). India and Israel: The Diplomatic History. *Indo-Judaic Studies in the Twenty-First Century*, 212–224.

⁸¹ *Hindustan Times* January 27 1992.

⁸² *Ibid.*

soon.”⁸³ Mr. Zev Sufott, Israel’s first Ambassador to China, explained the thinking behind the Chinese positive move towards Israel,

*“The myth of Israel’s support and influence in the west in general and the US in particular, was very powerful throughout China. The Chinese view of the relationship of world Jewry with Israel was similar to that of their own kinship with the Overseas Chinese, and they were profoundly impressed by the achievements and status of Jews in western societies.”*⁸⁴

In changed global circumstances, India and China abandoned their ambivalence towards Israel and normalized relations. The Israeli Foreign Ministry saw it as a major breakthrough when it claimed that, *“Early in 1992 Israel established full diplomatic relations with China and India, thus changing completely the nature of its presence on the Asian continent.”*⁸⁵ It is fair to say that China’s move to normalize relations with Israel was a factor that influenced India’s own decisive diplomatic move towards Israel.

The USA, being the only superpower, had a major influence on India’s diplomacy with Israel. “The involvement of USA in the bilateral relationship has been constant, albeit neither consistent nor direct.”⁸⁶ The backing of Israel by USA, as one of the super powers during the Cold War years, was viewed by India as a continuance of the imperialist policies of Washington.⁸⁷ The disappearance of the ideological divide between two power blocs gave India strategic leverage and provided a major impetus to nurture India-Israel-USA relationship. The anti-Israeli position advocated by India during the Cold war years alienated Jews, particularly Congressmen in the US who were supporters of India.

For example, India backing the USA led UNGA Resolution to equate Zionism with racism, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) intervention to abandon the sale of AWACS to Pakistan, ending of sports boycott by India due to USA

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ E. Zev Sufott, *A China Diary: Towards the Establishment of China- Israel Diplomatic Relations* (London: Frank Cass, 1997), p.81.

⁸⁵ Israel’s Foreign Relations, Selected Documents, Vol.11-12; 1988-1992.

⁸⁶ Nicolas Blarel, “Assessing US Influence over India–Israel Relations: A Difficult Equation to Balance?,” *Strategic Analysis* 41, no.4, (June 2017):384-400.

⁸⁷ Debjani Ghosal, “Strategic Hyphenation between India and Israel: The Major Areas of Cooperation and Constraints in the Post-Cold War Era,” *Jadavpur Journal of International Relations* 20, (2016):1-37.

intervention.⁸⁸ Political personalities in USA, namely Cellar and Solar and other pro-Israeli interest groups played a very important role in Indo-Israel normalisation of ties. It was due to their intervention that, the backchannel negotiations began by USA with the support of other USA based Jewish organisations during the tenure of Rajiv Gandhi government.⁸⁹ Later, in 1991, a delegation of WJC visited India to convince it to normalise ties with Israel.⁹⁰ In the meeting with P.V. Narasimha Rao, one of the members of the delegation, warned that the “*leaders of the American Jewish community ... would regard him as no different from the Head of Iraq or another Third World country if he continued with the hypocrisy of refusing to recognize some sort of normalization of relations with Israel.*”⁹¹

During the Gulf War, 1991, refueling of American planes by India, evoked wide spread political backlash from opposition political parties. This brought India and USA closer than ever. The slowdown in India’s economic growth became a major determinant in India’s policy in gravitating towards the USA, as India had to make certain structural reforms for financial assistance from monetary agencies like the IMF and World Bank. During the consultations over the normalisation of ties with Israel, the USA was involved, which had significant interests in the Indian market and exerted a strong influence on India to diversify its foreign policy due to the changed strategic environment in the global order.

The post-Cold War compulsions unravelled India’s foreign policy to explore new avenues for diplomacy like the USA, and Japan. The normalization of ties in January 1992 was considered a major *hallmark* in India’s foreign policy, which upgraded the diplomacy between them to an ambassadorial level and the opening of embassies in both nations. A significant upward trajectory in the Indo-Israel bilateral relationship was visible in the post-Cold War era due to the mutual understanding of each other’s concerns.

The end of the Cold War, demise of the Soviet Union, the emergence of America as the sole super power, globalisation, dilution of ideological component and bipolarity, and the weakening of Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), made India see

⁸⁸ Rubinoff, Arthur G. (1995), ‘India’s Normalization of Relations with Israel’, *Asian Survey*, 35: 487-505.

⁸⁹ Nicolas Blarel, “Assessing US Influence over India–Israel Relations: A Difficult Equation to Balance?,” *Strategic Analysis* 41, no.4, (June, 2017):384-400.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Kandel A., Wald. S. *India, Israel and the Jewish People, Looking Back, Looking Ahead, 25 Years After Normalization*, The Jewish People Policy Institute p.174.

WestAsian politics and Palestine issue in a new light. The flourishing of bilateral ties between India and Israel also had U.S.A. backing, with whom India also had strained relations despite goodwill in the Cold War years.

The developments in West Asia, like Iraq's invasion of Kuwait weakened the Palestinian cause in the late 1980s and early 1990s, and changed the course between India and Israel's diplomatic contacts. The dissolution of the Soviet Union weakened Arab countries ability to fight against Israel, which led to a conciliatory and non-confrontationist attitude towards Israel. The weakening of the Arab bloc due to the reduction of oil prices, and economic mismanagement reduced their international standing in global politics and softened their stance towards Israel. The West Asia Peace Conference heralded a new approach in dealing with Israel, and the process of negotiation was renewed. Not only India, but also other major powers like Beijing and Moscow reassessed their ties with Israel. Tel Aviv too altered its foreign policy due to the changed strategic environment to improve its ties with all the major powers across the globe which significantly enhanced Israel's diplomatic status and ended its international isolation. In short, changes in the global order, shifts in West Asian politics, and developments in India's economy and domestic politics in the 1990s played a decisive role in India normalizing ties with Israel in January, 1992.

India And Israel Post-Cold War : Defence Partnership

After establishing Indo-Israel ties in 1992, the defence and security cooperation reached new heights and became a significant factor in strengthening India's strategic partnership with Israel. As the diplomatic ties were low key between Tel Aviv and New Delhi before 1992 for various domestic and international factors, as explained in the earlier chapters, Israel did provide military assistance to India during the Indo-China war in 1962, and Indo-Pakistan wars in 1965 and 1971.¹

Against the backdrop of the end of the Cold War, which culminated in the disintegration of the Soviet Union, India lost its long-standing and time-tested strategic partner. In Indo-Israeli relations post normalization phase, Tel Aviv emerged as a major arms exporter in global politics with one of the most sophisticated defence weapon systems during Cold War.² In India's *Ministry of Defence Annual Report 2006-07*, India lists *Israel* as among its first five *defence partners*, along with France, Russia, USA, and the UK. The report says,

“rapidly expanding defense cooperation and ties” with these partners “will enhance not just the security environment in the region, but also the global security scenario.”³

Several factors facilitated enhanced military cooperation between New Delhi and Tel Aviv in the post-Cold War period, which include:

First, the demise of the Soviet Union, which was New Delhi's major strategic and diplomatic ally during the Cold War in international politics, compelled India “to reorient its foreign policy to accommodate the changing international milieu.”⁴ Due to the void left by the disintegration of the Soviet Union, India faced the major challenge

¹ Harsh V. Pant “India-Israel Partnership: Convergence and Constraints,” *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 8, no.4, (December 2004): 61.

² P.R. Kumaraswamy, “The Star and the Dragon: An Overview of Israeli-PRC Military Relations,” *Issues and Studies*, (China), 30, No.4, (April 1994), pp. 36-55.

³ Ministry of Defence, *Annual Report*, 2006-07, (New Delhi, Ministry of Defence, Government of India, 2007), p.11.

⁴ Harsh V. Pant “India-Israel Partnership: Convergence and Constraints,” *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 8, no.4, (December 2004): 61.

of addressing its security and military issues. New Delhi was in search of a major partner for its military needs, and Israel fit the bill admirably.

Second, the culmination of the Cold War led to the emergence of a unipolar order, i.e., where Washington was the dominant force. After Cold War, developments brought USA and Israel closer to India in global and regional politics, and the American factor played an important role in India renewing its ties with Israel.⁵

Third, Israel's relative isolation in global politics, particularly in the Asian context, in the Cold War years was also one of the major hindrances. However, there was a major change in this situation as Israel forged ties with other major Asian countries in the post-Cold War period, like China, Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam, and India had to fall in the line too.

Fourth, In the early 1990s, Israel became the fifth largest exporter of arms in the world,⁶ and looked for new partners and markets to maintain its technological edge.⁷ After Cold War, India's goal of self-reliance in the military industry and its desire to diversify its military supplies emerged as a significant factor in India's foreign policy.⁸ Israel, which needed partners for its arms exports, military cooperation, and technology transfer, and India in need of technological expertise, military equipment provided an avenue for mutual cooperation in the defence sector between the two.

In view of the above, the developments in West Asia in the aftermath of the Cold War due to the changed realities vis-à-vis the Arab-Israeli conflict, the threats emanating from cross-border terrorism, the Islamic terrorism backed by the neighbours of both countries emerged as one of the major convergences in the relationship between India and Israel. Though they were divided geographically apart, they faced

⁵ D. A. Lewis, "Diversification and Niche Market Exporting: The Restructuring of Israel's Defense Industry in the Post-Cold War Era", in A. Markusen, S. DiGovianna, and M. Leary (eds), *From Defense to Development? International Perspectives on Realizing the Peace Dividend* (London: Routledge, 2003).

⁶ P.R. Kumaraswamy, "The Star and The Dragon: An Overview of Israeli- PRC Military Relations", *Issues and Studies*, (China), 30, No.4, (April 1994):36-55.

⁷ D. A. Lewis, 'Diversification and Niche Market Exporting: The Restructuring of Israel's Defense Industry in the Post-Cold War Era', in A. Markusen, S. DiGovianna, and M. Leary (eds), *From Defense to Development? International Perspectives on Realizing the Peace Dividend* (London: Routledge, 2003).

⁸ P.R. Chari, "India's Weapons Acquisition Decision-making Process and Indo-Soviet Military Cooperation", *SIPRI Arms Procurement Decision Making Project*, Working Paper 19, 1995, pp.199.

common challenges and shared the same concerns with a similar security environment in the region. For example, India faced prolonged and protracted low-intensity conflict⁹ with Bangladesh, China, Myanmar, and Pakistan, whereas, Israel from its immediate neighbours such as Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria, etc.¹⁰

The robust defence ties established in more than two decades in the military level cooperation between India and Israel can give us an account of the common interests that both countries continue to espouse and the limitations that hinder the relationship in the defence-security fields.

As Cold War culminates, New Delhi and Tel Aviv coming together, on 23 February 1992, Sharad Pawar, emphasized the Indo-Israeli cooperation on counter-terrorism would be a great opportunity.¹¹ However, Sharad Pawar's comments evoked outrage and opposition in India which made the Government of India deal cautiously with Israel on the strategic side. Similarly, his deputy, Krishna Kumar, also acknowledged that "*Israel had certain defence capabilities worth noting.*"¹²

Despite formal contacts and consultations between New Delhi and Tel Aviv in January 1992 after a prolonged absence, there was an initial reluctance and evasiveness from the Indian side, partly due to domestic opposition to collaborate with Israel in the military and security domain. New Delhi continued to rule out the possibility of security-oriented cooperation. For instance, Minister of State (MoS) for Defence, S. Krishna Kumar, remarked, "*there was no proposal, no initiative and no offer for any kind of defense ties with that country- the subject had not been even formally discussed in the defense ministry.*"¹³

At the same time, making a brief intervention in the Parliament, the then Prime Minister of India, P. V. Narasimha Rao, stated as there was a prolonged absence of

⁹ low intensity conflict is a term in international relations when the commitment of the military capabilities is finite and limited.

¹⁰ Efraim Inbar, "Indian-Israeli Entente," *Orbis*, 48, (Jerusalem, Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies, 2004), p. 92–93.

¹¹ The Statesman (New Delhi), Feb. 28, 1992, quoted in P. R. Kumaraswamy, *Israel and India*; remarks of Maj. Gen. Uzi Dayan, National Security Advisor, in Amit Navon, "The Indian Knot," *Maariv* Weekend Magazine, Sept. 20, 2002.

¹² Joseph Hadass "Evolution of the Relations Between India and Israel," *India Quarterly*, 58: (2002) 15-32.

¹³ Nicolas Blarel, *The Evolution of India's Israel Policy: Continuity, Change, and Compromise Since 1922* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2015), p.276.

diplomacy between India and Israel, “we obviously know less than some of the members. Once the relations start functioning, we will see what we can learn from them.”

Similarly, in March 1992, Israel’s Foreign Ministry, deputy director, Yoshe Mager visited New Delhi to begin the establishment of the Israeli embassy’s preparatory work in New Delhi. During his visit to New Delhi, he interacted with the Defence and External Affairs senior officials. Later, when the media asked him about his discussions with Indian Defence Secretary N.N. Vohra, Yoshe Mager, expressed his unwillingness to comment on the subject and claimed that the topic of their discussion was *the weather*. He commented that, “*Nobody told us of Indian needs in the areas of defence*,”¹⁴ From the Israeli side, Giora Becher, charge d’affaires remarked that “it is not the right time for discussing such issues (as defense).”¹⁵

In August 1992, a delegation from Malat (a subsidiary of the Israeli Aerospace Industry), visited India and offered cruise missile technology. Malat representatives reportedly offered Searcher UAVs¹⁶¹⁷ and Israeli secure digital data links to India’s MiGs.¹⁸ In December 1992, another delegation of Malat visited New Delhi and briefed the army, air force officials of India to finalize the deal with Indian Air Force (IAF). The delegation also offered the third generation *Searcher* and *Ranger* UAVs to the IAF.¹⁹ Following normalisation of Indo-Israel ties in 1992, this became the first major defence deal signed between them.

From the Israeli side, Police Ministry, former Director General, Ya’acov Lapidot, stated that New Delhi was interested in assistance from Israel over anti-terror activities.²⁰ Shimon Peres, Israel’s Foreign Minister, visited India in May 1993, where anti-terrorism cooperation was discussed. Underscoring the importance of military

¹⁴ P. R. Kumaraswamy, “The limitations of Indo-Israeli military cooperation,” *Contemporary South Asia* 5, no.1, (1996):75.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ramesh Thakur, *The Politics and Economics of India’s Foreign Policy* (New Delhi: Palgrave Macmillan, 1994), p. 291

¹⁷ The IAI Searcher is a reconnaissance aircraft made in Israel in the 1980s. This was an offer made to India as it was still the target of Western technology controls at that time.

¹⁸ P. R. Kumaraswamy, *India and Israel: Evolving Strategic Partnership* (Ramat-Gan, Israel: The Begin-Sadat Centre for Strategic Studies, Bar Ilan University, 1998), p.7.

¹⁹ Ibid., p.14-18.

²⁰ Ibid., p.6.

cooperation in the bilateral relationship, the officials from both sides visited India and Israel at regular intervals. However, all these reports were denied from both sides, and secrecy was maintained to avoid any political backlash.

The Indian delegation led by J.N. Dixit discussed the cooperation between India and Israel over terrorism. J.N. Dixit discussed the requirement of possible defense ties with Prime Minister Rabin during his visit to Israel.²¹

After J.N. Dixit's visit to Israel, in April 1993, Israel's Manufacturers Association (IMA) visited India for two weeks with the representatives from defence industry (from the Elul and Elbit Technologies).²² Subsequently, Sharad Pawar, the former Chief Minister of Maharashtra, led a delegation from India to Israel, along with military officials, wherein, they visited military facilities and establishments in Israel including the Israeli Anti-Terror Unit.²³ From India, National Defence College delegations visited Tel Aviv in 1993 and 1995.²⁴

As the newly shaped bilateral ties between India and Israel continued through regular visits of officials from both countries, in October 1993, the Association of Electronic Industries of Israel, along with representatives of IAI and its subsidiary Elta, the manufacturer of electronic weapon systems, visited India. In November 1993, from the Israeli side, SIBAT's Brigadier General David Shoval visited India, and held discussions with the officials of the Indian Army and IAF.²⁵ SIBAT appointed more than fifty sales agents in India at the end of 1993 to sell different defence items.

On the other hand, in May 1994, *Defense News* reported that India would purchase Malat's sixteen Hunter and Seeker UAVs and two control stations for \$1.6 million per piece. It was also reported that Israel would assist India's *Lakshya* advanced Pilotless Target Aircraft (PTA) Falcons Remotely Piloted Vehicles (RPVS). In April 1994, during Deputy Minister Yossi Beilin's visit, the issue was discussed with his Indian counterpart. In the same month, India and Israel sealed a defence deal worth \$50

²¹ Jyotindranath Dixit, *My South Block Years: Memoirs of a Foreign Secretary* (New Delhi: UBS Publishers, 1996), p.313.

²² Neal Sandler "Trade Winds", *The Jerusalem Report*, May 06, 1993.

²³ Farah Naaz, *West Asia and India: Changing Perspectives* (New Delhi: Shipra Publications, 2005).

²⁴ P. R. Kumaraswamy, *India and Israel: Evolving Strategic Partnership* (Ramat-Gan, Israel: The Begin-Sadat Centre for Strategic Studies, Bar Ilan University, 1998), p.8.

²⁵ Nicolas Blarel, *The Evolution of India's Israel Policy: Continuity, Change, and Compromise Since 1922* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2015), p.284.

million to purchase Harpy drones.²⁶²⁷

Contrarily, these media reports were dismissed by Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO). The DRDO reported India's collaboration with Israel over procurement of arms as *incorrect and without any basis*.²⁸ In January 1995, the Indian Home Ministry delegation visited Israel to study the four-tiered specialized barbed wire system developed by Israelis in the Gaza strip. A study was done to safeguard New Delhi-Islamabad *de-facto* border in Kashmir and avert the incursions through the LoC near India-Pakistan, along 1,500 km border of the states of Gujarat and Rajasthan.²⁹ In March 1995, Israeli Air-Chief Maj. General Herzl Bodinger embarked to New Delhi in response to the invitation made by his Indian counterpart, Air-Chief Marshal S.K. Kaul.³⁰ In the defence equipment offered by Israel, it included anti-detection, and anti-jamming maneuvers for air platform access, anti-radar systems, remotely piloted vehicles (RPVs), airborne early warning control systems (AWACs), anti-radar systems, fourth-generation fly by wire technology, and other specialized weapons such as UAVs. During the visit, an \$80 million deal was also signed between India and Israel to provide electronic warfare systems for the MiG-21 fighter plane Fishbed.³¹ In return, the Israeli general called on the Indian side for using the IAF bases in Bhuj (Gujarat) and Jodhpur (Rajasthan) for refueling and air staging facilities.³² India's biggest Israeli procurement featured air combat maneuvering instrumentation equipment to increase flying performance.³³

Defence Secretary, K.A. Nambiar led a high-level Indian delegation to Israel in

²⁶ P. R. Kumaraswamy, *India and Israel: Evolving Strategic Partnership* (Ramat-Gan, Israel: The Begin-Sadat Centre for Strategic Studies, Bar Ilan University, 1998), p.14.

²⁷ The IAI Harpy is a UAV produced by IAI which is designed to attack radar systems. It carries a high explosive warhead.

²⁸ Nicolas Blarel, *The Evolution of India's Israel Policy: Continuity, Change, and Compromise Since 1922* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2015), p.283.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Jacob Abadi, *Israel's Quest for Recognition and Acceptance in Asia: Garrison State Diplomacy*, (London, Frank Cass Publishers, 2005) p.280.

³¹ Thomas Withington, "Arms Sales: Israel and India Partner Up," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, 57, no.1, p.18-19.

³² P. R. Kumaraswamy, *India and Israel: Evolving Strategic Partnership* (Ramat-Gan, Israel: The Begin-Sadat Centre for Strategic Studies, Bar Ilan University, 1998), p.17-18

³³ Thomas Withington, "Arms Sales: Israel and India Partner Up", *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, 57, no.1, p.18-19.

July 1995. This visit was necessary to explore the purchase of avionics and weapon systems for MiG 21 Bis, which were modified for New Delhi by an Indo-Russian joint venture. The high-level Indian delegation also discussed Israeli cooperation in upgrading indigenous T-72 tanks. Kaushal Singh, Defence Ministry Joint Secretary, led a 16 member delegation from National Defence College to Israel in the same month.³⁴

The China factor played a major role in strengthening the defence cooperation in Indo-Israel ties. For instance, following the deliberations between defence ministry officials, a high-level delegation from the Israeli Defence Production Wing visited India and offered radar systems which the Indian defense establishment required. Israel's military assistance was very significant for India in response to the installation of three Chinese radars in Myanmar towards India's eastern coast.³⁵

Ashok Tandon, the head of the Indian National Security Guards (NSG), visited Israel at the end of October 1995, and discussed the possibility of training commandos and the purchase of specialized weaponry and gadgets. Within a couple of days of NSG's visit to Israel, the Shabak (the Israeli General Security Service), which had prior experience in training the commandos from India before the normalization phase, failed to protect Israeli Prime Minister, Yitzhak Rabin. The Prime Minister's assassination overshadowed the good will visit made by the Director General of NSG to Tel Aviv.³⁶ In November 1995, as guests of Israeli navy, *INS Gomati*, and *INS Subhadra*, two Indian naval ships visited Israel which was a major development since the early 1950s.³⁷ In December 1995, Air Vice Marshal from Indian Air Force, Air Staff Operations Assistant Chief, V.K. Bhatia, led a four-member delegation to Tel Aviv. The delegation held a dialogue with Israeli officials about the safety measures required in preventing aircraft loss due to bird hits.³⁸

In January, 1996, India's air force, for its 90 radar jumping pads, negotiated a deal worth \$100 million with Elta Electronics from Israel.³⁹ However, as New Delhi

³⁴ P. R. Kumaraswamy, *India and Israel: Evolving Strategic Partnership* (Ramat-Gan, Israel: The Begin-Sadat Centre for Strategic Studies, Bar Ilan University, 1998). p.17-18.

³⁵ Avinash Singh, "Israel Offers Hi-Tech Air Defense Deal," *The Hindustan Times*, 8 April 1995.

³⁶ P. R. Kumaraswamy, *India and Israel: Evolving Strategic Partnership* (Ramat-Gan, Israel: The Begin-Sadat Centre for Strategic Studies, Bar Ilan University, 1998). p.17-18

³⁷ Ibid., p.18.

³⁸ Swaraj Thapa, "India, Israel Will Sign Deal on Flight Safety Technology", *The Asian Age*, 30 December 1995.

³⁹ P. R. Kumaraswamy, *India and Israel: Evolving Strategic Partnership* (Ramat-Gan, Israel: The

signed a \$300 million worth deal with Moscow, thereby, Israeli firms lost out to Russians, which effectively eliminated the IAI and Elbit as prime contractors for upgrading and modernizing 125 MiG-21BIS fighter jets.⁴⁰ For installation at the Jamnagar base, in the state of Gujarat, New Delhi procured Israel's highly developed Air Combat Maneuvering Instrumentation system. Israel's Ramta division won a \$10 million contract to manufacture two Dvora MK-2 patrol boats in India at the end of 1996. Similarly, in the domain of military communications, Israel's Tadiran Communications sold New Delhi hundreds of millions of dollars in system equipment. Soltam, another Israeli defence company, sold the Indian army 155 mm self-propelled artillery and modernize Russian-made M.46 tanks with artillery worth tens of millions of dollars.⁴¹

Following the elections and change of regime in Israel (1995) and India (1996), the military cooperation continued without any significant changes. The major turning point in the diplomacy between them occurred in 1996 when DRDO Chairman and the Chief Scientific Adviser to Prime Minister A.P.J. Abdul Kalam visited Israel. It was reported by *Financial Times*, London, "there is a hard evidence of Israeli Indian nuclear cooperation" as there were disclosures by Tel Aviv based newspapers. Although the details of the meeting were never made public, it appeared that DRDO was keenly looking for AWACS and ABM systems from Israel.⁴² Though, only after a few weeks, the details of the visit were revealed.⁴³ In July 1996, when new coalition government led by Deve Gowda assumed office, in response to the invitation extended by Maj. Gen. Eitan Ben-Eliah, Air Force Commander of Israel, S.K. Sareen, India's Air Chief Marshal visited Israel. During the visit, negotiations were held for acquiring equipment for MiGs, such as an air combat maneuvering instrumentation system. The other components for the purchase included AWACS, UAVs, electronic counter measures.⁴⁴

The visit of S.K. Sareen was shortly followed by the visit of M.S. Vasudev,

Begin-Sadat Centre for Strategic Studies, Bar Ilan University, 1998). p.10.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p.11.

⁴¹ "Israeli company targets arms sales to India", Press Trust of India (PTI), BBC Monitoring South Asia, New Delhi, Feb. 5, 2003.

⁴² P. R. Kumaraswamy, *India and Israel: Evolving Strategic Partnership* (Ramat-Gan, Israel: The Begin-Sadat Centre for Strategic Studies, Bar Ilan University, 1998). p.17-18.

⁴³ Ameer, P.S. "Indo-Israeli Tie Up Likely for AWACS", *The Pioneer*, 4 November, 1996.

⁴⁴ Avinash Singh, "India Keen on Israeli AWACs," *The Hindustan Times*, 1 August, 1996.

Deputy Air Chief Marshal to Israel.⁴⁵ Vice Admiral Alex Tal, the head of the Israeli navy, then visited India on official tour in November 1996 and had talks with Indian officials, including Minister of State (MoS) for Defence N.V.N. Somu.⁴⁶ In December 1996, India hosted an international air show in Bengaluru in which Israeli based Rafael, Cyclone Aviation and Sibot participated in which a senior official from Israel told reporters that Israel had offered its EL-M2022A multi-mode radar surveillance which could track up to 100 targets. The primary motive of the attainment of this radar was to limit the threat emanating from Pakistan's procurement of P-3C Orion maritime surveillance aircraft from the USA.⁴⁷ In the same month, Moshe Keret, head of IAI, visited India.⁴⁸

Ezer Weizman, Israel President accompanied by a 24-member business delegation, visited India in December 1996-January 1997, which signaled bilateral warmth and added vigour to the newly shaped ties between them.⁴⁹ Upon visit to New Delhi, he emphasized that India is a potential partner in the aircraft industry. In order to strengthen the security cooperation between the two during the trip of President Ezer Weizman, to supply India with electronic warfare systems, a deal worth \$100 million defence contract was signed by Elta while Israel based metal cutting tools company Iscar initiated a contract with blade factory of Indian Air Force.⁵⁰

India's Nuclear Tests and Kargil War

The American Factor

Following nuclear tests by Islamabad and New Delhi in May 1998 and India's Kargil War with Pakistan in 1999, Tel Aviv and New Delhi defence cooperation was not faded but enhanced, which paved the way for strengthening ties. To condemn the nuclear tests by India and Pakistan, a resolution was adopted by UNSC on June 6, 1998. Thereafter, USA imposed economic sanctions and arms embargo on both countries, i.e., India and Pakistan.⁵¹ The sanctions included the banning of economic assistance from

⁴⁵ P. R. Kumaraswamy, *India and Israel: Evolving Strategic Partnership* (Ramat-Gan, Israel: The Begin-Sadat Centre for Strategic Studies, Bar Ilan University, 1998), p.8.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p.11.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p.11.

⁴⁹ R. Swamy, "The Case against Collaboration between India and Israel," MR Zine, August 2006.

⁵⁰ P. R. Kumaraswamy, *India and Israel: Evolving Strategic Partnership* (Ramat-Gan, Israel: The Begin-Sadat Centre for Strategic Studies, Bar Ilan University, 1998). p.11.

⁵¹ Nicolas Blarel, *The Evolution of India's Israel Policy: Continuity, Change, and Compromise Since*

US including the export of defence technology. The USA also opposed the loans to India by leading international lending agencies and US banks. Though Washington had not considered India's nuclear programme as a threat to its strategic interests in South Asia or its own troops in China's case, it was wary about the possibility of a nuclear escalation between India and Pakistan.⁵² Both the South Asian neighbours joined the U.S. "countries of concern list."⁵³ In the post-Pokhran-II context, USA also objected to the Israeli sale of arms and weaponry to India. Both the countries, being nuclear aspirants, refused to sign Non-Proliferation Treaty (N.P.T.) in 1968.

Unlike other nations such as Moscow, Washington, Tel Aviv neither reacted nor condemned nuclear tests by India on 11 and 13, May, 1998, and had not joined the arms embargo against India.⁵⁴ Despite, being an ally of USA, it did not constrain Israel from strengthening its security cooperation with India. Eventually, the strategic equations tilted in South Asia in favour of New Delhi as India and Washington embraced each other in international politics; thereby, the Indo-Israeli partnership acted as a major catalyst and not as a constraint.⁵⁵

The Pakistani Factor

However, Israel and India were concerned about the Pakistani nuclear explosions and shared similar concerns. The reasons for the same can be summarized as follows:

First, both countries faced the challenge of a hostile external security environment, as it can be attributed to curb the terrorism and growing Islamic militancy. The nuclearization in Pakistan and ongoing nuclear programmes in certain countries of West Asia turned out to be of mutual concern and a direct security threat for India and Israel.

Second, Tel Aviv was apprehensive as the nuclear technology could spill over to Israel's immediate neighbours and declared foes such as Iran, Turkey, etc. In its strategic interests, Tel Aviv wanted to contain Islamabad from the transfer of any

1992, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press), p. 295.

⁵² Dinesh Kumar, "India and Israel: Dawn of a new era," (Jerusalem: Institute for Western Defense, 2001) p. 5-10.

⁵³ Thomas Withington, "Arms Sales: Israel and India Partner Up", *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, 57, no.1, p.18-19

⁵⁴ Nicolas Blarel, *The Evolution of India's Israel Policy: Continuity, Change, and Compromise Since 1992*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press), p. 295.

⁵⁵ Dinesh Kumar, "India and Israel: Dawn of a new era," (Jerusalem: Institute for Western Defense, 2001) p. 5-10.

nuclear technology to other West Asian nations, which considers it as a threat to its own security in the region.⁵⁶ For instance, Iranian Foreign Minister, Kamal Kharrazi remarked, “*Muslims feel more secure from any Israeli threats under the Pakistani nuclear umbrella and popular sentiments in the Muslim world calling it the pride of the Islamic nation.*”⁵⁷

Third, India and Israel had similar concerns about the threats emanating internally due to the insurgency of the militant groups in Kashmir and Palestinian conflicts (though the issues were different in nature) that could jeopardize the internal security environment. Both the countries feared that if the situation deteriorates, it would attract a possibility of unwanted external interference in Gaza and the West Bank or Kashmir.⁵⁸

On the other side, Pakistan alleged that Israel assisted India in its nuclear programme. In the words of Pakistan Foreign Minister, Mr. Gohar Ayubkhan, “*In the nuclear test that were conducted last month, Israel supplied India with devices for undertaking simultaneous tests, at an interval of a thousandth of a second. Only America and Israel have the type of apparatus and we know that it came from Israel.*” However, both India and Israel’s Governments denied the reports of such strategic collaboration between the two countries in nuclear energy. From the Indian side, these reports were condemned by the Indian Defence Minister Jaswant Singh. New Delhi denied the matter and said, “*There is no nuclear cooperation between the two countries.*”⁵⁹ The Israeli Foreign Office issued a statement in which it said, “*The Government of Israel takes serious note of such scurrilous allegations which are not only designed to subvert the ongoing West Asian peace conference but also quite contrary to facts. While India, at no stage sought our assistance for the development of its nuclear programme, Pakistan, through a third country, approached on a number of occasions to supply it with sensitive material and technology essential for the promotion of nuclear hardware.*”⁶⁰

⁵⁶ Itzhak Gerberg, *The Changing Nature of Israeli- Indian Relations: 1948-2005* (Pretoria, University of South Africa, 2008), p. 377

⁵⁷ Dinesh Kumar, “India and Israel: Dawn of a new era,” (Jerusalem: Institute for Western Defense, 2001) p. 5-10

⁵⁸ Efraim Inbar, “Indian-Israeli Entente,” *Orbis*, 48, (Jerusalem, Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies, 2004), p. 92–93.

⁵⁹ R. Sreekanthan Nair, *Dynamics of Diplomacy Delayed: India and Israel* (New Delhi: Kalpaaz, 2004), p.170.

⁶⁰ S. R. Chaudhari, “Indo-Israeli N-Nexus,” *The Hindu*, February 10, 1999.

The Arab States Factor

The Arab League also considered India's nuclear tests very seriously and expressed concern as they were apprehensive about the possibility of *nuclear cooperation* between India and Israel. For instance, Mr. Mohammed Zakaria, Deputy Secretary-General of the Arab League, accused India of its nuclear collaboration with Israel. However, the same was denied by Israelis in Knesset; Israeli Deputy Minister of Defence, Silvan Shalom, remarked that, "Israel does not have and did not have any part in the Indian nuclear tests, despite of false foreign publications about it."⁶¹

As India and Israel military cooperation gained momentum, it created concerns for the Arab states for the following reasons:

- First, India's ties with Arab states adversary Israel and the nuclear collaboration between them was a major threat to the security of the Arab nations.
- Second, the Arab nations attempt to isolate Israel, particularly in the Asian context, faced severe backlash as the two important powers in the Asian continent, i.e., Beijing and New Delhi, embraced Israel after the culmination of Cold War.
- Third, the military cooperation between them gives the latter an important place in the South and West Asia region, undermining the importance of Arab states in regional politics.
- Fourth, many Arab states, due to the changed geopolitical realities after the Cold War in the South and West Asia region, viewed the trilateral alliance between USA-India-Israel as becoming detrimental to their strategic ambitions.

Kargil War (1999)

The Kargil War in 1999 was a major turning point in the Indo-Israel bilateral relationship and bolstered military cooperation between them. The enhanced defence cooperation of India and Israel led to an increase in the volume of arms sales considerably after the Kargil War. An unequivocal support was extended by Israel when it stated that, "*LoC should not be violated*",⁶² During the short conflict that lasted for less than two months, Israel expressed its willingness to speed up the supply of necessary armoury and emerged itself as one of the most reliable countries which

⁶¹ Israel's Yearbook of Official Documents, 1998.

⁶² Kapil Kak, "International Responses," as part of Air Commodore Jasjit Singh (ed.), Kargil 1999: *Pakistan's Fourth War for Kashmir* (New Delhi: Knowledge World, 1999)

provided military support to India during the times of crisis.⁶³ The support extended by Israel became very significant for the Indian armed forces as New Delhi was facing the impact of economic sanctions due to the nuclear tests in 1998.⁶⁴

During the war, Israel supplied necessary ammunition, which included unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), laser-guided bombs, ordnance.⁶⁵ When war was underway, Indian Army was supplied with about 30,000 rounds of 160 mm mortars and 40,000 rounds of 155 mm ammunitions at the cost of \$400 each by Israel.⁶⁶ According to multiple sources, Israel provided laser-guided missiles for Indian Mirages fighter jets to destroy Pakistani bunkers in the mountains.⁶⁷ In the words of former India's Air Staff Chief, NAK Browne, Air Chief Marshal, New Delhi negotiated for the purchase of Listening Pod for the Jaguar and Mirage aircraft in 1997. Despite the sanctions imposed due to nuclear tests, Israel promptly facilitated the hardware and software modifications of the equipment.⁶⁸ The equipment provided by Israel was timely and mission-critical. Israel's upgraded Mirages precision strikes constrained the soldiers of Pakistan and tilted the war in India's favour.

The Kargil War and BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party) led NDA to victory in elections in 1999. It solidified the defence cooperation between the two nations. In the aftermath of the Kargil conflict, defence industry of Israel emerged as a possible

⁶³ Yiftah S. Shapir, "Israel's Arms Sales to India," *Strategic Assessment* 12, no. 3 (November 2009) p.29, Harsh V. Pant "India-Israel Partnership: Convergence and Constraints," *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, 8, no.4, (December 2004): 60-73

⁶⁴ Herb Keinon elaborates on the historical support by Israel to India during previous wars in an interview with Nicolas Blarel in "Israeli-India Ties Reach New Heights," *The Jerusalem Post*, July 1, 2017, <http://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/Politics-And-Diplomacy/Israeli-Indian-ties-reachnew-heights-498376>, The shift in India-Israel relations is reiterated by Ambassador Chinmaya Garekhan in Suhasini Haidar, "Paradigm shift after Israel's aid during Kargil," *The Hindu*, July 21, 2014, <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/paradigm-shift-afterisraels-aid-during-kargil/article6234801.ece>

⁶⁵ Rahul Bedi, "Moving closer to Israel," *Frontline*, 20, no.4, February 2003.

⁶⁶ Efraim Inbar and Alvite Singh Ningthoujam, "Indo-Israeli Defense Cooperation in the Twenty First Century", *Mideast Security and Policy Studies* 93, (Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies, Bar-Ilan University January 2013).

⁶⁷ Harsh V. Pant "India-Israel Partnership: Convergence and Constraints", *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, 8, no.4, (December 2004): 60-73

⁶⁸ N. A. K. Browne, "A Perspective on India-Israel Defence Ties," *Strategic Analysis*, 41, No. 4, (July-Aug, 2017):325-35.

alternative for India's defence establishment. By 1999, New Delhi's efforts to build UAVs indigenously yielded poor results. Consequently, due to the delay in production of Lakshya and Nishant UAV models led the Indian army to obtain the sophisticated technology from Israel. Since 2000, New Delhi procured advanced equipment, ranging from Heron and Searcher UAVs, high range early warning radars, Barak-I anti-defence missile systems.⁶⁹

In May and June 2000, India's Home and External Affairs Ministers, L. K. Advani and Jaswant Singh visited Tel Aviv. The visit by India's leadership at the highest level led to a new trajectory in Indo-Israel ties and strengthened the cooperation in defence between them.

As New Delhi realized the prospects of defence cooperation between the two, in May 2000, L.K. Advani, accompanied by other cabinet ministers embarked on a visit to Israel. The visit by L.K. Advani was in response to President of Israel Ezer Weizman's visit to India during 1996-97. After the normalization of Indo-Israel ties, L.K. Advani was the senior most cabinet minister of India to visit Israel followed by Jaswant Singh in June 2000.⁷⁰ In his maiden visit to Israel, he remarked, "Defeating the designs of our neighbor (Pakistan) who has unleashed cross-border terrorism, illegal infiltration and border management are concerns that have brought me to Israel."⁷¹

During the visit of L.K. Advani to Israel, three areas of cooperation were discussed between the high-level officials from both countries which include: defence equipment, intelligence sharing, and terrorism.⁷² Advani was accompanied by other senior security officials such as Kamal Pande, home secretary, Joint Secretary (Home) Vinay Kumar, and Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) head, B.K. Raghavan, Shyamal Dutta, the Intelligence Bureau (IB) head, and E.N. Rammohan, Border Security Force head. It was evident from the officials accompanied by Home Minister of India that terrorism is perceived as a major security threat to India, particularly in the

⁶⁹ Rajat Pandit, "Israel sneaks to No. 2 spot as arms supplier," *Times of India*, February 9, 2007, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/israel-sneaks-to-no-2-spot-as-arms-supplier/articleshow/1581346.cms>

⁷⁰ The only two other cabinet ministers who visited Israel include: Minister of Human Resource Development Arjun Singh in 1994 and the Minister of Urban Affairs, Health and Welfare Ram Jethmalani in 1999

⁷¹ Rahul Bedi, "The Tel Aviv connection grows,"

<http://www.indiatogether.org/govt/military/articles/isrlbuy02.htm>, 26 July 2002

⁷² Jasjit Singh, "How can Israel help in Kashmir," *The Times of India*, July 9, 2000.

context of Pakistan. It was reported by *Jane's Terrorism and Security Monitor*, between visit by L.K. Advani to Israel in 2000 and Shimon Peres visit to India in 2001, counter terrorism delegation from Israel, which includes military intelligence specialists and special police commandoes. They paid an unofficial visit to Kashmir and other regions of India that were grappling with terrorism and security threats to India.⁷³ Israel's Defence Secretary said, India and Israel must cooperate to fight terrorism and not fight it individually.⁷⁴

During his visit, L. K. Advani also met the President of Israel, Ezer Weizman, Ehud Barak, Prime Minister, Shimon Peres, Minister for Regional Cooperation, and Natan Sharansky, Minister for Internal Affairs. On his official trip to Israel, Advani visited the Israeli electronic fence along the northern border of Lebanon, which he felt that the Israeli experience of sophisticated border management techniques would help India in tackling *cross-border terrorism*. He also enquired about techniques deployed by top Israeli police officials in curbing terrorism.

Speaking at a reception hosted by Indian Ambassador to Israel, Ranjan Mathai, he further, remarked that, both shared a “common perception of terrorism as a menace”, particularly, “if coupled with religious fundamentalism.” He emphasized that, “*We are concerned with cross-border terrorism launched by proxies of Pakistan. Our mutual determination to combat terrorism is the basis for discussions with Israel, whose reputation in dealing with such problems is quite successful.*”⁷⁵

On his maiden trip to Israel, Advani visited Mossad's offices (Israel's intelligence agency) and interacted with the officials as he obtained an insight into how the agency functions. From the Israel side, it agreed to provide India with sophisticated technology to fulfil India's defence needs, such as UAVs to deal with India's security threat of cross-border terrorism. It assisted India with anti-terrorism training, advanced security equipment, and became the only nation to access key Indian installations in Kashmir.⁷⁶ In another conciliatory move to avoid political backlash or criticism from within India as well as other nations in West Asia, L. K. Advani had a meeting with

⁷³ Ed Blanche, “Mutual threat of Islamic militancy allies Israel and India,” *Jane's Terrorism and Security Monitor*, 14 August 2001.

⁷⁴ Krishan Gopal, *Sarabjit Sharma, India and Israel: Towards Strategic Partnership*, (New Delhi: Authors press Publication, Delhi), p. 356.

⁷⁵ Benn, A. “Advani's visit boosts India- Israel ties, but Tel Aviv may be averse to aiding directly,” *India Today*, June 26, 2000.

⁷⁶ Dinesh Kumar, “India and Israel: Dawn of a new era”, (Jerusalem: Institute for Western Defense, 2001) p. 5-10.

Arafat.⁷⁷

Following Advani's maiden visit to Israel, in quick succession, another senior most cabinet minister from the Government of India, Jaswant Singh (External Affairs Minister) visited Israel from June 30-July 3, 2000. Jaswant Singh met his counterpart, the Foreign Affairs Minister of Israel, David Levy. This was the maiden visit by India's External Affairs Minister to Israel after the diplomatic ties were established in 1992. This gave a fresh impetus to the bilateral relationship. In the bilateral meeting held during the visit, both nations decided to establish JWG for cooperation on security and counter-terrorism at the ministerial level, which will convene twice a year, alternately in both nations.⁷⁸ Notwithstanding the bilateral cooperation between them, this mechanism by both gave an opportunity to strengthen their strategic cooperation at all levels including regional and global levels.

In addition to the above, he also discussed other defence purchases such as aircraft, main battle tanks, missiles, surveillance equipments, etc., including the procurement of the Green Pine radar, a component of Israel's anti-ballistic missile system.⁷⁹ From the security and defence point of view, another major concern for India was China. Jaswant Singh secured an assurance from the Israeli side during the meeting with its officials that it would take New Delhi's security concerns into account when selling arms to its immediate neighbour Beijing and would not encourage any arms sale with the Chinese that could jeopardise relations between Tel Aviv and New Delhi.⁸⁰ Besides meeting Israeli Foreign Affairs Minister, Jaswant Singh also interacted with Finance Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Shimon Peres, Deputy Prime Minister etc.

In his meeting with Israeli Foreign Affairs Minister, David Levy, Jaswant Singh emphasised the necessity of creating a global mechanism for curbing terrorism in order to share the intelligence cooperation between the two. He stressed the significance of combating terrorism in the defence cooperation between them. Jaswant Singh's visit to Israel marked a decisive phase which reinforced the diplomatic ties between India and Israel.⁸¹ On January 6, 2000, the first Israeli-Indian JWG on

⁷⁷ Nicolas Blarel, *The Evolution of India's Israel Policy: Continuity, Change, and Compromise Since 1992*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press), p. 301.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ "India Shops for Israeli Air Defence," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 13 July, 2000.

⁸⁰ Pranay Sharma, "Israel Ducks US on Radar", *The Telegraph*, 3 July, 2000.

⁸¹ *Times of India*, 5 July, 2000.

Terrorism was set up to strengthen the cooperation on counter-terrorism, including cooperation on multilateral forums, which was discussed during Jaswant Singh's visit. The second JWG meeting took place in May 2002 in New Delhi, and the third in March 2003 in Jerusalem. In January 2002, during Shimon Peres, visit to India, both nations explored the possibility of a mutual agreement on counter-terrorism.⁸² Subsequently, discussions also continued on counter-terrorism with several visits by Israeli officials such as Israel's defence ministry director general, Amos Yaron.

Rajendra Abhyankar, the former External Affairs Ministry official mentions that bilateral cooperation on counter-terrorism differ in *philosophy behind counter terrorism and threat perceptions*. He further argues, India faces the threat from radical Islamic terrorism-based groups such as Lashkar-e-Toiba, Jaish-i-Mohammad aided and abetted by Pakistan, whereas, Israel faces its *concentric circles of threat*, includes Iran, Hamas, Hezbollah and Syria. For one of the JWGs, Indian delegation was led by Rajendra Abhyankar while in service and stated that both countries share *practical experiences* on aviation security, border security, terror financing, information security, cyber warfare etc.⁸³

In the midst of an international diplomatic crisis and limited military attack against Pakistan (Operation Parakram) in June 2002, Israel supplied the hardware necessary through their special airplanes to the Indian army for their operation on the Pakistani border. For Indian Army, a contract for the production of Advanced Light Helicopters (ALH) was signed in September, 2002 by Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL), a company based in India with Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI). Both companies mutually agreed to establish a division in Hyderabad to handle the maintenance of aviation services.

At the turn of the 21st century, despite the opposition from various political parties in India, the defence cooperation between the two was strengthened with Ariel Sharon, Prime Minister of Israel, visit to India in September 2003. He led a delegation from various fields in Israel on his official trip to India. In his interaction with Atal Bihari Vajpayee, India's Prime Minister he concentrated on counter- terrorism as a major area

⁸² Itzhak Gerberg, *The Changing Nature of Israeli- Indian Relations: 1948-2005* (Pretoria, University of South Africa, 2008), p. 372.

⁸³ Rajendra Abhyankar, "The Evolution and Future of Indo-Israel Relations", The S. Daniel Abraham Center for International and Regional Studies, Aspen Institute India, The Harold Hartog School of Government and Policy, Research Paper No.6, March 2012, p.20.

of cooperation. Similarly, Vajpayee stated that New Delhi and Tel Aviv were both “victims of terrorism”, and “partners in the battle against scourge.”⁸⁴

During Ariel Sharon’s visit to New Delhi, he cleared the sale of world’s most advanced AEWCC (airborne early warning common and control system), Phalcon Early Warning Radar System etc. The defense cooperation between them also happened due to the following reasons:

- First, New Delhi was concerned about Islamabad’s nuclear arsenal which may strengthen the Islamic extremists and might disturb the peace and tranquility in South Asia.
- Second, New Delhi’s acquisition of the Phalcon early warning system places it on advantage militarily as it has the required apparatus to delve deep into Islamabad’s inside territory, which may deter its air planes from being detected. Conversely, Pakistan was asking the USA to supply AWACS to Islamabad and give its nod to the purchase of F-16 aircrafts from Belgium.
- Third, as the strategic balance in South Asia was shifting in favour of India, Pakistan was concerned about the Indo-Israeli nexus.

The declaration signed between the two nations during Sharon’s visit also “condemned individuals and states who aided and abetted terrorism across borders, harboured and provided sanctuary to terrorists, besides financial support, training, or patronage. Both countries pledged both material and political support to each other in their struggle against terrorism.”⁸⁵

Following the 2004 elections, and the return of the INC to power, the defence cooperation between the two continued to strengthen, with various deals being signed even after the change of guard at the Centre. Pranab Mukherjee, the Defence Minister in Dr. Manmohan Singh-led Congress coalition government reiterated India’s stance on Israel policy by saying that it would not alter the existing policy towards the Jewish state, including the defence ties that have flourished after normalization of ties. He remarked,

“We have developed defense cooperation with several countries and we are not making any distinction between country A and country B. We have defense cooperation with

⁸⁴ Itzhak Gerberg, *The Changing Nature of Israeli- Indian Relations: 1948-2005* (Pretoria, University of South Africa, 2008), p. 349.

⁸⁵ Delhi Statement on Friendship and Cooperation between India and Israel, Ministry of External Affairs, <https://mea.gov.in/bilateraldocuments.htm?dtl/7730/Delhi+Statement+on+Friendship+and+Cooperation+between+India+and+Israel> Accessed on 16 March, 2021.

*Israel like with many other countries and if any deals for import of high-tech have been finalized, those will carry on ... But in general terms, I can say that it is a country with which we have defense cooperation that will continue.”*⁸⁶

When Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) was in power, five Phalcon systems, worth \$1.1 billion was delivered to India from Israel.⁸⁷ A defence export tradeshow, Def Expo was held in New Delhi in 2004, In this trade show, state-owned firms from both nations like Israel Military Industries (IMI) and Ordnance Factory Board (OFB) exhibited their jointly produced extended-range precision shells for exports to third country and the Indian army. The deal between IMI-OFB was the latest in a series of collaborative defence projects between them. By the end of 2003, India emerged as one of the most important countries for Israel in terms of arms purchasing nations, as 30 per cent of nearly \$2.7 million in new orders in 2003 was from India.

As per the joint venture agreement signed between the two firms, they will produce explosive and cargo shells for .52-caliber cannons for the Indian army. The deal also includes, the M401 high explosive, and M376 cargo shell.⁸⁸ As per the IMI data, the cargo shell carries anti-aircraft bomblets and 49 anti-tank missiles. The Indian army now has access to the greatest artillery ammunition because of the collaboration between IMI and OFB .52 calibre firearms as a result, the Indian army was able to redefine the modern battlefield's standards for range action and fire power.⁸⁹ In addition to IMI, two other Israeli defence firms, Israel Aircraft Industries in Lod and the Rafael Armament Development Authority in Haifa, also participated. Other companies such as Azimuth Technologies, Ashdod, Elta systems, Elisra group, Holon, Ra'anana, Bene Beraq, and Tadiran Communications, etc also participated.

In the winter 2004 followed by Defexpo, the Indian Army vice chief, and the chiefs of the Indian Air Force and Navy visited Tel Aviv.⁹⁰ Simultaneously, the fourth meeting of the JWG on counter-terrorism was held between India and Israel from

⁸⁶ Itzhak Gerberg, *The Changing Nature of Israeli- Indian Relations: 1948-2005* (Pretoria, University of South Africa, 2008), p. 349.

⁸⁷ “Israeli Phalcon to Land in India Today,” *The Hindu*, 25 May 2009.

⁸⁸ It is a version used by British forces in Iraq.

⁸⁹ Krishan Gopal and Sarabjit Sharma, *India and Israel: Towards Strategic Partnership*, (New Delhi: Authors press Publication 2007), p. 349

⁹⁰ Harsh V. Pant, “India-Israel Partnership: Convergence and Constraints,” *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, 8, No. 4, (December 2004):60-73.

November 29 to 02 December 2004, wherein, they also discussed about the disarmament issues. Hereafter, a joint statement was issued, which was reported by India's one of the leading national newspapers;

*“Both sides reaffirmed their unequivocal condemnations of all acts of terrorism. They reviewed the global campaign against terrorism and discussed ways and means by which the fight against terrorism by the international community can be made more effective and how India and Israel can contribute to this.”*⁹¹

The cooperation in counter-terrorism acquired immense significance due to the events that unfolded on September 11, 2001. As both countries became victims of Islamic fundamentalism and terrorism, they expanded their cooperation not only in counter-terrorism but also in other diverse fields in curbing terror, such as aviation security, border security, information security including cyber warfare, suicide bombers, terror financing, etc.

In March 2005, to manufacture three types of UAVs, (Gagan, Rustan, Pawan),⁹² a contract was signed between India based Aeronautic Development Establishment and IAI. Later, to construct chemical factories in Bihar,⁹³ IMI corporation won a tender worth USD 140 million. In August 2005, the then Minister of State (MoS), Defence remarked in Rajya Sabha, “the total value of the purchase contracts concluded, [with Israel] during the last three years [2002-05] is 11882.54 crores,”⁹⁴ or about USD 2.7 billion. In the same year, India based DRDO along with Directorate of Defense Research and Development (DDR&D) from Israel inked a MoU. They both met once a year under the auspices of the Indo-Israel Management Council (IIMC) to engage in defense-related activities.

Rafael 18 Spyder low-level quick-reaction anti-aircraft missile systems were purchased by New Delhi in 2006 for \$325 million. In the same year, Israeli expertise was sought by India for the production of key defence missile systems. With the Divya Drishti surveillance project, Elbit Systems, working with the DRDO's Defence

⁹¹ *The Hindu*, 04 December 2004

⁹² V. Raghuvanshi, “India, Israel Partner To Develop Three New UAVs”, *Space News*, 01 March, 2005. <https://spacenews.com/india-israel-partner-develop-three-new-uavs/>.

⁹³ Amnon Barzilai, “IMI Wins Tender for 5 Chemical Plants in India,” *Haaretz*, December 28, 2004. <https://www.haaretz.com/2004-12-28/ty-article/imi-wins-tender-for-5-chemical-plants-in-india/0000017f-e1b5-d7b2-a77f-e3b78aca0000>.

⁹⁴ Rajya Sabha, Unstarred Question 1786, “Establishing Chemical Plants in Bihar by Israel,” August 10, 2005, <http://164.100.47.5/qsearch/QResult.aspx>.

Electronics Research Laboratory (DLRL) in Hyderabad, encountered technological difficulties, the Tata Power Company Limited and Defence Electronics Research Laboratory (DERL) resolved the issues.⁹⁵ Israel-based companies have been in talks with India since 2005 about a number of projects, including the production of medium- and long-range surface-to-air missile systems.

A deal to manufacture medium power radars for the IAF worth \$180 million (Rs. 900 crore) was signed by Israeli defence company Elta, a subsidiary of IAI, and India in December 2006.⁹⁶ In fact, this was the first Israeli company to be required to invest in India under the 2006 offset clause when it chose to purchase radar components from Larsen and Toubro (L&T) and Astra Microwave for Rs. 250 crore. It contributed almost 30% of the deal's total value to the Indian industry.

By the end of 2006, Israel had sold \$1.5 billion worth of arms to India, making it the second largest exporter of arms to India after Russia. It is also evident from the fact that robust cooperation between India and Israel as the latter has considered to sold \$4.2 billion worth of arms worldwide.⁹⁷ However, after 2006, a sharp fall was registered in Israeli arms exports to India as New Delhi based investigative agency Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) registered a case against two Israeli based companies i.e., Rafael Advance Defence systems and IAI related to the procurement of nine Barak-I anti-missile systems. These two companies were put under restricted procurements category.⁹⁸

In March 2007, Gen. J.J. Singh, India's Army Chief visited Israel after Israel's Deputy Chief of General Staff, Maj. General Moshe Kaplinsky visit. In May 2007, Former Defence Minister of India, A K Antony in Rajya Sabha, made a statement on Indo-Israel defence cooperation by saying, "defence purchases from Israel during the period 2002–2007 have been over US \$5 billion."⁹⁹ The statement by Defence Minister

⁹⁵ A. K. Dhar, "DRDO seeks Israeli expertise in key surveillance system," *Outlook India*, November 26, 2006.

⁹⁶ "Out of Rs 833-cr deal, Israel's Elta to Invest 250 cr in India," *The Indian Express*, 21 December, 2006. <http://archive.indianexpress.com/news/out-of-rs-833cr-deal-israel-s-elta-to-invest-250-cr-in-india/19033/>.

⁹⁷ Efraim Inbar and Alvite Singh Ningthoujam, "Indo-Israeli Defense Cooperation in the Twenty First Century," *Mideast Security and Policy Studies* 93, (Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies, Bar-Ilan University, January, 2012), p.7.

⁹⁸ Vivek Raghuvanshi, "India Lifts Blacklisting For Two Israel Defence Companies," *Defense News*, 13 April, 2018.

⁹⁹ Rajya Sabha, "Defence Deals between India and Israel," Unstarred Question 4481, May 16, 2007, at <https://rajyasabha.nic.in/rsnew/Questions/QResult.aspx> (Accessed August 20, 2021).

in the Parliament evidently stated that there was no major change in the existing security ties between New Delhi and Tel Aviv.

A significant breakthrough was witnessed in Indo-Israel defence cooperation when the UPA regime under Dr. Manmohan Singh led government, Cabinet Committee on Security gave its nod to the \$2.5 billion joint venture for the co-production of MRSAM, which can reach targets up to 70 kilometres.¹⁰⁰ On the other side, several questions were raised by members of parliament belonging to Left parties pertaining to Indo-Israel defence deals. For example, in August 2007, D. Raja and Syed Azeez Pasha (members belonging to the Communist Party of India (CPI)) wanted to know from the Government of India about the joint venture with Israel for the production of missiles. They asked,

*“whether it is a fact that the general opinion in the country is against any military tie-ups with Israel which will annoy the Muslim countries who share friendly relations with India.”*¹⁰¹

However, the then Defence Minister of India informed the Lok Sabha that the LRSAM contract entered in 2006 by India and cooperation with Israel *“does not come in the way of the warm and mutually beneficial cooperation that we share with friendly Muslim countries.”*¹⁰²

Followed by the accelerated defence cooperation between India and Israel, various deals have been signed between them. Rafael Advanced Defense Systems, a defence technology company with its headquarters in Israel, received a \$325 million contract in 2008 to provide the Israeli Air Force with SPYDER¹⁰³ (surface-to-air Python-5 Derby) surface-to-air missile systems equipped with Python-5 and I-Derby missiles that provide both lock on before launch (LOBL) and lock on after launch (LOAL).¹⁰⁴ In September 2008, during the bilateral discussions held between Israel’s Army chief Maj. Gen. Avi Mizrahi, and Indian Army chief Gen. Deepak Kapoor

¹⁰⁰ S. Srivastava, “India embraces US, Israeli arms,” *Asia Times Online*, July 27, 2007.

¹⁰¹ Rajya Sabha, “JV with Israel for Production of Missiles”, Unstarred Question No.1582, August 22, 2007. at <http://164.100.47.5/qsearch/QResult.aspx> (accessed April 28, 2021).

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ It is a low-level quick reaction missile systems (LLQRMS) to protect quick infra-structure in ground-to-air missions for incoming air-borne threats.

¹⁰⁴ Efraim Inbar and Alvite Singh Ningthoujam, “Indo-Israeli Defense Cooperation in the Twenty First Century,” *Mideast Security and Policy Studies* 93, (Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies, Bar-Ilan University, January, 2012), p.18.

during the visit of the Israel Army chief from 09 to 11 September to India, it was reported that the Israeli troops would conduct specialized training for Indian army troops in counter-terrorism operations.¹⁰⁵

In February 2009, the \$ 1.1 billion deal was signed between India and Israel, for Advance Air Missiles (AAM) for India. In April 2009, the \$1.1 million deal for advanced Barak-8 tactical air defence systems, India and Israel struck a \$2.5 billion agreement with IAI and Rafael in August 2009 to build a new and improved Spyder surface-to-air missile. In September 2009, to supply India with an upgraded tactical air defense system deal was signed by Israel with \$1.1 billion contract. In 2010, as part of a joint venture, An IAI subsidiary owned by Israel's Elta Group, HBL Elta Avionics Systems Ltd (HELA) in Hyderabad was procured by India's Tata Group, a private firm with acquisition of 74 per cent stake in it.¹⁰⁶ The joint ventures between Indo-Israeli defence companies shifted the defence cooperation between two countries from buyer-seller relationship to joint venture cooperation.¹⁰⁷ For instance, examples include such as to produce LR-SAMS indigenously to protect Indian warships, Bharat Electronics Ltd., based in India, and IAI inked a joint venture (MoU) in December 2012.

In March, 2011, a \$1.8 million deal was signed between India and Israel to supply Indian army with 8000 anti-tank missiles. In the Aero India exhibition held in the same year from February 9-13, at the Air Force Station Yelahanka, Bengaluru, Israel defence companies, Rafael and IMI displayed new defence and missile systems such as Delilah-GL (ground-launched), the MPR500-Multi-Purpose Rigid Bomb, a loitering guided missile, the IFB500-Improved Fragmentation Bomb, and the new spectral IR flames.¹⁰⁸ Israeli products accounted for 29 percent of the Indian Army's overall capital expenditure from 2010 to 2013, Antony informed the Lok Sabha in August 2013.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁵ Vivek Raghuvanshi, "Israeli Troops to Train Indian's in Counterterrorism," *Defence News*, 9 September, 2008. <http://defence.pk/threads/israelitroops-to-train-indians-in-counterterrorism.14062>.

¹⁰⁶ V. Raghuvanshi, "Tata Buys Majority Stake in HBL Elta Avionics," *Defense News*, November 26, 2010.

¹⁰⁷ Efraim Inbar and Alvite Singh Ningthoujam, "Indo-Israeli Defense Cooperation in the Twenty First Century," *Mideast Security and Policy Studies* 93, (Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies, Bar-Ilan University, January, 2012).

¹⁰⁸ "IMI at Aero India 2011," *Defenseworld.net*, February 4, 2011. <https://www.aviationindia.net/2011/02/imi-at-aero-india-2011.html>.

¹⁰⁹ Samuel C. Rajiv, "Indian Responses to Israel's Gaza Operations," in *India-Israel: Contours of the Strategic Partnership* (Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies, 2016), p.16.

Both countries inked three major agreements to strengthen the defence cooperation between them, which include: Cooperation in Homeland and Public Security, Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters, and Protection of Classified Material. Under the agreement of the Homeland Security, a Joint Steering Committee was set up with the assistance of four thematic Joint Working Groups such as border management, capacity building for combating crime, crime prevention, cyber-crime, internal security and public safety etc.¹¹⁰

On 30 June, 2014, India's Defence Secretary Radha Krishna Mathur visited Israel for JWG meeting a month after newly elected Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) led Narendra Modi was sworn in as India's Prime Minister. In an official visit to Israel from 1-3 July, 2014, in his meeting with Israeli officials, he discussed the arms deals, which included, Israeli made AWACS for the Indian Air Force. From the Indian side, a request was also made to Israel to procure other arm deals such as Swordfish ground trackers, unspecified missiles, precision-guided artillery etc. The Steering Committee of Homeland Security first meeting, as laid out in the agreement signed between India and Israel was held from September 21-23, 2014. Shri Rajiv Gauba, Additional Secretary, Home Affairs Ministry led an Indian delegation.

In October 2014, furthering their defence ties, under the leadership of late Manohar Parrikar, Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) of India, inked a deal worth \$525 million Rafael Advanced Defence Systems to procure 321 missile launchers and 8,356 Spike ATGMs (anti-tank guided missiles) developed by it.¹¹¹ This was preferred by India to other available options like US based Javelin. The replacement of second generation ATGMs in India's arsenal, particularly the French MILAN and "wire-guided" Russian Konkurs-M necessitated the procurement of almost 24,000 missiles and 2,000 launchers.

Through this deal, New Delhi wanted to send a message to its other potential suppliers, such as the USA, and Russia, that were keenly looking towards India's defence market. Due to Narendra Modi's *Make in India*, initiative, of which indigenous defence production is a major component of the scheme, New Delhi's

¹¹⁰AK Sachdev, "Indo Israel: Defence Cooperation and Future Prospects," *Indian Defence Review* 34, no.1, (January-March, 2019).

¹¹¹ Bipindra, N.C. and Natalie Obiko Pearson "Modi Revives India-Israel Ties as Terrorism Threat Grows," *Bloomberg*, 20 November 2014.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2014-11-19/modi-revives-india-s-ties-with-israel-as-terrorism-threat-grows>.

message was that it not only wants finished products, but it is also interested in getting technology transfer for its defence indigenization programmes.¹¹² With the proven success in the defence field, Israel emerged as a valuable partner in India's *Make in India* initiative- for indigenization of defence through joint ventures and technology transfer. In recent times, Israel emerged as the largest arms exporter and customer to India.

Followed by Russia, Israel ranks second in terms of arms exports to India. For instance, the arms trade between India and Israel in the first nine months of 2014 stood at US\$3.4 billion. During 2015-2019, the bilateral arms trade between India and Israel increased by 175 percent. In November 2014, IAI successfully tested Barak 8 air and naval system, which was jointly developed by India and Israel. This was designed by India's DRDO and Israel's defence ministry. This joint collaboration between India and Israel became a major milestone in the defence cooperation between them. In the same month, during Rajnath Singh, India's Home Minister visit to Israel, he remarked that, "Israel must take advantage of the investment friendly policies adopted by the new government in India."

In January 2015, the Indian army requested Israel to speed up the purchase of Heron UAVs, as China and Pakistan initiated similar capacity development using similar UAVs.¹¹³ In March 2015, then Defence Minister of India, Manohar Parrikar, made a statement in Lok Sabha, "Israel shares technology information, know-how, [and] know-why" with India, noting that "joint R&D" as well as "collaborative research projects" are undertaken within this institutional framework.¹¹⁴

Due to the deepening defence ties between India and Israel, India's External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj travelled to Israel. The visit by Sushma Swaraj became a precursor to the Narendra Modi's visit to Israel. During her visit, she interacted with her counterpart Israel's Defence Minister, Moshe Ya'lon, wherein he reiterated that Israel is open and flexible to India's *Make in India* initiative. He further added, "We have moved way beyond a buyer-seller relationship, and it is much deeper."¹¹⁵

¹¹² Alvite Singh Ningthoujam, "Reinvigorated Indo-Israeli Military Ties: The Modi Phenomenon," *The Jerusalem Post*, November, 2014,

<http://www.jpost.com/Opinion/Reinvigorated-Indo-Israelimilitary-ties-The-Modi-phenomenon-382292>

¹¹³ "India Purchases Drones from Israel," *Palestine Newspaper*, 22 September 2015.

¹¹⁴ Lok Sabha, "Indo-Israel Co-operation in Defense Sector," Unstarred Question No.3994, March 20, 2015, at <http://164.100.47.132/LssNew/psearch/QResult16.aspx?qref=14096> (Accessed April, 2021).

¹¹⁵ "Defence, counter terrorism to top Sushma Swaraj's visit to Israel," *Hindustan Times*, January 2016,

Prior to the visit of Sushma Swaraj to Israel, in his address to the media, Israeli ambassador to India, Daniel Carmon, remarked that, “*the defence cooperation for many years has been central pillars of the relationship. The changing world, changing parameters, changing needs are always something that is on the top of our agenda and always on our radar.*” During her visit, two nations decided to coordinate with each other on counter terrorism as they face the common challenge of terrorism. Both countries agreed to share the information and identified the areas where they can cooperate.¹¹⁶

Sushma Swaraj’s visit became very significant after the terror attack in India’s Pathankot air force base situated in the northern state of Punjab. Given Israel’s significant prowess in urban warfare and tackling cross border terror, India can emulate Israel’s top-notch technology in securing its borders. In 2017, IAI, signed an arms deal in the amount of US\$ 2 billion with India, wherein, they would be provided with Barak8 air and defence missile system.¹¹⁷ In the history of Israeli security apparatus, this was the largest deal between the two which included the supply of missiles, telecommunications, radar systems, control and surveillance etc. In the same year, New Delhi’s Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) gave clearance to the purchase of an additional two AWACS made by Israel at an estimated cost of \$1.1 billion. This was cleared by the CCS prior to Narendra Modi’s visit to Israel.¹¹⁸ This was an important item as the same was vetoed by Israel from selling to China in late 1990s. The procurement of these items from Israel became very significant, and urgent need had arisen due to the rising air borne threats.¹¹⁹

In May 2017, India’s Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) signed a contract with IAI worth \$630 million to jointly develop four LRSAM for the Indian Navy. During

<https://www.hindustantimes.com/india/defence-counter-terrorism-to-top-sushma-s-israel-agenda/story-lde79Kd9LwyefonKx7AsVM.html>

¹¹⁶ “India, Israel to intensify coordination in counter terrorism,” *The Economic Times*, July 2018, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/india-israel-to-intensify-coordination-to-counter-terrorism/articleshow/50628549.cms>

¹¹⁷ “The Largest Deal in the History of Israel: India Purchases Weapons Worth US\$ 2 Billion.” Akka for Israeli Affairs, 8 April 2017.

¹¹⁸ “Two more AWACS from Israel,” *The Hindu*, March, 2016, <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/two-more-awacs-from-israel/article8306072.ece>.

¹¹⁹ Alvite Singh Ningthoujam, “The Future of India-Israel Arms Trade,” *The Jerusalem Institute for Strategy and Security*, Policy Papers, 21 July, 2020.

Narendra Modi's visit to Israel, he held talks with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu over strengthening the coordination in *anti-terrorism*. In his maiden trip to Israel, Narendra Modi exhorted the Israeli defence firms for the joint collaboration in defence industry to take advantage of liberalized and enhanced Foreign Direct Investment in defence sector on automatic route from 49 percent to 74 percent. India and Israel have agreed that the defence cooperation between them must be in the joint collaboration of defence products and transfer of technology in the foreseeable future. Other joint co-production programmes include: 1. Israel Military Industries (IMI) in cooperation with India's Ordnance Factory Board (OFB) 2. DRDO and Elisra are working together to develop dual colour missile approach warning systems (DCMAWS) and advanced electronic warfare (EW) suites for Su-30 MKI fighter aircraft. 3. Collaboration with IMI to increase the accuracy of Pinaka multi-barrel rockets.¹²⁰

For the first time ever, in 2017, the Indian Air Force (IAF) participated in a joint drill (multilateral air exercise) with Israel. This multilateral exercise *BlueFlag-17* witnessed participation of many nations including, Greece, Germany, France, Italy, Poland, USA etc.¹²¹ India participated with a 45-member contingent and sent a C-130J Super Hercules aircraft to Israel. To deal with the escalating security challenges, in 2018, a batch of Indian Police Service (IPS) (2016 batch) from Sardar Patel National Police Academy, Hyderabad, as part of their foreign exposure training, visited Israel in July-August 2018. In December 2018, the first Indo-Israeli joint venture in defence sector was inaugurated in joint collaboration with Adani Defence and Elbit systems in Hyderabad. This became the first private UAV manufacturing facility in India and the first facility in Israel to manufacture high technology, cost effective Hermes 900 UAV (a multi-purpose, all-weather UAV).¹²²

¹²⁰ Ministry of Defence, *Annual Report 2014-15*, (New Delhi: Ministry of Defence, Government of India, 2015), p.86.

¹²¹ AK Sachdev, "Indo Israel Defence Cooperation and Future Prospects," *Indian Defence Review* 34, No.1, (January-March 2019).

¹²² "Adani Group inaugurates India's first drone building facility in Hyderabad," *The Business Standard* December 15, 2018.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/adani-group-inaugurates-india-s-first-drone-building-facility-in-hyderabad-118121500588_1.html#:~:text=Apart%20from%20the%20UAV%20Complex,the%20Home%20Minister%20of%20Telangana&text=India's%20first%20private%20Unmanned%20Aerial,%26%20Aerospace%2C%20and%20Elbit%20Systems.

In the same year, CCS, under the chairmanship of Narendra Modi, gave clearance for procuring the MRSAM for the Indian army (project worth INR 170 billion US\$ 2.5 billion).¹²³ To boost Make-in-India in the defence industry, these missiles will be jointly developed by DRDO, and IAI. The Indian army planned to have five regiments of this defence missile system to be deployed opposite to China and Pakistan. Simultaneously, Cyclone, (a subsidiary of Elbit systems) signed MoU with Mahindra Aero structures for the joint collaboration to produce aero structure parts and assemblies.¹²⁴

Mahindra Groups of India in order to design and produce crucial electronics sub-assemblies and systems for use in automotive, marine, and aerospace applications, Mahindra Telephonics and Shachaf Engineering of Israel signed a Memorandum of Understanding.¹²⁵ Under a technology transfer agreement, Israel-based DSIT Solutions and India's Tata Power Strategic Engineering Division collaborated to jointly develop and provide Portable Diver Detection Sonar (PDDS) for the Indian Navy. These sonars are fitted on ships to detect underwater threats.¹²⁶ To address the challenge of securing borders and border management, Bengaluru based Dynamitic Technologies Ltd (DTL) signed an agreement with an Israeli company Mangal Security Systems (Mangal-S3), for combined integrated border management solutions (CIBMS).¹²⁷ Similarly, to address the need of UAVs for India, Israel based IAI signed an agreement with Dynamic Technologies Ltd for production, assembly, and support

¹²³ Shaurya Gurung, "Israel To Partner DRDO For Developing Missile Defence System for India," *The Economic Times*, July 14, 2018.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/israel-to-partner-drdo-for-developing-missile-defence-system-for-india/articleshow/59689811.cms?from=mdr>.

¹²⁴ "Mahindra Aerostructures ties up with Elbit arm," *The Hindu Business Line*, January 11, 2018.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/companies/mahindra-aerostructures-ties-up-with-elbit-arm/article9750653.ece>

¹²⁵ "Mahindra Telephonics ink pact with Israeli firm," *The Business Standard*, 04 July, 2017.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/companies/mahindra-aerostructures-ties-up-with-elbit-arm/article9750653.ece>.

¹²⁶ "Indian Navy seals deal for portable diver detection sonar," *The Financial Express*, November 16, 2017.

<https://www.financialexpress.com/india-news/indian-navy-seals-deal-for-portable-diver-detection-sonar/935652/>.

¹²⁷ "Dynamitic Technologies signs cooperation agreement with Israeli company Magal-S3," *The Business Standard*, April 8, 2017.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/news-cm/dynamitic-technologies-signs-cooperation-agreement-with-israeli-company-magal-s3-117040700204_1.html.

for mini UAVs. Israel's Military Aircraft General Manager Shaul Shahar remarked; *"India is one of IAI's main strategic customers... our intention is to transfer a significant part of our UAV activity to India in the near future, in accordance with the 'Make in India' policy. We will jointly offer best-of-breed solutions for India."*¹²⁸

The strengthening of defence cooperation between the two is also attributed to the factors such as the indigenization of India's defence industry, transfer of technology (ToT) from other countries such as US, Russia, including Israel due to the rising security challenges including the cross-border terrorism and expansionist behavior of the neighboring countries such as China.¹²⁹ The defence cooperation between India and Israel had broadly three dimensions such as arms trade, transfer of technology, research and development in high-technology military equipment and licensed production.

In the defence expo, held in early February 2020 in Lucknow, Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI) and Bengaluru-based Dynamatic Technologies Limited (DTL) inked a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL), a state-owned enterprise in India. Commenting on the signed MoU, CMD, HAL, R. Madhavan remarked that, *"The collaboration gives an opportunity to expand offerings to defence customers, absorb technologies, and strengthen the aerospace ecosystem in the country."*¹³⁰ The collaboration between India and Israel was to manufacture and sell drones in which HAL has the proven capability wherein, it manufactured world class battle proven drones.

Simultaneously, in a seminar held at Def Expo 2020, *"Indo-Israel-Opportunities in Defence Cooperation-Future Vectors of the Digital Battlefield"*, India's Director General (Acquisition) and Additional Secretary, Department of Defence remarked that, *"Israel is the largest contributor to India's preparedness of any adversaries and has always been forthcoming to share technology."* He further stated that, *"the burgeoning relationship between India and*

¹²⁸ "Israeli firm signs agreement with Bengaluru's DTL for UAVs," *The Business Standard*, February 15, 2017. https://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ians/israel-firm-signs-agreement-with-bengaluru-s-dtl-for-uavs-117021500474_1.html.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ "HAL, Israel Aerospace Industries and DTL form strategic collaboration for manufacturing drones," *The Economic Times*, February 5, 2020. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/hal-israel-aerospace-industries-and-dtl-form-strategic-collaboration-for-drones/articleshow/73957865.cms>.

*Israel would be strengthened and continued and over all experience so far has been satisfying.”*¹³¹

On the other side, the tradition of regular exchanges between the armed forces continued in the strategic partnership between India and Israel. Israeli Air Force Chief embarked on a visit to India, and he met his counterpart, India's Air Chief Marshal, B. S. Dhanoa, along with other defence officials. In the same year, Israel hosted the largest International Defence and Homeland Security where India based Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) such as Bharat Electronics Limited, Bharat Earth Movers Limited, Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers Limited, Goa Shipyard Limited, and Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited participated.¹³² The event also witnessed the participation from the Department of Defence Production, which included 16 Defence Manufacturers from the Society of Indian Defence Manufacturers.

In January 2020, the third Joint Steering Committee was held between Indian and Israeli officials for cooperation on Homeland and Internal Security from January 14-16, 2020, in Israel. The JWG on Capacity Building and Police Modernization was convened.¹³³ The Indian government and the government of Israel signed a defence agreement in March 2020 to purchase 16,479 Negev 7.62x51 mm light machine guns (gas-operated) for the Indian armed forces.¹³⁴ The deal is valued at Rs. 880 crores. In the same year, in order to boost defence exports, India organised webinars with Friendly Foreign Countries (FFC). A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to establish a Sub Working Group (SWG) on Defence Industrial Cooperation was signed by Israel and India during the webinar.¹³⁵

In recent years, due to the robust defence cooperation between India and Israel, the strategic partnership between two countries is elevated and set to grow further with immense potential.

¹³¹ “Israel Key Contributor to India's Defence Preparedness: Official,” *The Business Standard*, 05 February, 2020.

¹³² Ministry of External Affairs, (2019-20), *Annual Report*, (New Delhi: External Publicity Division of the Ministry of External Affairs), p.111.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ “Recent Defence Procurement in India,” Members of Parliament Reference Service, (New Delhi: Lok Sabha Secretariat, October, 2020), p.9.

¹³⁵ Press Information Bureau, “Year End Review 2020- Ministry of Defence,” last accessed 17 May 2022, <https://pib.gov.in/Pressreleaseshare.aspx?PRID=1685437#:~:text=Year%20End%20Review%20%E2%80%932020%20Ministry%20of%20Defence&text=The%20year%202020%20began%20with,on%201st%20January%202020>.

- First, the arms trade between the two is durable and sustainable due to the emerging security challenges that both countries' face. Militancy is a major military threat to both countries, and India and Israel are also concerned about nuclear non-proliferation in the region.
- Second, due to its proven technological capability and military prowess, Israel emerged as a major defence partner for India to enable its quest to attain self-sufficiency in defence production. There are no limits or considerations on the part of Israel to limit the supply of arms or military equipment to India. Over many decades, despite *non-relations*, Israel consistently demonstrated its willingness to transfer weapons, and technology. The joint collaboration between Tel Aviv and New Delhi in the defence industry serves the national interests of both countries.
- Third, India was solely dependent on the Soviet Union for arms and ammunition in Cold War times, it recognised the need to diversify its defence needs by forging military ties with various other countries, such as France, Israel, and US after the Cold War. Israel's need to seek international markets for the sale of its defence industry merchandise benefitted India from strengthening the defence relationship. For instance, as per the report released by SIPRI, New Delhi's top three arms suppliers from 2016-20 include: Russia (49%), France (18%), Israel (13%).¹³⁶
- Fourth, India and Israel's military cooperation moved from a buyer-seller relationship to a joint collaboration in defence. For instance, the joint military exercises between the two, the joint production of military equipment and technology transfer can provide further impetus to the burgeoning relationship between them. This can also help India and Israel to export armaments to Third World countries. As a defence analyst puts it, "*future prospects of Indo-Israeli defence cooperation are likely to be directly proportional to the private content of Indian participation in joint ventures with Israel.*"¹³⁷
- Fifth, being a close ally of the USA, Israel cannot act against the will of the USA in its arms sales to other countries. However, India and USA relations are on an upward trajectory since the end of the Cold War, Washington does not inhibit Israel

¹³⁶ Rahul Singh, "33% dip in India's weapon imports: SIPRI", *Hindustan Times*, 16 March, 2021.

<https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/33-dip-in-india-s-weapon-imports-sipri-101615832811050.html>

¹³⁷ AK Sachdev, "Indo Israel: Defence Cooperation and Future Prospects," *Indian Defence Review* 34, no.1, (January-March, 2019).

from the sale of weaponry to New Delhi, unlike in the case of Beijing. For instance, Israel had to cancel several military deals with China due to the pressure exerted by the USA.

TIV of Arms Exported from Israel to India (1998-2020, in US\$ million)

Years	Arms Procurement
1998	59
1999	19
2000	43
2001	83
2002	95
2003	148
2004	196
2005	247
2006	206
2007	105
2008	46
2009	73
2010	113
2011	158
2012	163
2013	119
2014	157
2015	377
2016	736
2017	688
2018	108
2019	133
2020	107

Source: SIPRI Arms Transfer Database

The above figure shows the TIV of the arms exported from Israel to India between 1998 to 2020. From the above-mentioned data, it can be said that Israel emerged as one of the top arms suppliers to India. After the end of the Cold War, due to

the expanded strategic cooperation between India and Israel, Tel Aviv emerged as *all-weather* defence partner for New Delhi.

Another major dimension in Indo-Israel military ties is naval cooperation. The Indian-Israeli naval cooperation has major implications in the Indian Ocean. India, being a major international actor, which has vital national interests in the Indian Ocean, and Israel, aims to strengthen its strategic reach in this area, became an important arena for the convergence of Indo-Israeli interests.¹³⁸ Historically, due to the frosty relations with neighbouring Arab countries, Israel's reliance on the Indian Ocean was not enhanced as the land routes to the region was blocked by hostile Arab neighbours. The major reason for Israel's strategic interests in the Indian Ocean is because that is the only transit route to Asia, in terms of air and sea lanes. In 2003, Israel aimed to increase its strategic outreach in the Indian Ocean after the removal of Saddam Hussein in Iraq, which led Israel to enhance its military capability by air and sea.¹³⁹ In the words of Subash Kapila,

*“In Israeli perceptions, the striking strategic imperative that is emerging is the development of sea-borne second-strike capability. This strategically has to be operative from the Indian Ocean, and hence strategic cooperation with the Indian Navy is an imperative.”*¹⁴⁰

The maritime cooperation between India and Israel became very significant due to the joint interests both countries possess in the region. First, Chinese patrolling in the Indian Ocean and its growing economic ties with Iran may impede India's supply lines and choke off Iranian oil flows to New Delhi. Second, due to the lack of Israeli experience in the blue water navy, despite its sophistication in the military, it may not respond adequately to Chinese sub-marine harassment in the region. Third, in order to contain Chinese economic pressure, India becomes a very important partner for Israel.¹⁴¹ Fourth, due to the nuclear threat that both countries face, maritime security

¹³⁸ Efraim Inbar, “Indian-Israeli Entente,” *Orbis*, 48, (Jerusalem: Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies, 2004), p. 100.

¹³⁹ Efraim Inbar and Alvite Singh Ningthoujam “Indo-Israeli Defense Cooperation in the Twenty First Century,” *Mideast Security and Policy Studies* 93, (Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies, Bar-Ilan University, January 2012).

¹⁴⁰ Subash Kapila, “Israeli-Indian Strategic Cooperation and Prime Minister Sharon's visit: The added dimensions.” *SAAG Paper no.777*, (New Delhi: South Asia Analysis Group, 2003), p. 4.

¹⁴¹ Harrey Halam, “Strategic Convergence and Prospects for Indo-US-Israeli Maritime Cooperation,” *Centre for International Maritime Security*, April 16, 2018,

becomes very important for a second-strike capability.¹⁴²

In 1997, New Delhi purchased Ramta two Super Dvora Mark II boats and signed a contract with Israel-based IAI to build the remaining at the Goa shipyard in collaboration with Ramta. In addition to the above, New Delhi procured electronic support measure sensors from Israel for its naval needs.¹⁴³ In the aftermath of the Kargil war in 1999, as defence engagement between India and Israel strengthened, Israel continued to provide necessary advanced military equipment to India. For instance, in 2001, in its first-ever largest single defence deal worth \$270 million, both jointly signed an agreement for the supply of nine Barak Anti-Missile Defence (AMD) systems.¹⁴⁴ These missiles had the capability to intercept anti-ship cruise missiles. The deal from Israel acquired immense significance because the Indian Navy planned to use these missiles to counter the threat from Pakistan's P3C-II Orion maritime strike aircraft and 27 Harpoon sea-skimming anti-ship missiles from the USA.¹⁴⁵

In 2002, Israel developed a naval strike capability for deepening its security cooperation with India.¹⁴⁶ In 2003, Israel assisted India by commissioning the Indian Naval Fast Attack Craft (INFACT, T-82), a ship built by IAI.¹⁴⁷ In the same year, for its navy, New Delhi placed the order for 20 Israeli-based Barak Sea-to-Air anti-missile weapons from Tel Aviv. Indian navy warships, including three Delhi-class destroyers and the INS Viraat, were equipped with Barak-I systems purchased earlier.

After the change of guard in 2004, the then Indian Navy Chief Admiral Arun Prakash, visited Israel. Due to the growing defence cooperation between India and Israel, two naval ships from India, INS Godavari, a missile frigate, and INS Mysore, a general-purpose destroyer, visited the port of Haifa in Israel. In January 2006, both

<https://cimsec.org/strategic-convergence-prospects-indo-israeli-u-s-maritime-cooperation/>.

¹⁴² Zahid Ali Khan, "Development in Indo-Israel Defense Relations Since 9/11: Pakistan's Security Concern and Policy Options," *South Asia Studies* 26, no. 1 (January– June 2011): 142, 145.

¹⁴³ Efraim Inbar and Alvite Singh Ningthoujam, "Indo-Israeli Defense Cooperation in the Twenty First Century," *Mideast Security and Policy Studies* 93, (Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies, Bar-Ilan University, January, 2012), p.4.

¹⁴⁴ Prakash Gopal, "India-Israel Defence Engagement: A Naval Perspective," *Strategic Analysis* 41, No.4, (June 2017):341-47.

¹⁴⁵ Sushil J. Aaron, "Straddling Faultline: India's Foreign Policy towards the Greater Middle East," (New Delhi: French Research Institutes in India, 2003), p.20.

¹⁴⁶ "India assisting Israeli Navy," *Times of India*, June 17, 2002.

¹⁴⁷ "Israeli built ship commissioned in Indian Navy," *The Indian Express*, October 09, 2003.

jointly signed worth \$350 million contract to develop long-range surface-to-air (LRSAM) missiles, for both navies. However, the project was plagued by inordinate delays.

In 2007, Vice Admiral Maj. Gen. David Ben Bashat, Naval Chief of Israel visited India to strengthen the naval cooperation.¹⁴⁸ India and Israel jointly agreed to boost the development of Indian Sea Harrier Jump Jets and anti-missile defense systems. During the visit of Vice Admiral Suresh Mehta, India's Naval Chief, both countries agreed to develop unmanned helicopters for the navies of both countries.¹⁴⁹ The bilateral visits by the top military leaders reflect the deepening security cooperation.

The navy leaders of the two nations exchanged visits in 2010. Eliezer Marom, commander of the Israeli Navy, went to New Delhi in January. During his visit, the \$2.5 billion Barak-NG (next generation) missile defence system and Long-Range Surface to Air Missile (LRSAM) system project for the Indian Navy was signed by Israel's IAI and India's DRDO.¹⁵⁰ India's Navy Chief Admiral Nirmal Kumar Verma visited Israel in October of the same year and spoke about the possibility of deepening defence cooperation. In 2011, Israeli-made TAR-21 (Tavor Assault Rifle 21st Century) assault rifles and Galil sniper rifles were deployed by the marine commandos of the Indian Navy (ordered in 2008).¹⁵¹

Towards the bolstering expansion in naval ties between India and Israel, as part of good will visit, the Indian naval ships made regular port calls in Israel, which became an integral part of India's Israel diplomacy. In June 2006, INS Brahmaputra and INS Mumbai visited the port in Haifa. Along with INS Betwa and INS Shakthi, these two warships were a part of Op Sukoon, an operation led by Rear Admiral Anup Singh that evacuated almost 1,500 Indian and South Asian people from Beirut before the Israel-Lebanon war on June 21–23, 2006.¹⁵² Later, in 2007, two Indian naval ships INS Shardul and INS Sujata, visited Haifa port in Israel. In 2009-10, both navies conducted passage exercises (PASSEX).¹⁵³

¹⁴⁸ "India, Israel to step up naval ties," *Times of India*, August 8, 2007.

¹⁴⁹ "India, Israel mull development of unmanned combat helicopters," *Times of India*, August 14, 2007.

¹⁵⁰ "India holds wide ranging strategic talks with US, Israel," *Times of India*, January 19, 2010.

¹⁵¹ "Indian navy marines ready for Tavor rifles", *UPI Asia Online*, January 20, 2011.

¹⁵² "Operation Sukoon," last accessed 17 July, 2022,

<http://www.bharat-rakshak.com/NAVY/Galleries/News/Sukoon/>

¹⁵³ Ministry of Defence, *Annual Report*, 2009-10, (New Delhi, Ministry of Defence, Government of

In 2012, a task force of the Indian Navy comprising four ships, namely, INS Aditya, INS Gomati, INS Mumbai, and INS Trishul, paid a good will visit to Haifa port in Israel.¹⁵⁴ This visit was embarked under the command of Rear Admiral A.R. Karve, Flag Officer, Commanding Western Fleet. In 2015, a frontline warship of the Indian Navy, INS Trikand, visited Haifa port from August 19-22.¹⁵⁵ In 2017, three Indian naval ships, INS Aditya (tanker), INS Mumbai (destroyer), INS Trishul (frigate), visited Haifa port in Israel, which marked 25 years of establishment of diplomatic ties between India and Israel. In 2018, the Indian Navy's first Sail Training Ship (STS), INS *Taringini*, which was built in the Goa shipyard, visited Haifa port in Israel. However, no joint exercise had been carried out by both navies yet. The strengthened cooperation between Indian and Israeli navies fostered new mechanisms for maritime cooperation.¹⁵⁶

Rear Admiral Dhiren Vig, ACNS (FCI), and Rear Admiral Eli Sharvit, Deputy C-in-C and Chief of Staff from the Israeli Navy, co-chaired the Staff Talks at the tenth round of negotiations between the Indian and Israeli fleets on February 23, 2016 in New Delhi. Both sides discussed cooperation possible in the fields of information exchange, training, and operations.¹⁵⁷ Admiral Sunil Lanba, the head of the Indian Navy, travelled to Israel in 2017 for bilateral talks with Lt. Gen. Gadi Eisenkot, the chief of the general staff of the Israel Defense Force. He visited Haifa Naval Base along with other defence officials.¹⁵⁸

The defence cooperation between India and Israel would strengthen in future not only due to the arms sales between them but also technology transfer. Simultaneously, Israel will also face competition from its strong potential partner, i.e.,

India, 2010), p.38.

¹⁵⁴ Ministry of External Affairs, *Annual Report*, 2012-13, (New Delhi: External Publicity Division of the Ministry of External Affairs), p.42.

¹⁵⁵ "Frontline Indian warship INS Trikand anchors at Israeli port," *The Economic Times*,

¹⁵⁶ Embassy of India, Tel Aviv, Israel, "INS Tarangini, Indian Navy's Sail Training Ship Visits Haifa," last accessed May 2021, <https://www.indembassyisrael.gov.in/press?id=penRe>.

¹⁵⁷ Indian Navy, "10th Indian Navy-Israeli Staff Talks held at New Delhi on 23 Feb 16," last accessed June 2021, <https://www.indiannavy.nic.in/content/10th-indian-navy-israeli-navy-staff-talks-held-new-delhi-23-feb-16>

¹⁵⁸ Indian Navy, "Visit by Admiral Sunil Lanba, Chairman COSC & Chief of the Naval Staff to Israel," last accessed June 2021, <https://www.indiannavy.nic.in/content/visit-admiral-sunil-lanba-chairman-cosc-chief-naval-staff-israel-12-15-june-2017>.

US, as it eased restrictions on the export of military technology. As New Delhi continues to face the threat of Islamic terrorism emanating from borders, i.e., from a continually hostile Pakistan, a resurgent and expansionist power like China, India must seize the opportunity with Israel to expand its military cooperation beyond the sale of technology. Both countries continue to face volatile security environment (traditional and non-traditional security threats) across the borders, and their strategic partnership must flourish and remain sustainable in coming decades to address these problems. The commonality of needs and cooperation between India and Israel for manufacturing in the defence industry will shape and enhance the existing military cooperation at the strategic level.

India And Israel Post-Cold War: Economic Buoyancy

The following chapter examines how the economic relationship between India and Israel grew over the last thirty years. In this bilateral relationship, the trade factor plays a significant role. As discussed in the earlier chapters, the limited contacts between India and Israel acted as a barrier, due to which trade played a very limited or negligible role in the relationship between them. In the words of Giora Becher, former Consul General from Israel,

*“the official Indian policy on trade with Israel is still preventing the public sector from dealing with us, even if it means spending more money or buying less quality products elsewhere. Furthermore, although there is no restriction what so ever on the private sector to do business with Israel, the political atmosphere prevailing between the two countries makes many Indian businessmen believe it is better not to be engaged in many commercial contacts with their Israeli counterparts.”*¹

However, after the establishment of full-fledged diplomatic relations between them in 1992, similar to the changes that happened in the strategic-military sphere, there was a steady rise in economic diplomacy as well. On the other side, India also embraced economic reforms, thereby opening its doors for economic cooperation with several countries across the globe. The economic reforms taken up by India acted as a major catalyst in strengthening economic ties with the rest of the world, while Israel was no exception.

India’s economic interests converged with Israeli interests in several sectors, such as agriculture, defence, energy, etc., besides the traditional chemical and diamonds trade (composed about nearly 83 per cent of Tel Aviv’s exports to New Delhi in the early 1990s).² The emergence of Tel Aviv and New Delhi as industrialized and technologically advanced nations enhanced the cooperation in multi-sectoral areas such

¹ Gulu Ezekiel, “Indo-Israeli ties waiting to break in to the open,” *The Pioneer*, January 14, 1992.

² Farah Naaz, “Indo-Israel Military Cooperation,” *Strategic Analysis* 24, (2000): 969-85.

as agriculture, science and technology, services sector etc. which are complementary to each other.

Prior to the 1990s, diamonds alone constituted about 40 per cent of Israeli exports to India. Similarly, cotton yarn and polished diamonds constituted about 76 per cent of India's exports to Israel.³ Due to the normalisation of relations with Israel and the vast economic opportunities available, the economic liberalization from the Indian side led to the diversification of trade in various spheres which were earlier limited to diamonds and chemical industries.

The commercial and economic ties between Tel Aviv and New Delhi not only altered the balance of power in West and South Asia but also in the larger Asian and European regions that changed a lot in the past few years. Certain sectors, such as electronics, machinery, medical equipment, telecommunications, etc. in India were disadvantaged as there was no diplomacy with Tel Aviv. Prior to the pre-1992 policy towards Israel, the trade was confined only to the chemical and diamond industries. For instance, the Hinduja brothers negotiated with firms in Israel. During the Cold War years, the Indian trading and industry community failed to influence the Indian government to change its policy towards Tel Aviv despite being sanctioned for trading with companies in the West that had links with Israel.

After the normalization of ties in 1992, several delegations from the two countries visited each other for economic cooperation, which subsequently led to the forging of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and other agreements in several areas, which opened new avenues for trade and economic assistance between them. In fact, prior to normalization, former Minister of Trade and Law from the Government of India Subramanian Swamy met Moshe Nissim, Israeli Minister of Trade and Commerce unofficially at a Brussels economic conference, Belgium, despite the objection from the Indian side.⁴ In the early 1990s, high level business delegations began visiting Israel to facilitate the trade in high-tech industries, agriculture and tourism. An Indian-Israel Joint Business Council, set up in the early 1990s, facilitated the trade between two states. An Indian business delegation led by Mr. Sanjay Dalmia, Chairman, in October 1993, The India-Israel Joint Business Council visited Tel Aviv, to participate in the Jerusalem Business Conference. The Federation of Indian Export Organisation's vice

³ Farah Naaz, "Indo- Israel cooperation: Agriculture, trade and culture," *Strategic Analysis* 23, No.6 (2008):895-907.

⁴ Itzhak Gerberg, *The Changing Nature of Israeli- Indian Relations: 1948-2005* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 2008), p.99.

president and its Director General left for Israel to establish business ties and explore the possibilities of promoting bilateral trade between India and Israel. New Delhi also granted the Israeli Trade Attache in Singapore, Samuel Offri, a working visa in October 1991. He embarked on a visit to India to promote economic ties between India and Israel.⁵

Israeli companies also exhibited their interest to explore trade and investment opportunities in India due to the significant labour force (skilled and unskilled) that existed in India. Israel played a significant role in India's economic development by making new strides in several fields such as agriculture, energy, space, technology transfer, etc.

The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) held a seminar with the title, "*India-Israel Business Opportunities*", on April 15, 1993, Israeli Ambassador to India Mr. Ephraim Dowek, The Manufacturers Association of Israel (MAI) president, Mr. Dov Lautman participated in the seminar. Speaking at the seminar, Dan Gillerman, Federation of Israeli Chamber of Commerce Chairman, gave two reasons for the Indian investment in Israel: New Delhi could use Israel as a base for gaining access to the trading blocs of EC, the USA and AFTA (ASEAN Free Trade Area) with whom Tel Aviv signed FTAs (Free Trade Agreements), Israeli industry joint venture with Indian defence projects in aviation.⁶

When Shimon Peres visited New Delhi in May 1993, both countries signed an MoU for bolstering the economic ties between India and Israel. Thereafter, this culminated in the signing of an agreement on trade and economic cooperation in December 1994 by Micha Harish, former Minister of Trade for Israel and the then Indian Minister for Commerce, late Pranab Mukherjee. This agreement enabled India and Israel for granting Most Favoured Nation (M.F.N.) status upon each other.⁷ The other significant element of this agreement was that it allowed the import of Indian goods to Israel without import permits except certain items under Israeli custom regulations.⁸ In the same year, both the countries signed an MoU on custom, standard and industrial R&D.

⁵ Ibid., p.169.

⁶ Nicolas Blarel, *The Evolution of India's Israel Policy: Continuity, Change, and Compromise Since 1922* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2015), p.286.

⁷ Dalia Ray, "Genesis and Fruition of Indo-Israel Cooperation," *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, Vol.66, Indian History Congress, 2005-06), p.1310.

⁸ "Initiatives: Israel – India Business guide on Israeli Industry," (Israel – Asia Business, 1996), p.10.

In January 1996, during the visit of the Israeli Finance Minister Avraham Shohat to India, both countries signed an agreement on customs cooperation. Under the above mentioned MoU, the Standard Institution of Israel (S.I.I) and the Bureau of Indian Standards (B.I.S) agreed to work in tandem in the testing of the quality of goods in India and Israel. Another MoU on industrial R&D proposed a fund to finance private sector R&D projects for product and commercial application development.

The draft of the above agreement was finalized in January 1996 during the visit of the Indian Minister of Commerce P. Chidambaram to Israel between New Delhi based DSIR (Department of Scientific and Industrial Research) and Tel Aviv based Office of the Chief Scientist in the Israeli Ministry of Trade and Industry. Besides this, during the visit of Israeli Finance Minister Avraham Shohat to India, agreements on protection of bilateral investment and double taxation were signed. All these agreements provided the necessary legal framework for strengthening the trade and economic cooperation between India and Israel. In May 2000, India Trade Promotion Organization, ITPO, organized India Week in Tel Aviv with the aim of bringing huge Israeli investments to India. This meeting highlighted the business opportunities, and industrial strength available in India.⁹ During his India visit, Ezer Weizman, Israeli President, said,

“The twenty-first century belongs to the East-China, Japan, Indonesia, and India. The USA and Europe will have to get here—India will take its place in its technological world.”¹⁰

In view of the increasing business contacts between them, both nations inked several trade agreements. They are as follows:

- A MoU was signed between Electronic Industrial Association of Israel (EIAI) and the Electronics and Software Export Promotion Council (ESEPC) to enhance the cooperation.
- Israeli association for software houses (IASH) signed a deal to enhance cooperation with National Association of Software and Services Companies (NASSCOM).
- For the promotion of Israel’s electronic technologies in India, Israel Export Institute (IEI) signed a memorandum of understanding with Technova India

⁹ “Indo-Israeli trade-1999: Reaching \$ 1 billion earlier than expected” Economic Department of Embassy of Israel. January 2000.

¹⁰ K.P. Bhanumathy, “Reinforcing Indo-Israeli Relations,” *Mainstream* 35, no.10, 15 February 1997.

Private Limited.

- An agreement for Joint Research and Development between the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research (DSIR) and the Chief Scientist of Israel.
- India's first solar thermal power plant with 30MW capacity was set up near Jodhpur (Rajasthan) in India as a result of a technology tie up between India's Bharat Heavy Electronics Limited (BHEL) and an Israeli corporation, M/s Solel Solar, and others.¹¹

As mentioned above, several MoUs were exchanged between industry associations of India and Israel.¹² For example, many business forums in India like the FICCI, CII, NAASCOM, and the PHD Chamber of Commerce, have deals with their counterparts in Israel such as Federations of Israeli Chamber of Commerce, Electronics Association of Israel, Manufacturers Association of Israel and others. The bilateral visits of various industry delegations from both countries widened the scope of economic partnership with a combination of Israeli and Indian technology, manufacturing capacity, marketing channels, exports to third countries etc.

Irrespective of whichever political party holds power in India, the economic relations of both countries had not altered. Due to the convergence of mutual interests, they exploited all the opportunities for collaboration in trade.¹³ Minister of Finance, Benjamin Netanyahu from Israel met India's, P. Chidambaram his counterpart (India's Finance Minister) in Washington in 2004 to negotiate monetary guarantees for projects in states of India by Israeli companies.¹⁴ Following this bilateral meeting, from 6-9 December, 2004, Ehud Olmert, Industry Minister of Israel visited India with a delegation of 45 leading companies from Israel.¹⁵ In the midst of burgeoning trade relations between India and Israel, the State Bank of India (SBI) branch was opened in Tel Aviv, in Israel in May, 2006.¹⁶

¹¹ Javed Ahamed Khan, *India and West Asia: Emerging Markets in the Liberalization Era* (New Delhi: Sage, 2000), p.162-3.

¹² Nicolas Blarel, *The Evolution of India's Israel Policy: Continuity, Change, and Compromise Since 1922* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2015), p.335.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Itzhak Gerberg, *The Changing Nature of Israeli-Indian Relations: 1948-2005* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 2008), p.379.

¹⁵ Ibid., p.379.

¹⁶ Nicolas Blarel, *The Evolution of India's Israel Policy: Continuity, Change, and Compromise Since 1922* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2015), p.335.

In a meeting organized by FICCI in New Delhi to expand the economic and trade cooperation between Tel Aviv and New Delhi, Israel and India decided to constitute a joint study group (JSG) to make suggestions about mechanisms related to trade and its targets to be achieved. Based on the recommendations of JSG, a preferential trade agreement was signed between Eli Yishai, Industry Minister of Israel and Indian Commerce and Industry Minister Kamal Nath in 2006.¹⁷

In the wake of growing economic cooperation between India and Israel, many Indian states business delegations, including industrialists, entrepreneurs, and CEOs of various companies from Maharashtra, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu etc also embarked on a visit to Israel as part of an effort to bring in the investments from Israel. To expand the footprint of growing business opportunities and for promoting the trade links between India and Israel, many independent forums were created to sustain the momentum of an economic partnership in the mutual interests of both countries.

- India-Israel Business Forum was founded by Tel Aviv University in 2007. Since then, the forum has met once every year, with the latest 15th meeting held from December 14-15, 2022, in India. This forum was established in association with the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and the Ananta Aspen Centre. The India-Israel Forum meeting held in Delhi in November 2010, proposed a three-tier agenda which includes:
 1. Business (B2B) partnerships to provide solutions that are *made in India, made for India*.
 2. Government (G2G) engagements, (state to state) to absorb market risks,
 3. Academia (a2a) to promote academic collaborations involving universities on both sides.¹⁸
- To expand the growing business opportunities between India and Israel, the Federation of Indo-Israeli Chambers of Commerce (FIICC) was established in 2012 in Bengaluru, India. This FIICC, South India, was established to deepen the trade ties between India and Israel in various sectors such as environment, real estate, defence offset needs, SMEs, IT, pharmaceuticals, construction, consumer goods and others.
- To commemorate twenty-five years of New Delhi's relationship with Jewish

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Confederation of Indian Industry, "The Third India-Israel Forum, New Delhi, 1-2 November 2010, Proceedings", (New Delhi: Confederation of Indian Industry, 2010).

state, Indo-Israel CEOs Forum was established, and its first meeting was organised during Modi's visit to Israel in July 2017. Several working groups have been identified by the forum to strengthen the trade engagement between India and Israel, which includes a. defence, aerospace and homeland security. b. agriculture and water management c. urban infrastructure and transport d. digital technology- IT, cyber and data security e. start up, and innovation ecosystem.¹⁹

To facilitate the bilateral trade dialogue, these forums were established, when the economic partnership between India and Israel was scaling new heights. They play a critical role in exploring the magnitude of business opportunities in the third decade of the 21st century which could be redefined by new frontiers of cooperation in various sectors such as agriculture, industry, and services.

Agricultural Cooperation: A Silent Revolution

Notwithstanding the mutual benefits obtained from diverse areas of cooperation between two thriving economies and democracies, agriculture emerged as the *main pillar* in New Delhi's economic diplomacy with Tel Aviv. Israel is a global leader with proven expertise in agricultural technology, **Agro-Tech**. It made significant strides in agriculture by transforming itself from a desert, water scarce arable land to a major exporter of agricultural commodities.²⁰ Agriculture and its allied sectors emerged as a major area of collaboration between New Delhi and Tel Aviv. India, being an agrarian economy (wherein nearly 60% of its workforce is dependent on agriculture for livelihood), the technical know-how from Israel was the need of the hour for the development of its arid and desert areas. In the words of Sanjay Pulipaka, "it is a very important dimension of the relationship as it reinforces the strengthening of the strategic partnership between them. Although, Israeli technology may not be replicated across India given its size, it helps in the most drought hit regions of the country."²¹

¹⁹ "What roadmap India-Israel CEOs Forum has charted to enhance bilateral trade to \$20 bn by 2022," *The Financial Express*, 15 January, 2018,

<https://www.financialexpress.com/india-news/what-roadmap-india-israel-ceos-forum-has-charted-to-enhance-bilateral-trade-to-20-bn-by-2022/1016571/>.

²⁰ Farah Naaz, "Indo- Israel cooperation: Agriculture, trade and culture," *Strategic Analysis* 23, No.6, (2008):895-907.

²¹ Mr. Sanjay Pulipaka, an independent researcher on international politics and security issues, (Formerly Senior Fellow, Delhi Policy Group and ICRIER), *Phone Call*, 15 April, 2022

The most striking feature, which is unprecedented in any bilateral relationship, is Israel's agricultural cooperation with the Indian states. After India opened its economy in the early 1990s, many states such as Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Punjab, and Rajasthan had greater leverage, wherein the Chief Ministers of the Indian States visited Israel as they were concerned with their immediate priorities such as agriculture, irrigation, horticulture, etc. in their respective states. Several state governments also partnered with Israeli companies and agencies for foreign direct investment and agricultural assistance. The Israeli companies negotiated directly with Indian state governments and signed agreements pertaining to their requirements in various fields such as agriculture, irrigation, dairy farming, and others. Through yielding rich dividends in agricultural cooperation from Israel, Indian states opened a new chapter in the trajectory of India's Israel diplomacy.

Both nations have had bilateral relations in agriculture within weeks of upgrading their diplomatic relations. For instance, to seek agricultural assistance from Israel, former Agriculture Minister of India, Balram Jhakar, visited Israel for its technological expertise in drip irrigation. In May 1993, former Chief Minister of Maharashtra Sharad Pawar led an official delegation to the Tel-Aviv **Agro-Tech** exhibition. Besides, a 15-member farmers and entrepreneurs delegation sponsored by the National Horticultural Board and about 600 farmers (from the states of Maharashtra and Gujarat) also visited the exhibition. The delegation became familiar with methods for efficient water usage and increased productivity.²²

This was followed by Israel's Minister of Agriculture, Yaacov Tzur, embarking on a visit to New Delhi accompanied by a large delegation of agro-businessmen, in December 1993. An agreement in the area of agriculture was signed on December 24th, 1993, during his visit, broadening the scope of bilateral relations. Israeli Agriculture Minister Yaakov Tour and his Indian counterpart Balram Jhakar inked this pact. They had extensive discussions about how to improve bilateral cooperation in the agricultural industry.

Over the years, a number of Chief Ministers from various parties have travelled to Israel and discussed cooperative ventures, particularly in the fields of agricultural/manufacturing machinery and seed production. The Indian Agriculture Minister organized a travelling seminar for Indian and Israeli experts to visit the desert

²² India, Ministry of External Affairs, *Foreign Affairs Record* 39, no.5, (New Delhi: External Publicity Division, May 1993), pp.132.

areas of Rajasthan and the Indira Gandhi canal. After that, negotiations were held between the Indian academic and research institutions like Rajasthan Agricultural University and Israel's Ben Gurion Desert University of Negev.²³ This made it easier for scientists from both countries to share ideas about stabilising deserts, managing water, poly-green house technology, and others.

Tel Aviv and New Delhi established more than sixty joint venture agricultural projects from 1992 to 1997, in several fields such as chemicals, dairy development, fertilizers, green houses, horticulture, insecticides, irrigation, water management, tissue culture, solar energy, afforestation, etc. The joint venture projects were not only limited to these areas but also included the power and food industries.²⁴ The joint venture is where both countries find a common area of cooperation. In the words of the Economic Consular of Israel, Ofri,

“The best way to promote trade between India and Israel is through joint ventures, as India has a well trained workforce of dedicated engineers and scientists as well as technology minded companies. While Israel has good connection with the US and Europe, India has direct access to Asia and the third world.”²⁵

Several joint venture projects have been initiated between Tel Aviv and New Delhi after 1992, notably where states played an important role with agriculture as the major lynchpin of the relationship. To mention a few,

- One of the biggest advancements in modern agriculture is Israel's innovation in drip irrigation. In December 1993, Israel based Plastro Gvat Irrigation Systems collaborated with Pune based Finolex group, Maharashtra, for drip irrigation systems in India.²⁶
- Israel's leading tissue company, Rahan Meristem, collaborated with the Jain Group of Jalgaon (Maharashtra). This tie up was significantly important as India's largest bananas are grown within a radius of 70 km from the base in Jalgaon.
- A plant for the production of drip irrigation systems has been established nearby Hyderabad by the Madras-based Pasumai Irrigation Company and Israel's Netafim Drip Irrigation, a global leader in drip irrigation and water-saving technologies.²⁷

²³ Ibid., p.132.

²⁴ R. Sreekanthan Nair, *Dynamics of Diplomacy Delayed: India and Israel* (New Delhi: Kalpaaz, 2004), p.156.

²⁵ The News, Islamabad, June 1993.

²⁶ Israel-India Final Report of the Joint Study Group, 10 November, 2005, p.32.

²⁷ Javed Ahamed Khan, *India and West Asia: Emerging Markets in the Liberalization Era* (New Delhi: Sage,

- A phosphate plant was set up in Gujarat in collaboration with Israel based Rolem fertilizers and Titegarh Steel Mills.
- Amcor and solar (solar energy), Dan (irrigation), Gadot (citric acid), Netafim (drip irrigation), Rahan (tissue culture), Tahal (water management), Zinkal (irrigation pipes) to name a few are the joint ventures between New Delhi and Tel Aviv.

In December 1996, on a visit to India, President of Israel, Ezer Weizmann inaugurated an Indo-Israeli Research and Development Farm in the Indian Agricultural Research Institute (I.A.R.I) at Pusa located in New Delhi. This farm has been in operation since November 1999, demonstrating Israeli know-how in high-tech agriculture, including crop management and soil water. This farm acted as an extension centre for promoting Israel based sophisticated agricultural technology to several other parts of India. Water management, micro irrigation, soil conservation, open protected cultivation methods, soil-less culture, and introduction of new saplings for high yields and seeds were the farm's priorities. This farm will also play the role of a training institute for farmers and conduct various training courses such as food processing, marketing, and post-harvest technical support.²⁸ The technological assistance provided by Israel would make it possible to find different ways to grow crops that would work in different climate zones in India.²⁹

In the same visit, on January 4, 1998, the President of Israel inaugurated the model of the Cotton Technology Centre Demonstration project in Akola located in the state of Maharashtra, which was established in partnership with the State Government and A.G.R.I.D.E.V (Agricultural Development Company) in Israel. This significant project was expected to obtain cotton yields as this crop was under drip irrigation. As mentioned earlier, the Indian states partnership with Israeli based agricultural agencies was vigorously pursued, which gave further impetus in strengthening the cooperation between India and Israel, which include:

- In September 1993, Israel hosted the Chief Minister of Gujarat, Chimanbhai Patel. This visit culminated in a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Israeli based Eisenberg group and Gujarat for investments in agriculture, communication, shipping, and wasteland development.³⁰ Several other MoUs were signed, such as Gujarat

2008), p.162-3.

²⁸ Souvenir on India-Israel Relations (Mumbai: Consulate General of Israel, January-February 1997), p.11.

²⁹ R. Sreekanthan Nair, *Dynamics of Diplomacy Delayed: India and Israel* (New Delhi: Kalpaaz, 2004), p.158.

³⁰ Nicolas Blarel, *The Evolution of India's Israel Policy: Continuity, Change, and Compromise Since*

Corporations Ltd.³¹ and Agricultural Export Co.Ltd., Israel, Gujarat State Fertilizer Company Ltd. and Netafim Yiftah Irrigation Equipment and Drip Systems, Gujarat Ecology Commission and the Jacob Blaustein Institute of Desert Research, Industries (Commiserate, Gujarat Corporations) and EFUL Group.

- In 1996, MoU with the Eisenberg group was signed by Haryana to establish a thermal power plant on the banks of river Yamuna.³²
- In October 1996, Israel hosted the Chief Minister of Maharashtra Manohar Joshi. His visit resulted in an MoU between Maharashtra Government and A.G.R.I.D.E.V (Agricultural Development Company) in Israel for a cotton demonstration farm project.
- In 1997, Punjab Government also signed an MoU with Dairy Board from Israel to establish a Modern Satellite Dairy Farm in the state.³³ Another project was enunciated between the Ozcot Company of Israel and Punjab Agro-Industries Cooperation, and the Indo-Israel demonstration farm in the field of dairy development in Karnal.
- In 2000, former West Bengal Chief Minister Jyoti Basu, along with his senior colleague Somnath Chatterjee, visited Israel to solicit Israeli investment in West Bengal.
- In January 2001, the former Chief Minister of West Bengal Buddhadev Bhattacharya, signed a MoU with Arye Volka, deputy managing director of AGRIDEV for horticulture and floriculture demonstration farm development project.³⁴
- In 2003, the former Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, Chandrababu Naidu, on his visit to Israel constituted a joint working group to study the feasibility of Israeli cooperation to provide IT solutions in agriculture.
- Tahal Consulting Engineers Ltd., the Israeli water management company, played an important role in wasteland development, irrigation, water management and infrastructure, and modern agricultural projects in several states such as Gujarat, Haryana, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, and Uttar Pradesh. Most of the state governments directly entered into a MoU with Israel based companies for cooperation in agro-technology. These companies played a pivotal role in the establishment of tissue-culture laboratories in India.

1922 (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2015), p.287.

³¹ Gujarat Corporations Collectively represented several Gujarat companies.

³² Javed Ahamed Khan, *India and West Asia: Emerging Markets in the Liberalization Era* (New Delhi: Sage, 2008), p.162-3.

³³ R. Sreekanthan Nair, *Dynamics of Diplomacy Delayed: India and Israel* (New Delhi: Kalpaaz, 2004),p.158.

³⁴ S. Rajen Singh, "India and Israel: Towards Greater Cooperation," *India Quarterly* 57, no.4 (October-December 2001):131.

On October 10, 1997, an executive agreement was signed between New Delhi and Tel Aviv for a future course of action in the agricultural sector. It included setting up greenhouses, open-field facilities, infrastructure, technical assistance training, and management of certain times.³⁵ Both countries also agreed to give 25 training scholarships to people who want to work in agriculture, horticulture, irrigation, and other related fields. A steering committee made up of experts from both states was also put together to closely monitor all the agriculture programmes.³⁶

To participate in Agritech Exhibition from May 9-11, 2006, former Agriculture, Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution Minister of India, Sharad Pawar, led an Indian delegation to Israel comprised of the chief ministers of Gujarat, Rajasthan, and Nagaland – Narendra Modi, Vasundhara Raje, and Neiphiu Rio and agriculture ministers from other states such as Andhra Pradesh, Haryana, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Nagaland, and Odisha.³⁷ A 30 member business delegation led by Dr. Amit Mitra, Secretary General, FICCI also accompanied them. During the visit, A detailed intergovernmental work plan for cooperation in agriculture was inked by Tel Aviv and New Delhi. Sharad Pawar and his Israeli counterpart Shalom Simhon signed this pact.³⁸ The strategy called for the creation of agribusiness initiatives, research and development cooperation, farmer-level interactions, cooperation with gene bank resources, and others.

This visit was followed by Rajasthan Agriculture Minister Prabhu Lal Saini's visit to Tel Aviv from 27 June – 3 July 2006, as the state sought Israeli firms' technological assistance in the development of drought free agriculture systems.³⁹ The exposure to Israeli agricultural practices and technologies was very important for a drought prone state like Rajasthan. In the same year, the former Chief Minister of Rajasthan Vasundhara Raje, embarked on a visit to Israel to assist farmers in the state for olive and dates cultivation. In this regard, Rajasthan Olive Cultivation Limited was set up with assistance from Israeli firm Indolive.⁴⁰ Similarly, Shivraj Singh Chouhan, the

³⁵ R. Sreekanthan Nair, *Dynamics of Diplomacy Delayed: India and Israel* (New Delhi: Kalpaaz, 2004), p.158.

³⁶ Ibid., p.158.

³⁷ Nicolas Blarel, *The Evolution of India's Israel Policy: Continuity, Change, and Compromise Since 1922* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2015), p.333.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ *The Times of India*, July 3, 2006.

⁴⁰ Federation of Confederation of Indian Industry, *Background Paper on India-Israel Economic Partnership*, (New Delhi: Federation of Confederation of Indian Industry, July 2013), p.16.

Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh, led a delegation of 16 people to Israel at the invitation of Mr. Shalom Simhon, the Israeli Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development. The Chief Minister was very keen to obtain Israeli assistance for raising farm productivity, seed production, agro processing, and training in Madhya Pradesh.⁴¹

The bilateral trade in agriculture continued to grow between India and Israel. In 2007, Israel based NaanDan partnered with India's Jalgaon based largest micro irrigation firm Jain Irrigation Systems to form NaanDanJain, which provides irrigation solutions to nearly 100 countries.⁴² The major areas of focus in NaanDanJain project include integrated community irrigation, explore renewable solar power, precision agriculture.⁴³ MASHAV⁴⁴ (Israel) and International Crops Research Institute For The Semi-Arid Tropics ICRISAT (India) signed a MoU to promote sustainable agricultural development and research in Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa.⁴⁵ An action plan for bilateral agricultural cooperation for the years 2008 to 2010 was started during Dr. P.K. Mishra's visit to Israel in April 2008.⁴⁶ The Indo-Israel Agriculture Project (IIAP) was subsequently extended for three years in different phases (2009-12, 2012-15, 2015-18, 2018-20) A number of areas were identified for collaboration between India and Israel under this action plan:

- Collaborative Research
- Development techniques such as micro irrigation, input delivery, extension services, wasteland development, horticulture, dairy products and others.
- Mutual visits between India and Israel for training purposes.
- Participation of the private sector
- Higher education in agriculture
- Introduction of crop diversity, increase in productivity, and optimum utilization of water resources.

⁴¹ *Hindustan Times*, January 29, 2007

⁴² Mayuri Mukherjee, "How Israel made friends in India," *The Jerusalem Post*, 30 October, 2018. <https://www.jpost.com/opinion/how-israel-made-friends-in-india-570704>.

⁴³ "Water to Space: India, Israel ink 7 key strategic pacts during Modi visit," *The Business Standard*, 06 July, 2017. https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/water-to-space-india-israel-ink-7-key-strategic-pacts-during-modi-visit-117070501128_1.html

⁴⁴ MASHAV is a Hebrew acronym for Israel's Agency for International Development Cooperation.

⁴⁵ *The Times of India*, February 07, 2008.

⁴⁶ India, Ministry of External Affairs, *Annual Report*, 2008-09 (New Delhi: External Publicity Division of the Ministry of External Affairs), p.50.

- Training and Demonstration etc.

Under this plan, Centres of Excellence (CoE) were established in India with State Governments, MASHAV, Embassy of Israel, MIDH (Mission for Integrated Development for Horticulture) as stakeholders. Replying to a question in Lok Sabha, the then Minister of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Gajendra Singh Shekhawat stated that the, *“The main objective of establishment of these CoEs is to demonstrate technologies, impart training and produce planting material. The Israeli experts travel to these centres and impart hands-on training to field staff and farmers.”*⁴⁷ These centres across the country play an important role in benefitting nearly 1.2 lakh farmers in increasing farm productivity through the adoption of the latest cutting edge agricultural technologies.

⁴⁷ Lok Sabha, Unstarred Question No.2522, January 2, 2018.

State	Centre of Excellence (CoE)
Punjab (3)	• Hoshiarpur (Fruits) • Kartarpur (Vegetables) • Bhatinda (Brackish Water)
Haryana (5)	• Karnal (Vegetables) • Mangiana (Fruits) • Ladwa (Mango) • Ram Nagar (Bee Keeping) • Hisar (Flowers, Animal Husbandry and Milk)
Gujarat (3)	• Vadrad, Sabarkantha (Vegetables) • Bhuj (Date and Banana Palm Post Harvest Management) • Junagadh (Mangoes)
Karnataka (3)	• Dharwad (Vegetables) • Bagalkot (Pomegranate) • Kolar (Mangoes)
Maharashtra (4)	• Dapoli (Mangoes) • Nagpur (Citrus) • Aurangabad (Mangoes) • Rahuri (Pomegranate)
Rajasthan (3)	• Kota (Citrus) • Bassi (Pomegranate) • Jaisalmer (Date Palm)
Tamil Nadu (2)	• Thally (Floriculture) • Dindigul (Vegetables)
Uttar Pradesh (2)	• Kannauj (Vegetables) • Basti (Mangoes)
Andhra Pradesh (1)	• Kuppam (Vegetables)
Telangana (1)	• Jeedimetla (Vegetables and Flowers)
Bihar (2)	• Nalanda (Vegetables)

	• Vaishali (Mangoes and Lichi)
West Bengal (1)	• Hooghly (Vegetables)
Mizoram (1)	• Lunglei (Citrus)

Source: *The Indo-Israeli Agricultural Project, MASHAV (Israel's Agency For International Development Cooperation), Embassy of Israel in India.*

Apart from the above mentioned CoEs, Israel proposes to set up new CoEs in other states, such as Chhindwara (oranges) and Morena (vegetables) in Madhya Pradesh, Sepahijala (vegetables) in Tripura, Guwahati (vegetables) in Assam, Jajpur (fruits and vegetables) in Odisha.

A three-day conference titled, *India-Israel Agriculture: From Project to Policy*, was held from June 19-21, 2019, at the Centre of Excellence (CoE) for vegetables in Dindigul, Tamil Nadu. Speaking at the conference, former Ambassador of Israel, Dr. Ron Malka said, “*The next step in our growing partnership is moving from Project to Policy, expanding from centres of Excellence to areas of Excellence, Horticulture, Agriculture, Aquaculture, Dairy and more, as well as exploring partnerships with the private sector.*”⁴⁸

On May 24, 2021, India and Israel signed a three year agreement (2021-23), taking forward the growing bilateral relationship in agriculture between them. In the words of Dr. Ron Malka, former Ambassador of Israel to India, “*The three-year work program (2021-2023) reflects the strength of our growing partnership and will benefit local farmers both through the Centres of Excellence and the Villages of Excellence.*”⁴⁹ Enhancing the collaboration in agriculture with Tel Aviv, New Delhi also decided that 150 villages located near CoEs will be converted to *Villages of Excellence*. Commemorating India’s Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav (75 years of India’s Independence), 75 villages are being taken up in the first year.⁵⁰ The Indo-Israel Villages of Excellence will be comprised of three main features, which include: (a) modern agriculture

⁴⁸ “India-Israel Agriculture: From Project to Policy,” Consulate General of Mumbai, June 20, 2019.

⁴⁹ “India, Israel sign agreement on agricultural cooperation,” *The Indian Express*, May 25, 2021.
<https://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-israel-sign-agreement-on-agriculture-cooperation-7328840/>

⁵⁰ “India to convert 150 villages into ‘Villages of Excellence’, with technical help from Israel: Tomar”, *The Hindu*, January 28, 2022.
<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/india-to-convert-150-villages-into-villages-of-excellence-with-technical-help-from-israel-tomar/article38339280.ece>

infrastructure (b) capacity building (c) market linkage.⁵¹

Taking new heights in India and Israel collaboration in agriculture in the last decade, many state governments in India partnered with Israel, which helped in increasing tomato yields in Tamil Nadu, growing crops in deserts of Rajasthan, increasing yields of tomato, cucumber, capsicum in Haryana, drip irrigated vegetable nurseries in Gujarat, growing mangoes in parched fields of Maharashtra and others. Undoubtedly, the Israeli technology for farming and water treatment in India brought significant changes in its agricultural landscape. Following are some examples:

- In 2013, Israel based BHC Company assisted the state of Andhra Pradesh in integrated water conservation. The pilot project was introduced in Kuppam constituency in Chittoor district in the state.⁵²
- During the Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi's visit to Israel in 2017, an MoU was signed between Jal Nigam, Government of Uttar Pradesh and Israel aimed at bringing water utility reforms in through the introduction of latest technology in Israel.⁵³ Uttar Pradesh was the first Indian state with which Israel signed a water management agreement. In August 2020, to set up water project in Bundelkhand, Government of Uttar Pradesh and Israel signed an agreement. This project envisaged to offer a solution to water problems in the Bundelkhand region in Uttar Pradesh with three major components include: (i) water conservation (ii) advanced water practices in agriculture (iii) efficient transportation of water.⁵⁴
- In 2018, Israel hosted the former Chief Minister of Gujarat, Vijay Rupani, to strengthen the collaboration with Israel in the agriculture sector. Sixteen MoUs were signed during this visit. Later, in June 2018, Israel and Gujarat constituted a JWG to strengthen ties and boost cooperation in agriculture. Similarly, Tel Aviv also hosted the Chief Minister of Haryana Manohar Lal Khattar delegation accompanied by the Agriculture Ministers of Maharashtra and Uttarakhand along with senior officials from Punjab to participate in AGRITECH conference showcasing latest agricultural technologies in Tel Aviv.⁵⁵

⁵¹ MASHAV, Embassy of Israel in India, 25 June, 2019.

⁵² *The Business Standard*, January 27, 2013

⁵³ Lok Sabha Q &A, Unstarred Question No. 2550.

⁵⁴ "Israel's deal with UP to resolve Bundelkhand water crisis has a 3-pronged solution," *The Hindustan Times*, August 20, 2020.

<https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/israel-signs-deal-to-resolve-bundelkhand-water-crisis-has-a-3-pronged-solution/story-606PQi6jfeZFcxRFcpq4ZM.html>.

⁵⁵ India, Ministry of External Affairs, *Annual Report*, p.114

- In 2018, former Chief Minister of Punjab Amarinder Singh led a delegation to Israel and sought its technological assistance to improve the quality of citrus fruits such as oranges, kinnow in which Punjab state is a leading producer.⁵⁶
- In 2016, Rajasthan's Agriculture Minister Prabhu Lal Saini led a delegation to Israel to seek Israeli technology to increase crop yield, wastewater management, grafting techniques to enhance the life of fruits and vegetables.⁵⁷
- In 2018, an Israeli based agri research firm Degel launched a neurolinguistic programme to teach farmers on how to manage their water consumption. This project was implemented in Mandya and Shivamogga districts in the state of Karnataka.⁵⁸
- In 2020, Tamil Nadu Agricultural University sought Israeli assistance to adopt the latest technologies in the agricultural sector, such as nanotechnology, remote sensing and water management, use of drones for the application of pesticides and fertilizers.⁵⁹
- In recent times, several states such as Haryana and Himachal Pradesh partnered with Israel in the cooperation of floriculture.⁶⁰

As mentioned earlier, deep collaboration in agriculture and water management became the dominant themes in cementing ties between Tel Aviv and New Delhi. During the mutual visit of officials, ministers, heads of state, the strategic partnership in agriculture and water as *central pillars* was prioritized in underlining the critical importance of these sectors in India's ties with Israel. Due to climate change and its disruptive impact on the environment, rapid urbanisation, polluted rivers, population growth, and acute shortage of water in India, it can be greatly benefitted from Israeli expertise and innovation on water management technology with a focus on productivity, and minimizing water consumption, and recycling of water.

⁵⁶ Kanchan Vasudev and Man Aman Singh Chhina, "As Punjab struggles to cope: chief minister flies to Israel," *The Indian Express*, October 22, 2018.

<https://indianexpress.com/article/india/as-punjab-struggles-to-cope-chief-minister-flies-to-israel-5411921/>.

⁵⁷ "Rajasthan seeks Israeli technique to strengthen agricultural sector," *The Economic Times*, May 21, 2016.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/agriculture/rajasthan-seeks-israeli-technique-to-strengthen-agricultural-sector/articleshow/52374754.cms?from=mdr>

⁵⁸ "Israeli firms programme to teach farmers water usage," *The Times of India*, May 23, 2018.

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/bengaluru/israeli-firms-programme-to-teach-farmers-water-usage/article-show/63425068.cms>.

⁵⁹ "Tamil Nadu Agricultural University seeks advanced farm tech from Israel, hosts delegation", *The Times of India*, October 28, 2021.

⁶⁰ 'India-Israel Relations', Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, January 2016.

Israel's remarkable breakthrough in offering technological solutions to water management and farming practices resonates well in addressing India's water woes. Israel is well positioned to meet India's desire for technology in raising its agricultural productivity, food security, water scarcity, and in stimulating a second green revolution.⁶¹ Israel's experience and technological superiority can play a key role in India's flagship programmes *Har Khet Ko Pani* (per drop more crop) embedded in Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchai Yojana, raising the income of small farmers in India and others. As per the industry sources, exports of water saving Israeli technologies exceed 1.5 billion US\$ every year.⁶² Due to the congruence of interests in water management between India and Israel, Dr. Lior Asaf was appointed as Water Attaché to the Embassy of Israel in India.

- During the visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Israel from 4-6 July, 2017, a memorandum of understanding was signed between Tel Aviv and New Delhi to raise awareness campaign on water conservation and for promotion on re-use, recharge, and recycling of water.⁶³
- Israel offered its expertise in *Clean Ganga Mission*, announced by the Government of India in July 2014.⁶⁴ In the words of P. R. Kumaraswamy, "*cleaning the Ganges is larger and more attractive for Israel than any lucrative military contract.*"⁶⁵ For instance, Delhi Government engaged with Israeli firm Ayala Water and Ecology Limited to clean up 8km long polluted stretch of Yamuna river.⁶⁶
- In 2016, Israel was associated as the partner country in the fourth edition of India Water

⁶¹ Manvendra Prasad and Manish Kumar, "India-Israel Ties: New Opportunities," *Deccan Herald*, January 06, 2022. <https://www.deccanherald.com/opinion/in-perspective/india-israel-ties-new-opportunities-1068334.html>.

⁶² "India seeking Israel help for 'tap water to every Indian' by 2024: Minister," *The Business Standard*, November 15, 2019. https://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/india-seeks-israel-s-help-to-ensure-tap-water-to-every-indian-by-2024-119111500870_1.html

⁶³ Manish Chand, "Major strategic turn to India-Israel Relations," *The Pioneer*, 07 July, 2017. <https://www.dailypioneer.com/2017/columnists/major-strategic-turn-to-india-israel-relations.html>

⁶⁴ Smriti Kak Ramachandran, "Israel Offers Help to Clean up Ganga," *The Hindu*, July 19, 2015. <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/Israel-offers-to-help-clean-Ganga/article60190458.ece>

⁶⁵ P. R. Kumaraswamy, "Redefining 'Strategic' Cooperation," *Strategic Analysis* 41 no.4, (July 2017):355-368.

⁶⁶ Ashok Gulati, "Narendra Modi Israeli Visit: Here is What Indian Can Learn from Jewish Country", *The Financial Express*, July 04, 2017. <https://www.financialexpress.com/opinion/narendra-modi-israel-visit-here-is-what-india-can-learn-from-the-jewish-country/746289/>.

Week held from 04-08 April, 2016 under the auspices of the Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation Ministry. A delegation led by Agriculture Minister of Israel Uri Ariel visited India to attend the seminar.⁶⁷

- During the visit of the President of Israel to India from 14-21 November 2016, a MoU on development cooperation and water resources was signed between India and Israel with desalination and recycling of water as one of the main areas of cooperation.⁶⁸ The desalination plants can ameliorate the drinking water problem, especially in coastal habitations. Israel, being a pioneer in water desalination, assisted Indian states in setting up of desalination plants. For instance, Israel based IDE solutions signed a pact with the Government of Tamil Nadu to set up a desalination plant near Chennai,⁶⁹ BMC (Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation) and Israel also inked a pact to set up a water desalination plant near Mumbai to increase water supply in the city.⁷⁰
- In 2018, during Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu's visit, to Mumbai, Israel's Mekorot (the national water company of Israel) signed a MoU with Maharashtra Jeevan Pradhikaran (MJP) to design a water grid system for drought hit Marathwada.⁷¹ In this official visit by Israeli Prime Minister, India's Tata Industries signed a MoU with Israeli Watergen to solve India's drinking water problem.⁷²

⁶⁷ "Israel to partner with India in water management, confirms envoy Cameron," *First Post*, March 30, 2016. <https://www.firstpost.com/world/israel-to-partner-with-india-in-water-management-confirms-envoy-carmon-2703758.html>

⁶⁸ "India, Israel Sign MoU on Water Management, Desalination: Govt", *The New Indian Express*, November 24, 2016. <https://www.newindianexpress.com/nation/2016/nov/24/india-israel-sign-mou-on-water-management-desalination-govt-1542226.html>.

⁶⁹ "Israel collaboration ensures drinking water to water starved Chennai," *The Business Standard*, July 04, 2017. https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/israeli-collaboration-ensures-drinking-water-to-water-starved-chennai-117070401049_1.html

⁷⁰ "BMC, Israeli co ink pact for Maharashtra's first desalination plant," *The Times of India*, June 29, 2021. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/mumbai/mumbai-bmc-israeli-co-ink-pact-for-states-first-desalination-plant/articleshow/83937808.cms>

⁷¹ "Maharashtra join hands with Israel for drought free Marathwada," *The Indian Express*, February 22, 2018. <https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/mumbai/maharashtra-israel-agreement-drought-free-marathwada-water-mekorot-5073556/>

⁷² "India seeking Israel help for tap water to every India by 2024: Minister," *The Business Standard*, November 15, 2019. https://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/india-seeks-israel-s-help-to-ensure-tap-water-to-every-india-117070401049_1.html

- From ramparts of Red Fort, Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi, on India's Independence Day on August 15, 2019, announced *Jal Jeevan Mission*, (a scheme by the Government of India to provide piped drinking water to every household by 2024). Israel being an ideal partner to aid India's efforts in order to ease chronic water scarcity in rural India, Jal Shakti Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat led an Indian delegation to Israel to achieve the goal of water sustainability. During the visit, the minister took part in WATEC (Water Technology and Environmental Control Conference and Exhibition). Addressing a conference on 'India-Israel Strategic Partnership on Water', he said, *"Let's innovate together deflect a little from conventional thinking, and help each other to fight against all odds. Let's come together to create a synergy for saving life, saving water, and in turn saving the planet."*⁷³

The assistance offered by Israel can bring a massive change in water infrastructure in India, such as with the successful implementation of Israeli technologies in sprinkler and drip irrigation, rain water harvesting etc in India. As India witnesses the alarming dip in ground water levels especially in agrarian states such as Punjab and Haryana, Israeli technology can immensely alleviate this problem to a great extent. Israel's water recycling technology can greatly help Indian farmers, given the fact that India depends heavily on seasonal monsoons for agriculture.

Innovation, Science and Technology : From Cooperation to Collaboration

Beyond the realms of agriculture and water management cooperation, collaboration in science and technology emerged as a central avenue in the Indo-Israel bilateral relationship. In 1993, during the visit of the Israeli Foreign Minister, Shimon Peres, joint research by S&T institutions, academies of science, research institutes, higher education institutions, and scientific communities under a S&T cooperation agreement was signed between the two states.⁷⁴ Under the above signed agreement, a joint committee was also constituted to monitor the programmes and the same is supposed to meet once in every two years.⁷⁵

[an-by-2024-119111500870_1.html](#)

⁷³ "India calls upon Israel to innovate together for saving water", *The Times of India*, November 18, 2019. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/india-calls-upon-israel-to-innovate-together-for-saving-water/articleshow/72112604.cms>.

⁷⁴ 'India-Israel Relations', Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, January 2016.

⁷⁵ A.K. Raju, "Shamir for Better Ties with India", *The Statesman*, New Delhi March 22, 1992.

In September 1993, specific areas of cooperation were identified, such as biotechnology, electro optics, information technology, lasers and others. India and Israel established a \$3 million corpus fund in November 1994 during the visit of the Israeli Minister for Communication, Science, and Technology, Shulamit Aloni, to encourage research endeavours from both sides.⁷⁶

Researchers from India attended the joint working committee meeting and a symposium on advanced materials that were held in Israel in July 1996. Subsequently, in March 1997, Israeli researchers attended a seminar on biotechnology held in New Delhi. As per the deliberations in a joint committee meeting held in 1997, the mutual visits by researchers from both states facilitated the exchange of ideas for joint R&D projects.⁷⁷ In 1999, the Governments of India and Israel evoked great enthusiasm in research on the *Human genome*, due to which a series of initiatives were jointly taken up by both the states.

The two nations expanded their cooperation in the field of science and technology through the organization of joint seminars/conferences, workshops, and exchange of scientists/researchers. In 1998, Israel hosted the first-ever binational conference on genetics and work on the human genome. Israel hosted six Indian scholars in this conference. Later, a bilateral symposium on *Condensed Matter and Material Physics* was held in New Delhi. India hosted over 20 Israeli scientists in this conference.⁷⁸

The growing S&T cooperation on the tapestry of bilateral relations between India and Israel was given further impetus in the sharing of technology. Israel based multinational company **Tahal** Consulting Engineers Ltd., signed a deal with Indian partners in diverse fields such as agro-industries, desalination, engineering, managing groundwater, and stopping desertification. This company was crucial in the construction of Israel's infrastructure for agricultural and water management, as was mentioned previously in the chapter. Similarly, Israel's major electronic industry **Tadiran**, also assisted India in the transfer of technology.⁷⁹

The two countries have also involved higher education institutions, and research institutes to expand their cooperation in S&T. For instance, an agreement for ongoing

⁷⁶ R. Sreekanthan Nair, *Dynamics of Diplomacy Delayed: India and Israel* (New Delhi: Kalpaaz, 2004), p.160.

⁷⁷ Ibid., p.160.

⁷⁸ Embassy of Israel in India, New Delhi, "Indo-Israeli Cooperation in Science", 1999, p.3.

⁷⁹ R. Sreekanthan Nair, *Dynamics of Diplomacy Delayed: India and Israel* (New Delhi: Kalpaaz, 2004), p.161.

collaboration in the sphere of science and technology was inked between the Israeli National Academy of Science and Humanities and the Indian Science Academy. Discussions in the area of solar energy have been held in order to address the expanding energy needs in India. The significant outcomes included; emulating the Israeli model for the operationalization of Indian solar energy, cooperative research and development with the Weizman Institute on a project to turn solar energy into steam and refine petrochemicals.⁸⁰

In November 1999, the fourth Indo-Israel joint committee meeting was held in Jerusalem to explore the possibilities for further enhancement of S&T cooperation. Four proposals for collaborative research projects in the realm of human genome research were finalised during the meeting.⁸¹ In the subsequent years, India and Israel reaffirmed their commitment to strengthen S&T cooperation between the two states without any hindrance.

Shimon Peres, Israel's deputy prime minister and foreign minister, travelled to India in January 2002 to take part in the Bengaluru-based CII Partnership Summit. During his visit to India, he held negotiations with various ministries in the Government of India to expand S&T cooperation between Tel Aviv and New Delhi. His visit was followed by India's Communications and Information Technology (IT) Minister, Pramod Mahajan visit to Israel. During the meeting, Pramod Mahajan (India) and Reuven Rivlin (Israel) signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to advance bilateral trade in the areas of electronics and information technology.⁸²

To give a major push to the growing S&T cooperation between India and Israel, former Israel's Minister for Science and Technology, visited New Delhi to enhance the investment to \$ 1 million from the existing \$0.5 million under the ongoing scientific collaboration between the two nations. He mentioned Israel was particularly interested in synergising its scientific research with India due to the latter talented and skilled pool of scientists and technologists.⁸³

Kapil Sibal, the Minister of State (MoS) for Science and Technology of India, visited Israel in May 2005 and held discussions with Ehud Olmert, the Vice-Prime Minister of Israel. The two leaders discussed the need to take forward the S&T cooperation between Tel Aviv and New Delhi in the mutual interests of both states.

⁸⁰ Ibid.,p.161.

⁸¹ India's Foreign Relations- Israel, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India.

⁸² "India, Israel sign MoU to boost IT cooperation," *The Times of India*, January 22, 2022.

⁸³ Sunderarajan, P. "Israel plans thrust on science and technology collaboration," *The Hindu*, December, 2003.

During this visit, an MoU was signed between India and Israel for setting up a joint R&D Fund (India-Israel Industrial Research and Development Cooperation Initiative), otherwise known as i4RD. Under this mechanism, two sides would contribute \$1 million each to fund joint research in the industry involving at least one Israeli and Indian company. India and Israel agreed to expand S&T cooperation in other areas such as aeronautics, biotechnology, space and others.⁸⁴ This framework is jointly implemented under the auspices of the Global Innovation and Technology Alliance (GITA), Department of Science and Technology, Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and MATIMOP, Israeli Industry Centre for R&D.⁸⁵

The Karnataka Science and Technology Promotion Society and the Karnataka State Council for Science and Technology inked a Memorandum of Understanding with Israel's MATIMOP in May 2013 for cooperation in industrial, technological research and development.⁸⁶ In April 2015, former Chief Minister of Maharashtra, Devendra Fadnavis met the officials of MATIMOP and discussed the opportunities for collaboration between Government of Maharashtra and Israel. Other states, such as Gujarat and Rajasthan are also discussing similar programmes with MATIMOP.⁸⁷

Ramot, Tel Aviv University's technology transfer company and India-based Tata Industries inked a Memorandum of Understanding to fund and develop inventions that are suitable for commercialization. Under the agreement, with an investment of \$5 million, In Ramot's \$20 million US Technology Innovation Momentum Fund, Tatas assumed the role of lead investor. Tatas also contributed to a fund for Internet of Things (IoT) innovations set up by Tel Aviv University.⁸⁸

In July 2017, during the visit of Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi to Israel, a MoU was signed between Tel Aviv and New Delhi by The Department of Science and Technology, Government of India, and the National Authority for Technological Innovation, Government of Israel jointly administer the India-Israel R&D and Innovation Fund (I4F). This agreement laid the foundations for further expansion of the growing India-Israel *economic partnership*. Both states decided to make an annual contribution of \$4 million

⁸⁴ "Israel-India-Commercial and Economic Relations," Israel Trade & Economic Office- Embassy of Israel, India.

⁸⁵ 'India-Israel Relations', Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, January 2013.

⁸⁶ "Karnataka, Israel sign MoU," *The Hindu*, 08 May, 2013.

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/karnataka/karnataka-israel-sign-mou/article4693017.ece>

⁸⁷ Briefs on Foreign Relations-Israel, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, 2013.

⁸⁸ "Tata, Tel Aviv University join hands to fund tech innovations", *The Financial Express*, 29 April, 2013.

each for the next five years (2017-22). The focus areas identified under I4F include: (a) agriculture (b) energy (c) healthcare (d) information and communication technology (ICT). This fund provides Indian and Israeli companies in enabling commercialization of innovation technologies, undertaking joint R&D projects and others. This project so far funded eleven R&D projects.⁸⁹

In September 2020, Israel's Start Up Nation Central signed a MoU with India based International Centre for Entrepreneurship and Technology (iCREATE). The campus of iCREATE was established in 2012 during the tenure of Narendra Modi as Chief Minister of Gujarat. This agreement between India and Israel is an important milestone to accelerate the collaboration in innovations and technology between start-ups and corporates from both countries.⁹⁰ Start-ups and businesses seek to develop cutting-edge technology to meet the most urgent requirements in India and the rest of the globe in the interests of both countries.

Due to the growth in diplomatic relations by transcending conventional strategic and defence ties between New Delhi and Tel Aviv, Israel emerged as an attractive partner in leading the baton of start-up ecosystem in India. The deepening relationship between India and Israel in the innovation ecosystem is a mutual necessity for both countries. India's domestic market, its vast talent pool and Israel's technological capability augurs well for both market economies. In the words of R. Chandrasekhar, President, NASSCOM, *"the combine power of these two nations around the globe by uniting their strengths across three areas: talent, technology, and temperament."*⁹¹ Israeli innovation ecosystem helps in tapping the potential opportunities of India's manufacturing and services sector, along with its huge software base. The synergetic Indo-Israel cooperation in the field of S&T can also lead to joint export to third countries.

With innovation and technology emerging as one of the main drivers in international relations, the joint collaboration between India and Israel can carve out multilateral cooperation with like-minded countries in global politics in shaping the

⁸⁹ "India, Israel launch tech fund to further business ties," *The Business Standard*, January 16, 2018. https://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/india-israel-launch-tech-fund-to-further-business-ties-117070600091_1.html.

⁹⁰ "India, Israel sign pact to collaborate in tech innovation," *Hindustan Times*, September 22, 2020. <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/india-israel-sign-pact-to-collaborate-in-tech-innovation/story-N1rDdZ2JBocCSRYDIymo9O.html>

⁹¹ "Collaborative Innovation: The Vehicle Driving Indo-Israel Prosperity," NASSCOM Report, 2017, p.6.

world order. Examples include, (i) India, Israel, United States of America (USA), three leading innovative technology hubs began their trilateral cooperation in 5G communication network,⁹² (ii) India, Israel, and United Arab Emirates (UAE) triangle can inevitably bring a significant cutting edge technology and capital for West Asia. (iii) The quadrilateral grouping of USA, India, Israel, and UAE can explore the technology dimension for collaboration.

The S&T cooperation between India and Israel reached yet another zenith when both countries forged ahead to intensify their cooperation in space. Tel Aviv and New Delhi space cooperation have come a long way since the early 2000s. To enhance cooperation in the space sector, Israel and India signed various agreements in the field of space to learn from each other's experience. For instance, on October 28, 2002, India's Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and Israel's Space Agency for Cooperation on Peaceful Uses of Outer Space signed a MoU in Bengaluru on space cooperation.⁹³ ISRO was also involved in launching of Israeli satellites into orbit by India's satellite launcher vehicles (PSLV and GSLV).

In 2003, Israel and India agreed to incorporate the Ultra Violet Experiment, TAUVEEX from Tel Aviv University, on board in India's GSAT-4 satellite launch by ISRO's Geo-Synchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV) in December 2005. To this effect, India and Israel signed a MoU, when the former chief of ISRO K. Kasturirangan visited Israel.⁹⁴ Likewise, during the visit of Israel's Science and Technology Minister to India, Tel Aviv expressed its enthusiasm to participate in India's moon mission, Chandrayaan-I.⁹⁵

In 2008, India's ISRO launched Israeli reconnaissance satellite TechSAR embedded in its satellite launching vehicle PSLV. The TechSAR surveillance satellite was launched under a commercial contract by Israel with the Bangalore based Antrix Corp. In 2009, Israel assisted India's launch of microwave imaging satellite RISAT-2. ISRO and IAI kept launch under the wraps because of the possible geopolitical fallout. India procured this satellite from Israel which was indigenously developed by Tel Aviv

⁹² "India, Israel, US collaborating in 5G Tech: Official," *The Economic Times*, September 08, 2020. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/business/international-business/india-us-israel-collaborating-in-5g-tech-official/articleshow/77989007.cms>.

⁹³ Amnon Barzilai, "Israel, India Sign Agreement on Space Research Cooperation," *Haaretz*, November 3, 2002

⁹⁴ "ISRO to Launch Israel's Scientific Instrument," Department of Space. Indian Space Research Organisation, Government of India, December 25, 2003

⁹⁵ *The Financial Express*, December 25, 2003.

without any assistance from USA.⁹⁶ In the words of Science journalist, R. Ramachandran,

“An inclined orbit of 410 becomes strategically important for both countries because of their fortuitous relative geographic locations. As can be seen from an atlas, this region covers the areas of strategic interest for both countries the entire West Asia region for Israel, and Pakistan and China, except for a part of its north, for India.”⁹⁷

In February 2017, BGUSAT (Ben Gurion University SATellite), a nanosatellite was successfully launched by ISRO.⁹⁸ A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for cooperation in three areas—atomic clocks, GEO-LEO (Geostationary Earth Orbit-Low Earth Orbit) optical link, academic cooperation, and electric propulsion for small satellites—was signed between India and Israel’s space agencies during Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi’s official visit to Israel in 2017.⁹⁹ Similarly, during Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s visit to India in January 2018, a space exploration agreement was signed between Haifa’s Technion Israel Institute of Technology and Kerala based Indian Institute of Space Science and Technology under the auspices of India’s Science Ministry. As per ISRO’s Annual Report 2020, “*it is proposed to fly ISA’s EPS in ISRO’s small satellite.*”¹⁰⁰ Taking space ties to new heights, India and Israel agreed to launch 75 student built nano satellites into orbit by August 2022 to celebrate India’s seventy fifth anniversary of independence. The momentum of the bilateral space cooperation was reinforced with continued high level engagements from both the states.

As discussed above, in the wake of heightened diplomatic relations in January 1992, India and Israel witnessed sustained momentum in expanding the trade ties between them. The following reasons have been identified for this mutually beneficial economic partnership between Tel Aviv and New Delhi:

⁹⁶ Radhakrishna Rao, “An Indo-Israeli Handshake in Space,” *Institute for Peace and Conflict Studies*, May 18, 2009.

⁹⁷ R. Ramachandran, “Tango with Israel,” *The Frontline*, May 22, 2009.

⁹⁸ Shoshanna Solomon, “First Israeli research nanosatellite launches from India,” *The Times of Israel*, 15 February, 2017. <https://www.timesofisrael.com/first-israeli-research-nanosatellite-launches-from-india/>.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Indian Space Research Organisation, *Annual Report 2020*, p.92.

- First, Israel's domestic market's limited size is a constraint in Israel's economic development, and it requires export markets. The huge size of the Indian market (1.4 billion population) and burgeoning middle class (400 million) offers immense opportunities for Israeli exports and entrepreneurs in driving its economic growth.
- Second, the complementary strengths of India and Israel provide an excellent opportunity for collaboration in various sectors such as agriculture, biotechnology, defence, space, and others. The joint ventures by companies from India and Israel can lead to the modernization and strengthening of the Indian economy. For instance, India as a leader in information technology services, need Israel's technology to provide competitive edge to its products in domestic and international markets. Israel can also assist India's flagship programme *Digital India* as New Delhi aims to transcend the existing digital divide and expand its digital outreach through optical fibre connectivity, increase in digital cash transactions etc. India's largest insurance industry can also be benefitted by the Israeli technology.
- Third, cooperation with Indian companies can facilitate Israel's access to markets in Southeast Asia with whom India shares significant economic ties. Similarly, Israel can also facilitate the access of Indian goods to markets with other countries such as the United States of America (USA) and the European Union. A potential quadrilateral (US, UAE, India, and Israel) and multilateral (India, Israel, Japan, USA, UK) cooperation can truly help this economic relationship soar to new heights.
- Fourth, India's workforce (skilled and unskilled), with a very vast working population, can offer huge opportunities for the Israeli innovation ecosystem. Indian software companies and start-ups can extend their skills to Israeli counterparts and blend it with their technology. This move can help in developing NextGen Tech jointly by India and Israel. In the words of Manish Kumar, "Israel can help India in managing its health services systems as India aims to take up a digital health revolution, With assistance from Israel, it can obtain artificial intelligence, telemedicine, required for its population."¹⁰¹
- Fifth, rural India, which has a socio-political dimension attached to it, can learn

¹⁰¹ Personal Interview, Mr. Manish Kumar, Deputy Director, International Division, Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), *Phone Call*, 21 May 2022.

a lot from Israel based agricultural cooperatives such as Kibbutz and Mashav. Simultaneously, Israel can emulate the Indian model of women based self-help groups (SHGs) in the rural hinterland of India. The institutional mechanisms of these collectives can truly transform the development journey at the grassroots level in both societies

Israel-India Collaborations

Israel	India	Benefits
RADA Electronic Industries	Alpha Design Technologies	To market, manufacture, sell and support RADA's radars in India. This collaboration caters to the India's air force and defence protection.
Aqwise	Triveni Engineering	Offering solutions to Water and wastewater management in India.
Metzerplas	Skipper Ltd.	To provide drip irrigation facilities in India.
RAD Data Communications Ltd	Tejas Networks Ltd	To provide optical networking systems.
NASSCOM	Accenture	Joint product development, knowledge transfer, and in the creation of hardware ecosystem.
Elbit Systems C4I & Cyber	Alpha Design Technologies	Involves upgrading of 90 Mi-17 helicopters.
Airfence Solutions	DSE Technologies	To manufacture drones system and devices.
PlantarcBio Limited	Rallis India Limited	Development of drought tolerant corn (maize)
Rammot, Tel Aviv University	TATA Industries	To set up IoT (Internet of Things) incubator in Israel

Taro Pharmaceuticals	Sun Pharma	Acquisition of Taro Pharmaceuticals by Sun Pharma to expand Taro's presence in USA, Israel and Canada
Upstream Commerce	Flipkart	to provide services like real-time pricing and information on product assortment to Flipkart's seller base.
Zebra Medical Vision	Medsynaptic Pvt Ltd	AI (Artificial Intelligence) will be used to provide care to patients of India's Apollo Hospitals health system
Sanoculis	Appasamy Ocular Devices	Affordable technology solution for treatment of glaucoma in India.
Bacsoft	Energy Efficiency Services Ltd	Through the development and use of IoT devices, villages in India can use less water and electricity.
Ubiqam Ltd	Frog Cellsat Limited	to create mobile solutions for the Indian cellular market that will aid in reducing network interference and enhancing network quality.
AgroSolar Irrigation Systems Ltd	Vyoda Pvt Ltd	To develop cost-effective, efficient, and suitable for any type of well solar-powered water pump systems for irrigation, as well as to boost electricity generation and reduce maintenance costs.

Source: Newspapers (*The Economic Times, The Financial Express, The Business Standard*)

India-Israel Trade Statistics 1992-2022 (In millions of US \$)

Year	India's Export	Israel's Export	Total Bilateral Trade
1992	74	127	201
1993	125	195	320
1994	141	338	479
1995	185	279	464
1996	220	312	532
1997	281	367	648
1998	355	335	663
1999	464	536	950
2000	479	613	1099
2001	390	504	894
2002	583	614	1197
2003	702	720	1422
2004	923	1036	1959
2005	1162	1224	2386
2006	1303	1270	2573
2007	1536	1613	3149
2008	1480	2361	3841
2009	1609	1825	3434
2010	2810	2890	5700
2011	3759	2998	6757
2012	3815	2509	6324
2013	3832	2272	6104
2014	3584	2285	5869
2015	2925	2263	5188
2016	2913	2399	5312
2017	3265	1926	5191
2018	3786	2105	5892
2019	3605	1984	5589

2020	2634	1542	4176
2021	4378	2741	7119

Source: *Direction of Trade Statistics (Washington, DC: International Monetary Fund)*

After India and Israel normalized ties in 1992, bilateral trade expanded from a meagre US\$ 200 million in 1992 to US\$ 6.35 billion (excluding defence) in 2021–2022, with the balance of trade favouring New Delhi.¹⁰² India became Israel’s third-largest trading partner in Asia and its seventh-largest commercial partner worldwide.¹⁰³ In the initial years of economic partnership, from the Israeli side the exports were mostly confined to non-industrial rough diamonds, precious metals and few organic chemicals. These items constituted nearly 63% of India’s import to Israel.¹⁰⁴ One of the significant reasons for this major share of diamonds in Israel’s exports to India also is that it is one of the world’s largest centre for diamond cutting and polishing. One-fourth of Israel’s exports to the world constitutes of diamonds.

Similarly, India’s exports to Israel mainly included polished or worked diamonds, cotton yarn. These items accounted for approximately 76% of India’s exports to Israel. In spite of the diversification of trade between New Delhi and Tel Aviv in other sectors such as agriculture, IT, pharmaceuticals, telecom, textiles etc., about 56.4% of the bilateral trade in 2011 consisted of diamonds. While there has been growing economic cooperation in other sectors in recent times, India remained a *focus* country for Israel. Both the trading partners continue the negotiations for an FTA (Free Trade Agreement) which can significantly alter the existing economic cooperation in various sectors. In the words of Alon Ushpiz, former Israel’s Ambassador to India, “*The FTA would lead to two other significant advantages of promoting interaction between the private sector of the two countries and also enable the work force of both the nations to work together to ‘invent, produce and market’ things together in areas that are not traditionally covered.*”¹⁰⁵

Both countries aim to conclude the negotiations of FTA over the past 14 years by mid-2022. In the mutual interests of both countries, the FTA can boost the trade multifold between New Delhi and Tel Aviv can unleash the potential to change the composition of trade through harnessing opportunities in various sectors such as IT, biotechnology, energy, etc. Until now,

¹⁰² “India-Israel Economic and Commercial Relations,” Embassy of India, Tel Aviv, Israel.

¹⁰³ *The Jerusalem Post*, October 17, 2021.

¹⁰⁴ R. Sreekanthan Nair, *Dynamics of Diplomacy Delayed: India and Israel* (New Delhi: Kalpaaz, 2004), p.147.

¹⁰⁵ *The Economic Times*, June 26, 2013.

despite the robust economic ties (including merger, acquisition, collaboration) between India and Israel, FDI (Foreign Direct Investment) is significantly low.

As per the latest figures, Cumulative FDI from India to Israel as on December 2021 was US \$ 124.96 million, Israel's FDI into India was US\$ 263.82 million.¹⁰⁶ There is a huge scope for the expansion of FDI in both the states who can explore the lucrative investment opportunities in mobility, health, food tech, sustainability technologies. Due to the easing of restrictions in FDI policy and tax benefits in India which otherwise was a constraining factor for investment by Israeli companies in India, Tel Aviv can certainly look for the joint collaboration in various areas such as defence, start ups etc. under the new liberalised FDI regulations. Similarly, India can also invest in Israeli start ups which augurs well for both the states as the innovation ecosystem can soar to new heights.

The next chapter will focus on entirely new dimension of India and Israel relations in the post-Cold War period i.e., flourishing inter societal interactions between the two democracies.

¹⁰⁶ Annual Report 2020-21, Reserve Bank of India.

Chapter 7

India And Israel : Enriching Societal Interactions

The civil society landscape often acts as an important factor in the making of foreign policy. This element has immense potential, which can act as a catalyst in transforming bilateral ties with any state in global politics. As any two democracies engage with each other, the robust participation of civil society organizations can accelerate the bilateral engagement on various platforms.¹

The post-Cold War witnessed significant political and economic changes in international politics and the participation of non-state civic actors throughout the world. Various factors can be attributed to this phenomenon: (1) the expansion of democracy across the globe (2) the expanding interconnectedness which led to the advent of the communications revolution (3) the effects of globalization facilitated the transnational and multinational civic activity (4) the greater spread of education and awareness among the general populace.²

Due to the changes in global diplomatic, economic and political scenario, the above-mentioned factors played a pivotal role in bringing forward the idea of civil society to the centre-stage of foreign policy. These factors profoundly played an important role on *traditional diplomacy* in several ways, which include:

First, the bilateral relationship between any two states was no longer confined to the state organs. Diplomacy became increasingly multi-channel through the growth of various civil society organizations. Though the state remained the sole facilitator and implementer of foreign policy in formal terms, the contribution or influence of multiple channels cannot be ignored. The decision-making by the state in its foreign policy was no longer concentrated by a few bodies.

Second, the concept of security was broadened in addressing the concerns of

¹ Jon Temin. "Civil Society Should Be at the Center of Foreign Policy," *Lawfare*, March 01, 2021, <https://www.lawfareblog.com/civil-society-should-be-center-foreign-policy>.

² Mor Mitrani, "Global Civil Society and International Society: Compete or Complete," *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* 38, no.2 (May 2013):172.

citizens. The challenge of addressing non-traditional security issues required giving space to new actors within the realm of governance and fostering cooperation with non-governmental organizations to confront global problems on the world stage.

Third, transparency and accountability became very important due to the growing participation of various civil society groups. The persuasion and mobilization of public opinion on foreign policy issues both at home and abroad became significant in the diplomatic maneuvering of the states.³ In the words of David Hoffman, “Freedom of speech and exchange of information are not just luxuries; they are the currency on which global commerce, politics and culture increasingly depend.”⁴

In essence, traditional diplomacy has undergone a major transformation due to the changes altering the global landscape. Civil society, through its interwoven networks of social interactions, transcends the defined boundaries like states to become more participatory and inclusive. To be more precise, diplomacy has moved away from being secretive to more open and from emphasizing hard power to relying more and more on soft power.

Against this background, Indian and Jewish civilizations have shared historical links and strong cultural affinities since ancient times. The P2P contacts between India and Israel encompass a wide base which includes: the diaspora, entrepreneurs, farmers, students, scientists, tourists, and non-government organizations.⁵ Born as democracies at the time of their independence with diverse populations, the social, cultural, political interactions between the two bolstered the relationship beyond state-to-state contacts.

Apart from the transactional ties between India and Israel strategic partnership, the element of civil society contacts and its role in harnessing the partnership between Tel Aviv and New Delhi has not been explored adequately as a significant dimension, which is now emerging as a major factor in evolving Indo-Israel ties.⁶ Unlike most West Asian nations which are authoritarian states, Israel is the only democratic country in the region which enables the two countries to deepen and broaden their relationship

³ Prithvi Ram Mudiam, Public Diplomacy and India-Australia Relations: A Potential Game-Changer?, in *Enriched Relations Public Diplomacy in Australian-Indian Relations*, (ed), David Lowe, Amit Sarwal, p. 32-33

⁴ David Hoffman, “Beyond Public Diplomacy,” *Foreign Affairs* 81, no.2 (March-April 2002):95.

⁵ Kobbi Shoshani, “India-Israel relations: From the past into the future,” *The Free Press Journal*, January 29, 2022.

<https://www.freepressjournal.in/analysis/from-the-past-into-the-future-writes-consul-general-of-israel-in-mumbai-kobbi-shoshani>.

⁶ Maina Chawla Singh, “Indians and Israelis: Beyond Strategic Partnerships,” *Israel Studies* 17, no.3, (Fall, 2012):23.

further.

Indian Jews: Historical Context and Linkages

Indian and Jewish cultures have interacted with one another for a very long time, dating back to the Talmudic and Biblical times. Thousands of Jews settled in India during exile over two thousand years ago. Judaism is India's oldest foreign religion. Unlike in many other parts of the world, ever since Jews migrated to India, they were allowed to practice their religion freely without anti-semitism. India has the fourth largest Asian Jewish community after Israel, Iran, and the Central Asian region of the former Soviet Union. From the Himalayas to Deccan, from the Bay of Bengal to the Arabian Sea, a well-integrated tiny Jewish community settled and flourished in India. Jews in India lived peacefully and in harmony with the Hindu and Muslim communities, and were able to preserve their customs in a multi-cultural Indian society. The Jewish community in India comprised three types of Jews – Bene Israeli, Baghdadi Jews and Cochin Jews. There is a small minority of Jews in Manipur called Bene Menashe Jews.

Though it was a minuscule minority in terms of population, the contribution of Jews to Indian society, economy, literature, and polity was multifold. Some prominent names include: Lt Gen J.F.R. Jacob, an army man of India's Jewish origin who served in the Indian Army's Eastern Command and negotiated with Pakistan during the Indo-Pakistan war in 1971. Leela Samson, a famous Bharatanatyam danseuse, Nissim Ezekiel, an Indian Jewish poet, and playwright, who contributed to India's post-colonial literary history, Ruth Praver Jhabvala, an eminent short story writer and novelist, to name a few.

From the early 20th century onwards, vast literature (fictional and non-fictional texts) were published in India about Jewish communities and their contribution in English and Indian languages. In 1939, a well-known Marathi writer, Vishram Bedekar, wrote a novel *Ranangan* on the problems faced by Jewish immigrants to India.⁷ Other works in the Marathi language include, *Gul and Sanobar* by Bahais Joseph Talkar, M.D. Talkars's work titled *Bagh O Bahar* and others. After the partition of the sub-continent in 1947, Indian language Urdu writer, Sadat Hasan Manto, wrote the novel *Mozelle*, about a Jewish girl and her life in Bombay (now Mumbai) in the 1940s.

In 2013, the only Hindi language Indian Jewish writer, Sheela Rohekar's work,

⁷ Rajendra Dengle, "Ranangan or Response in Marathi Literature to the Theme of Jewish Emigration," *Jewish Exile in India 1933-1945*, ed. Anil Bhatti and Johannes H. Voigt, (New Delhi, Manohar-Max Mueller Bhavan, 1999): 172-185.

Miss Samuel: Ek Yahudi Gatha, narrates the story of India's Bene Israel Jewish community. Another famous novel by Meera Mahadevan, originally written in Hindi in 1961 under the title, *Apna Ghar*, later translated into English in 1971 as *Shulamith*, exemplifies the story of a Jewish woman in India. Nissim Ezekiel's poetry *A Night of the Scorpion* is widely popular among Indian readers. Other Indian-born Jewish writers contributed significantly to the literature, such as Jael Saliman's *The Man with Many Hats*, Esther David, a Bene Israeli Jew, and published works, such as *The Walled City*, translated in Gujarati later. She won India's highest literary honor Sahitya Akademi Award for English literature, in 2010 for her debut novel, *The Book of Rachel*.

Several mainstream authors across India wrote many short stories, and novels (including fiction and non-fiction) with Jews as a central theme in their works. Such works include: *Baumgartner's Bombay* by Anita Desai, *Two Lives*, by Vikram Seth, *In An Antique Land*, by Amitav Ghosh and others. The multi-faceted dimensions of Jews by Indian authors continue to remain unexplored and have not received widespread attention in our literature. The historical and contemporary presence of various ancient Jewish communities in India and their contribution to Indian society need to be thoroughly documented to discover each other's culture and history.

In deciphering the P2P contacts in the Indo-Israel relationship, the Jewish groups played a vital role in strengthening this bilateral engagement. All these groups of the Indian Jewish community in Israel acted as an important link in consolidating the ties between Tel Aviv and New Delhi. All these Jewish groups are neither united nor homogenous in their identity. They spoke a different language, and observed their traditions.⁸ The absorption of Indian Jews into Israeli society was also challenging which has not tapped into its full potential yet.⁹

- First, in the 18th century, Jews began to migrate to Mumbai, Pune, and Thane (the western coast of India). This **Bene Israel** Jewish group is the largest of the five Jewish communities in India. During the British administration in India, they were associated with oil pressing, and later served as high-ranking officers in the

⁸ Oshrit Birvadker, "Between East and the Middle East: The Integration Story of the Indian Jewish Community in Israel," *The Jerusalem Strategic Tribune*, December 2021.

<https://jstribune.com/indian-jewish-community-israel/>

⁹ Mansheetal Singh, "Israel's absorption of Bnei Menashe Jews from India," *Observer Research Foundation*, 30 January, 2020.

<https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/israels-absorption-of-bene-menasseh-jews-from-india-60895/>

Bombay army.¹⁰ Before the partition, they mostly lived in Sindh, Punjab, and Pathan areas also.

- Second, in the aftermath of the destruction of the Second Temple at Jerusalem around 70 AD (or CE), **Jews of Cochin** arrived in the Malabar region of present-day Kerala (southwestern India). They were mostly involved in international trade, and most importantly, women played a significant role in this Jewish community.¹¹ They settled as traders in India. Cochin Jews comprised Malabari and Paradesi (of West Asian and European descent). They lived in various towns in Kerala, such as Chendamangalam, Mattancherry, and Perur.¹² After they migrated to Israel, they set up a Cochin Cultural Heritage Centre for the preservation of the spiritual culture and heritage of Cochin Jewry. During Narendra Modi's visit to Israel, he gifted a *Sefer Torah*,¹³ to Benjamin Netanyahu, Prime Minister of Israel.
- Third, the **Baghdadi Jews**, who identified themselves mostly with European origins and culture, moved to Mumbai and Kolkata in India. They are identified as the late-comers to India in the 18th century¹⁴ by escaping pogroms in Iraq, Iran, Syria, and Yemen. They established their business eastwards from India to Shanghai.¹⁵ A jewel trader named; Shalom Cohen was the first Jew to migrate to Kolkata. An influential businessman named, Shaikh David Sassoon dominated the import-export trade, real estate, and textiles. He was a philanthropist and built several schools, hospitals, synagogues, and charitable institutions.¹⁶ Another prominent Baghdadi Jew, Nahoum Israel, started an

¹⁰ Yulia Egorova, *Jews and India: Perceptions and Image*, (New York: Routledge, 2006), p.81-82.

¹¹ Ibid., p.83.

¹² "Jews who lived in Kerala but left for Israel ensure their heritage lives on", *The Business Standard*, 12 April 2019. https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/jews-who-lived-in-kerala-but-left-for-israel-ensure-their-heritage-lives-on-119041201250_1.html.

¹³ A hand written prayer scroll, dating back to 1908-9, from 450-year-old Paradesi Synagogue, which is a UNESCO Heritage Site located in Mattancherry, Kochi, Kerala.

¹⁴ Benjamin Chin, "The Indian Diaspora in Israel: Understanding the Past, Present and Future of Israelis of Indian Origins," *Institute of South Asian Studies*, National University of Singapore, p.2.

¹⁵ Maina Chawla Singh, "Indians and Israelis: Beyond Strategic Partnerships," *Israel Studies* 17, no.3, (Fall 2012):28.

¹⁶ Adrija Roychowdhury, "For the first Indian Jews, assimilation in Israel was not easy," *The Indian Express*, January 16, 2018.

iconic bakery, Nahoum and Sons, in New Market in Kolkata. This confectionery was very popular amongst the local Bengali residents.¹⁷ The members of the Baghdadi Jewish group carried out the restoration of Kolkata's Beth El and Magen David synagogues.¹⁸ Due to the British East India Company (including China, India, Persia, Pasra and Baghdad) as a trading body allowed Baghdadi Jews free trade as they were granted British patronage. The Baghdadi Jews prospered under colonial rule and played an important role in economic, civic and political spheres.

- The fourth and fifth groups of Indian Jews include: **Bene Menashe** Jews in Manipur and Mizoram (north east India) and **Bene Ephraim**, or *Telugu Jews*, in Andhra Pradesh (southern India). This community mostly lives in Kotha Reddy Palem in Prakasam district of Andhra Pradesh. These groups are very small communities and distinct with their languages, and customs.¹⁹ Recently, Shavei Israel, a non-profit organization, led the movement to bring back the Bene Menashe community to Israel.²⁰

It was further argued by Maina Chawla Singh, that these groups have *existed in their own orbits*.²¹ With India's independence in 1947 and the emergence of Israel as an independent, sovereign, democratic nation in 1948, these communities migrated to Israel to make the *aliyah- return home to the Holy Land*. India never barred Jews from going back to Israel.

Various factors played a crucial role in their migration towards Israel, which include: (a) For better economic opportunities, for instance, many Jews from Karachi

<https://indianexpress.com/article/research/benjamin-netanyahu-narendra-modi-india-israel-prime-minister-5026879/>.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Sifra Lentin, "Soft Power of Israel's Indian Jews," *Gateway House, Indian Council on Global Relations*, 11 January 2018. <https://www.gatewayhouse.in/israel-indian-jews-soft-power/>.

¹⁹ Yulia Egorova, "Jews and India Perceptions and Image," (New York: Routledge, 2006), p.81-82.

²⁰ "252 Indian Jews from the Bnei Menashe community immigrate to Israel", *Deccan Herald*, 15 December 2020. <https://www.deccanherald.com/national/252-indian-jews-from-the-bnei-menashe-community-immigrate-to-israel-927643.html>.

²¹ Maina Chawla Singh, *Being Indian, Being Israeli: Migration, Ethnicity, and Gender in the Jewish Homeland*, (New Delhi: Manohar Publishers & Distributors, 2009), p.74.

migrated to Israel for employment.²² (b) There was a strong desire for the Jewish population in India to migrate to their holy land of religious origin in Israel.²³ (c) Many Jews were concerned about their status in the newly independent India though they had not encountered any discrimination.

However, there was no mass exodus of Indian Jews to Israel after its creation. In the words of Dalia Ray, “The Indian Jews have not migrated to Israel and abroad en masse as the wealthy Jews have got a stake in Calcutta. Business and landed property hold them back. They cannot repatriate their assets easily. The poorer sections of the Jews, old and infirm, have neither funds nor energy to migrate to Israel. Moreover, the language barrier and hard life in Israel are brakes to the Jewish migration to Israel.”²⁴

As these communities migrated to Israel, they faced the challenge of assimilation into Israeli society in the early 1950s and 1960s. They faced racism charges from Israel, and they were marginalized as they tried to resettle in this state.²⁵ Several migrants who moved to Israel were settled in small *development towns* and *agricultural settlements* upon their arrival.²⁶ The Jews who migrated to Israel were settled in informal sector jobs such as agriculture, and factories.²⁷ The later phase of Jews who migrated had better economic prospects due to the higher education background they had in India.²⁸ The Jewish Agency for Israel²⁹ played a key role in helping immigrants from India integrate into Israeli society. Hitahadut ‘Ole Hoddu, an association of Indian immigrants in Israel, assisted the immigrants from India to preserve the cultural

²² Ibid., p.92.

²³ Adrija Roychowdhury, “For the first Indian Jews, assimilation in Israel was not easy,” *The Indian Express*, January 16, 2018.

<https://indianexpress.com/article/research/benjamin-netanyahu-narendra-modi-india-israel-prime-minister-5026879/>.

²⁴ Dalia Ray, “Jews in Indian History After Independence,” *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, 57, (Indian History Congress, 1996):573.

²⁵ Benjamin Chin, “The Indian Diaspora in Israel: Understanding the Past, Present and Future of Israelis of Indian Origins,” *Institute of South Asian Studies*, National University of Singapore, p.2.

²⁶ Report of the High-Level Committee on Indian Diaspora, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, 19 December, 2001, p.18.

²⁷ Maina Chawla Singh, *Being Indian, Being Israeli: Migration, Ethnicity, and Gender in the Jewish Homeland*, (New Delhi: Manohar Publishers & Distributors, 2009), p. 124.

²⁸ Ibid., p.150.

²⁹ A non-profit organization based in Israel, plays a key role in integrating Jewish communities across the world.

traditions of their native land.³⁰ In 2012, in the Knesset Committee for Immigration, Absorption, and Diaspora Affairs, Navtej Sarna, former India's Ambassador to Israel stated that the Jewish communities in India played an important role in fostering ties between the two nations because of commonalities and values.³¹

Many international Jewish organizations worked to uplift Indian Jewry in various cities of India, such as Mumbai, New Delhi, Kolkata, and Bengaluru. The Joint (the largest Jewish humanitarian organization in the world), World Organization for Educational Resources and Technological Training (World ORT), and the American Jewish Congress (AJC), to name a few. There are many Jewish organizations based in India, which include, a Jewish Club in Mumbai, Bikur Cholim, Hadassah, and Women's International Zionist Organization (WIZO). After the normalization of ties in 1992, The Israel Project (TIP), a non-profit organization, launched innovative programmes in India to strengthen bilateral relations through P2P contacts.³²

In 2001, the AJC offered relief assistance to Gujarat when it was devastated by the earthquake. Other organizations also supported India's relief assistance to the tsunami in 2004.³³ In the aftermath of the earthquake in Kashmir in 2005, Israel based NGO Flying Aid³⁴ group sent a delegation to give essential supplies and shelter to thousands of families.³⁵ In 2011, three Israeli experts from Israeli Trauma Coalition Centre participated in emergency preparedness workshop organized by the Joint at King Edward Hospital in Mumbai.³⁶ In 2018, the Jewish Community of India along with Joint assisted in providing food and clothing during the floods in Kerala. Gabriel

³⁰ Ezekiel N. Musleah, "India," in *The American Jewish Yearbook*, Vol.62, (American Jewish Committee, 1961), p.381.

³¹ Knesset Israel. (2012). India-Jewish people relations. The Knesset Committee for Immigration, Absorption and Diaspora Affairs.

³² Rajendra Abhyankar, "The Evolution and Future of Indo-Israel Relations," *The S. Daniel Abraham Center for International and Regional Studies*, Aspen Institute, The Harold Hartog School of Government and Policy, Research Paper No.6, March 2012.

³³ Shalom Salomon Wald & Arielle Kandel, *India, Israel, and the Jewish People: Looking Ahead, Looking Back: 25 Years After Normalization*, (Jerusalem: The Jewish People Policy Institute, 2017) p. 196.

³⁴ It is a nonprofit, volunteer-based NGO that delivers lifesaving aid to communities affected by natural disasters, and human conflict

³⁵ Israel's Humanitarian Aid, Israeli Missions Around the World, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Israel.

³⁶ Ibid.

Project Mumbai (GPM), a Jewish NGO, works with the informal urban dwellings in Mumbai in tackling malnutrition, and illiteracy. This NGO teamed up with IsraAID during the COVID-19 pandemic to support government-run hospitals in the Palghar district of Maharashtra in India.³⁷

Indian Diaspora in Israel

The Indian diaspora community in Israel consists of nearly 85,000 *Indian Jewish community* acting as a vital link between New Delhi and Tel Aviv.³⁸ The diaspora also includes a non-Jewish cluster where there are nearly 14,000 citizens of India in Israel, of whom around 11,500 are care givers, others are diamond traders, IT professionals, and students.³⁹ In the words of India's senior diplomat, "*Israel being an ageing society, the requirement of care givers became very important.*"⁴⁰

Unlike the Indian diaspora in other West Asian countries such as Saudi Arabia, Iran, United Arab Emirates (UAE), the Indian community in Israel barely receives attention in the bilateral relationship. The Indian diaspora are neither politically nor economically influential in shaping the contours of Indo-Israel ties.⁴¹ As observed by one of the senior diplomats, "*The Indian Jewish diaspora haven't risen in the Israeli economy, and polity unlike the Western countries such as USA, UK.*"⁴²

On September 23, 2013, Ramle hosted the inaugural National Convention of Indian Jews under former Indian Ambassador to Israel, Jaideep Sarkar. This event was facilitated by the Indian Embassy in Israel.⁴³ Since then, these conventions have been held annually in different cities of Israel, Yeruham (2014), Ramla (2015), Kiryat

³⁷ Yotam Polizer, "The Israeli-Indian partnership tackling the Covid-19 crisis in India," *Times of Israel*, November 14, 2021. <https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/the-israeli-indian-partnership-tackling-the-covid-19-crisis-in-india/>.

³⁸ Embassy of India, Tel Aviv, Israel, "India-Israel Economic and Commercial Relations," last accessed April 2022, <https://www.indembassyisrael.gov.in/pages?id=nel5a&subid=7ax9b>.

³⁹ Embassy of India, Tel Aviv, Israel, "Indian Community in Israel," last accessed April 17, 2021, <https://www.indembassyisrael.gov.in/pages?id=xboja&subid=wdLwb>.

⁴⁰ Personal Interview. Interviewee wants to remain anonymous.

⁴¹ Benjamin Chin, "The Indian Diaspora in Israel: Understanding the Past, Present and Future of Israelis of Indian Origins," *Institute of South Asian Studies*, National University of Singapore, p.2.

⁴² Personal Interview. Interviewee wants to remain anonymous.

⁴³ India, Ministry of External Affairs, "India-Israel Relations," (New Delhi: Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, July 2014). https://www.mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/Israel_Dec_2014.pdf.

(2016), Ashkelon (2017) where there is a large concentration of Indian Jews.⁴⁴ Several Jewish heritage tours by India help in cementing ties between India and Israel to learn about heritage.

Many Israelis of Indian origin were also conferred with Pravasi Bharatiya Samman for their distinguished service in various fields in Israel. Eliyahu Bezalel, a Cochin Jew who migrated from Chennamangalam, Kochi, to Israel in the early 1950s, is a pioneer in fertigation. He is considered one of the eminent agriculturists in Israel.⁴⁵ In 2011, Mr. Sheikh Ansari, (whose family had its roots in Saharanpur in Uttar Pradesh) manages the Indian Hospice in Jerusalem, Dr. Lael Anson Best, (who immigrated to Israel in 1979 from Mumbai) an Israeli cardiothoracic surgeon to name a few.⁴⁶ Others include, former Israeli politician Eli Ben-Menachem, basketball player Eban Hyams, Pratik Thakker (Hindu immigrant to Israel), founder of digital marketing agency Webzoly in 2016. Some of them have also been conferred with Padma Awards by the Government of India.

During Narendra Modi's visit to Israel in 2017, he recalled the contributions made by Israelis of Indian origin. In his address to the diaspora community in Tel Aviv Convention Centre, Israel, the Prime Minister, announced that the people of Indian origin (PIO) would receive Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) cards, the launch of direct flight services between Mumbai, New Delhi and Tel Aviv, and an Indian cultural centre in Israel.⁴⁷ Indiaspora, a non-profit organization, founded in 2012 by M.R. Rangaswami led a high-level delegation to Israel to strengthen the P2P contacts in partnership with American Jewish Committee (AJC), and the Global Indian Jewish Relations Institute.⁴⁸

There are various diaspora organisations that are related to the Indian

⁴⁴ Sifra Lentin, "Soft Power of Israel's Indian Jews," Gateway House, *Indian Council on Global Relations*, 11 January 2018. <https://www.gatewayhouse.in/israel-indian-jews-soft-power/>.

⁴⁵ K. Pradeep, "He made deserts bloom," *The Hindu*, January 18, 2012. <https://www.thehindu.com/life-and-style/money-and-careers/He-made-deserts-bloom/article13370861.ece>.

⁴⁶ Dipanjan Roy Chaudhury, "A busy day for Narendra Modi in Israel," *The Economic Times*, 06 July 2017. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/-a-busy-day-for-pm-narendra-modi-in-israel/article13370861.ece>.

⁴⁷ Press Information Bureau, "English Rendering of the text of PM's speech at Community Reception in Israel," last accessed May 01, 2022, <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseDetail.aspx?PRID=1892595>.

⁴⁸ Indiaspora, "Global Connect: Israel," last accessed May 04, 2022, <https://indiaspora.org/event/indiaspora-delegation-israel/>.

community in Israel, such as the Central Organization of Indian Jews in Israel (COIJI), Based in Jerusalem, it is the largest organization that brings together a sizeable number of Indian Jews, founded in 1986 by Noah Massil, (born in Maharashtra and located to Israel in the beginning of 1970s). It possesses twenty headquarters scattered around Israel. The COIJI also runs a popular Marathi magazine named, *Mai Boli* (My Mother Tongue) edited by Noah Massil. The organization hosts a music and performance festival *HoduYada*, in Eliat every year.⁴⁹

The Indian Jewish Community Centre (IJCC), located in Israel's third largest city, Haifa, the Indian Jewish Heritage Centre (IJHC), which is the first heritage centre for Indian Jews in the world, based in Moshav Nevatim, preserve the heritage of all the Jewish communities of India. The Indian Community Organization in Petah Tiqvah, Bnei Menashe in *Shavei Israel Organisation*, based in Jerusalem was founded by Michael Freund in 2002 which aims to help descendants of the tribe of Menashe (one of the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel), Israel Telangana Association and others.⁵⁰ *Shalom Namaste*, founded by David Negrekar in Ashdod, hosted several events in Israel in association with Israel Embassy and participated in several shows in India.⁵¹

Israel Embassy in India also partnered with different NGOs in India to help and support the residents of India, thereby, strengthening the ties between New Delhi and Tel Aviv. Recently, Israel and India based Khushi NGO⁵² inaugurated a vocational skill centre in Burari in Haryana, to train 200 women in providing them employment through the Amidi project. Other NGOs with whom Israel Embassy collaborated include: Aarohan, Culture Monks and Navratan Foundation, Gulshan Foundation, Noida Deaf Society, Smile Foundation, Salaam Balak Trust.⁵³ These NGOs which

⁴⁹ Dario Miccoli, Emanuela Trevisan Semi, Todor Parfitt, *Memory and Ethnicity: Ethnic Museums in Israel and the Diaspora*, (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars, 2013), p. 103.

⁵⁰ Embassy of India, Tel Aviv, Israel, "Indian Community in Israel," last accessed April 30, 2021, <https://www.indembassyisrael.gov.in/pages?id=xboja&subid=wdLwb>.

⁵¹ Dario Miccoli, Emanuela Trevisan Semi, Todor Parfitt, *Memory and Ethnicity: Ethnic Museums in Israel and the Diaspora*, (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars, 2013), p. 103.

⁵² KHUSHII is a National Level NGO that work with the most vulnerable, less privileged children & communities with one purpose that 'no child is left behind.'

⁵³ "Israel Embassy partners with NGOs to help underprivileged people in India during Covid19," *The Times of India*, December 11, 2020.

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/israeli-embassy-partners-with-ngos-to-help-underprivileged-people-in-india-during-covid-19/articleshow/79681232.cms#:~:text=NEW%20DELHI%3A%20The%20Israeli%20Embass>

mostly cater to the most underprivileged communities in India were assisted by Israel in providing assistance. The Consulate General of Israel in Bengaluru, together with Art of Living,⁵⁴ distributed 100 tablets to school children in rural Tamil Nadu and Karnataka to alleviate the learning losses due to the COVID-19 pandemic.⁵⁵

In the midst of the second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2021, Israel based non-profit organization IsraAID⁵⁶ assisted virus ravaged India in dispatching a shipment of medical aid which included oxygen cylinders to treat COVID-19 patients.⁵⁷ Another Israeli aid group, in collaboration with the Ted Arison Family Foundation, DHL and charity organisations in New Delhi,⁵⁸ SmartAID delivered oxygen concentrators to the city's largest hospitals. Yad Sarah, also provided required medical equipment to India during the pandemic.⁵⁹

In October 2021, India and Israel shared their COVID-19 pandemic experience during the visit of the Consul General of Israel to South India, Jonathan Zadka, to Meenakshi Mission Hospital and Research Centre in Madurai. He led a delegation accompanied by four medical experts, representatives of Israel NGOs such as Brit Olam, Topaz and Israeli Medicine on the Equator and others.⁶⁰ Recently, Israel also collaborated with Khushii NGO and Rajiv Gandhi Cancer Centre to assist cancer detection for underprivileged women in India.⁶¹ This was an important collaboration

y,Embassy%20said%20in%20a%20statement.

⁵⁴ An educational and humanitarian movement started by Sri Sri Ravi Shankar in 1981.

⁵⁵ "100 tablets for students in TN, Karnataka." *Times of India*, Bengaluru, 05 January 2021.

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/education/news/100-tablets-for-students-in-rural-tn-karnataka/articleshow/80101298.cms>.

⁵⁶ An Israeli non-governmental humanitarian aid agency.

⁵⁷ Nathan Jeffay, "Oxygen to India: Israeli group dispatching medical aid to India," *Times of Israel*, 28 April, 2021. <https://www.timesofisrael.com/oxygen-to-india-israeli-ngo-dispatching-medical-aid-to-covid-stricken-country/>.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ An NGO based in Israel providing a wide array of compassionate health and home care services to people of all ages.

⁶⁰ "Israel ready to help India, says its Consul General," *The Hindu*, October 28, 2021.

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Madurai/israel-ready-to-help-india-says-its-consul-general/article37216086.ece>

⁶¹ "Israel join hands with NGO to facilitate cancer detection in Indian Women," *ANI*, November 16, 2021. <https://www.aninews.in/news/world/asia/isreal-join-hands-with-ngo-to-facilitate-cancer-detection-in-indian-women20211116171855/#:~:text=The%20team%20in%20partnership%20with,to%20India%20Naor%20Gilon%20informed.>

between them for the promotion of women's health and awareness education. In an interview with Ms. Orly Goldschmidt, Head, Public Diplomacy, Embassy of Israel in India, "*The partnership of both nations efforts for women's health and breast cancer awareness is an important collaboration in health care of India. There is a need to expand this relationship towards joint research on new drugs and therapies for its populace.*"⁶²

In the spirit of strengthening P2P contacts between India and Israel, Heroes for Life, an Israel-based NGO founded in 2013 by three officers of the Israeli Defense Forces, offers volunteer opportunities for two weeks to Israeli backpackers. These volunteers work with locals in Mumbai and are involved in teaching underprivileged children in the suburbs of the city.⁶³ The Triratna Prerana Mandal, an NGO based in India, is supported by the Consulate General of Israel, Mumbai, in providing sanitation services and educational opportunities to the school children in slum areas of Mumbai.⁶⁴ This NGO also provided sanitizer bottles and soap dispensing units to doctors and staff of JJ Hospital in Mumbai.⁶⁵ As part of the mutual research programme between India and Israel, School of Social Work, Sapir College, Israelis embark on a visit to India to work in various slum areas, orphanages, and other social centres in association with Matru Sewa Singh Institute of Social Work.⁶⁶

B'Tzedek, in partnership with Brit Olam, based in Israel, started the LIFE⁶⁷ training programme with its overseas partner in India, a major NGO called the Byrraju Foundation,⁶⁸ to train Israelis in a number of fields from livelihood (cotton industries), rural tourism, women's empowerment, health issues in Indian villages.⁶⁹ Similarly, TavTech, a youth-driven programme started by young Israelis connect the Indian

⁶² Personal Interview, Ms. Orly Goldschmidt, Head, Public Diplomacy, and Mr. Muhamed Heib, Spokesperson, The Embassy of Israel in India, Zoom, 29 June, 2022.

⁶³ "Israeli backpackers give Santa Cruz civic school children dance, Krava Maga lessons," *The Times of India*, September 13, 2014.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ The Free Press Journal, April 15, 2020.

⁶⁶ Manka Behl, "Understanding Social Issues, in Israel, India," *Times of India*, February 17, 2015.

⁶⁷ A nine-month learning program for college graduates from the Jewish world and their Israeli peers (aged 21-30) that will train participants in effective social action which can change policy by sending them to the developing world.

⁶⁸ An Indian NGO, set up in July 2001, by Late Satyanarayana Raju dedicated to rural transformation.

⁶⁹ For further details, see <https://www.israel21c.org/opportunity-of-a-life-time/>

students with tech-based startups. This non-profit organization acts as a building bridge between India, Israel and the United States of America (USA) in forging new highways for cooperation in providing accessibility to Israel's top entrepreneurs.

The collaboration between New Delhi and Tel Aviv is also expanded to the textile industry. In Kannur, a small handloom making town in Kerala state in India, uniforms are stitched at Maryan Apparel Pvt Limited, a unit in Valiyavelicham, for Israeli Police Forces personnel every year.⁷⁰ In 2005, an Israeli couple, Danny and Orly under the banner of *Wellpaper*, started a tsunami rehabilitation programme which has grown into a social enterprise. The women in Auroville, Puducherry, provided livelihood to several women to create products from scraps, weave wicker baskets, and embroider accessories using recycled materials.⁷¹ In 2013, an Israeli student named, Gili Navon from Hebrew University in Jerusalem, partnered with local women and youth in Majuli district in Assam, northeast India and started *Amar Majuli*, a non-profit organization to enhance the livelihood and well-being of communities in developing countries. This organization runs a Women Weavers Cooperative (Rengam) to promote handloom work and eco-tourism in India.⁷²

Several Israeli delegations recently visited India's textile manufacturing units in Tirupur (Tamil Nadu), Surat (Gujarat), and Ludhiana (Punjab). Israeli firms can play an important role in addressing environmental challenges from India's textile industry.⁷³ For instance, Israel's Nilit⁷⁴ can join hands with many textile voluntary organizations in India for the promotion of man-made fabrics.

⁷⁰ "Israeli police get uniform stitched from dressmaker in Kerala," *The Hindustan Times*, 25 September 2018. <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/israeli-police-get-uniform-stitched-from-dressmaker-in-kerala/story-7j0ALguQM1iXLxnn9nL7UK.html>.

⁷¹ Anu Thomas, "Wellpaper: How an Israeli couple is using art to empower rural women in Tamil Nadu," *The Economic Times*, August 08, 2016. https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/articleshow/53536779.cms?from=mdr&utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst

⁷² Smita Bhattacharya, "Collective farming in Majuli, the Israeli way", *The Telegraph*, May 28, 2013. <https://www.telegraphindia.com/north-east/collective-farming-in-majuli-the-israeli-way-two-women-from-jerusalem-replicate-kibbutz-model-on-island-for-uplift-of-women-landless/cid/1622539>.

⁷³ M. Soundariya Preetha, "Israeli firms to help textile units fix environment issues", *The Hindu*, March 14, 2013. <https://www.thehindu.com/business/Industry/israeli-firms-to-help-textile-units-fix-environment-issues/article4509121.ece>

⁷⁴ Located in Migdal HaEmek, in Israel is a privately owned international manufacturer of nylon and other fibres.

The Dastkari Haat Samiti in India collaborated with Israel to exchange artistic skills between Indian and Israeli artists.⁷⁵ In its 32nd edition, Israel was the partner country for the fifteen-day long festival at Delhi Haat. To enhance the citizen-to-citizen interaction, the collaboration between India and Israel in grass roots development issues can transform the bilateral strategic partnership. For instance, Israel can emulate the Indian model of women Self Help Groups (SHGs).⁷⁶ Several women-based NGOs in Israel can learn from the experience of Indian women groups that provide institutional credit for women employment.

Amidst, the COVID-19 pandemic, The Consulate General of Israel in South India, partnered with a leading NGO, Bengaluru Political Action Committee (BPAC), to improve the quality of governance in the city.⁷⁷ Under the Thane Smart City programme, the Tel Aviv-Jaffa local government collaborated with Thane municipality to develop a citizen-oriented digital platform called *DigiThane* to provide seamless services to the residents in Thane city.⁷⁸ The Israeli based technology can play an important role in providing hassle-free services to the Indian citizens in accessing services. The above-mentioned city-to-city engagement is a classic example to address the urban citizens' agenda under the United Nations envisaged Sustainable Development Goal (SDG-17).

In short, fostering ties between Tel Aviv and New Delhi nonprofit organisations can truly transform the lives and livelihoods of several underprivileged communities in society, such as women, and children. Under these initiatives, the economically weaker sections can yield huge dividends, with new synergies being created as the bilateral ties move forward. In the words of India's senior diplomat Anil Trigunayat, "The civil society groups of both nations can explore opportunities, identify challenges and mutual projects for poverty alleviation."⁷⁹

⁷⁵Suridhi Sharma, "Shaping Indo-Israeli artworks", *The Asian Age*, January 06, 2018.

<https://www.asianage.com/life/art/060118/shaping-indo-israeli-artworks.html>

⁷⁶ Manvendra Prasad and Manish Kumar "India-Israel Ties: New Opportunities," *Deccan Herald*, January 06, 2022. <https://www.deccanherald.com/opinion/in-perspective/india-israel-ties-new-opportunities-1068334.html>.

⁷⁷ For further details, see Consulate General of Israel in Bengaluru.

⁷⁸ Sayli Udas-Mankikar, Nathan Marom, Dhaval Desai and Tamar Akov, "Envisioning the post pandemic metropolis: Perspectives and Learnings from Mumbai and Tel Aviv," *Observer Research Foundation*, New Delhi, 2021.

⁷⁹ Personal Interview. Mr. Anil Trigunayat, Former Indian Ambassador to the Indian Missions in Cote d'Ivoire, Bangladesh, Mongolia, USA, Russia, Sweden and Nigeria, Libya and Jordan, *Email*, April 21, 2022.

Due to the lack of formal relations until 1992, people-to-people contacts between Tel Aviv and New Delhi through mutual visits remained very limited. To cater to the Jewish community in India, the Jewish Agency established an immigration office in Bombay (now Mumbai) in Maharashtra. This was later converted into a Trade Office and, subsequently, a Consulate.⁸⁰ However, New Delhi chose not to have a consulate of its own in Tel Aviv. In 1958, Jayaprakash Narayan, leader of the Sarvodaya movement, visited Israel. In the early 1970s, India's well-known agriculturist, Appasaheb Pawar (brother of Sharad Pawar), visited Israel to study the agro-tech policy of Israel.⁸¹

Other prominent trade union leaders from India, such as the late George Fernandes, Sharad Rao, and Somnath Dube visited Israel.⁸² The Histadruth (The General Federation of Workers in Israel) maintained ties with India's labour union leaders. A well-known Indian author and economist, Raja Hutheesing, visited Israel to promote trade relations between New Delhi and Tel Aviv.⁸³

Many farm delegations comprising land reforms activists from the Bhoodan movement, and another delegation comprising sixteen leading young farmers from the Young Farmers Association of India had visited Israel to study Israel's cooperative institutions, *Kibbutzim* and *Moshav*.⁸⁴ During the visit of Dr. S. Jaishankar, India's External Affairs Minister to Tel Aviv, *Bhoodan Grove* plaque was unveiled in the Jerusalem Forest in memory of Indian leaders who visited Israel.⁸⁵

For the promotion of P2P contacts between India and Israel, 50 societies and associations were founded in different parts of India. In August 1950, upon the

⁸⁰ India, Ministry of External Affairs, "India-Israel Relations," (New Delhi: Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, July 2014). https://www.mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/Israel_Dec_2014.pdf.

⁸¹ Mayuri Mukherjee, "How Israel made friends in India," *Jerusalem Post*, October 30, 2018. <https://www.jpost.com/opinion/how-israel-made-friends-in-india-570704>.

⁸² Reema Lokesh, "Narendra Modi Israel Visit: The Namaste Shalom Ties Strengthened Post 1992", *The Financial Express*, July 04, 2017. <https://www.financialexpress.com/india-news/narendra-modi-israel-visit-the-namaste-shalom-ties-strengthened-post-1992/748855/>.

⁸³ Middle East Records (1960) Vol.1. (Jerusalem: George Weidenfeld & Nicolson Limited, 1960).

⁸⁴ Mayuri Mukherjee, "How Israel made friends in India," *Jerusalem Post*, October 30, 2018. <https://www.jpost.com/opinion/how-israel-made-friends-in-india-570704>.

⁸⁵ "Jaishankar unveils plaque at 'Bhoodan Grave', in Israel," *The Hindu*, October 18, 2021. <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/s-jaishankar-unveils-plaque-at-bhoodan-grave-in-israel/article37050661.ece>

insistence of the Bombay Zionist Association (BZA), an All-Indian Zionist Association was formed. Later, BZA formed the Indo-Israel Cultural Society, an unofficial, non-government organization to function *as an arena in which Indian friendship with and goodwill for Israel would be promoted*. This organization played a key role in fostering people-to-people contacts between the two nations.⁸⁶

However, this organization was short lived due to the objections raised by the Israeli government. BZA published a fortnightly bulletin, the *India-Israel Review*, on relations between New Delhi and Tel Aviv. This was the only English bulletin published in India to promote friendship and cooperation between India and Israel.⁸⁷ In the aftermath of the 1967 Arab-Israel War, upon the request of thirty-three Indian Members of Parliament, the Indo-Israel Friendship League was formed. This league was headed by Mrs. Lilavati Munshi, a well-known Indian personality, (wife of K.M. Munshi, who dissociated from the Congress party and emerged as one of the key architects in the formation of the Swatantra Party).⁸⁸ The members of the league acted as an interest group by urging the Indian government to alter its policy towards Israel.

Several Jewish institutions were represented in various regional bodies, such as the Central Jewish Board of Bombay, the South Indian Jews Association of Cochin, and the Jewish Welfare Association of New Delhi, the Jewish Association of Calcutta. These organizations played a very important role in fostering communal solidarity and promoting relations between India and Israel. Several other Zionist associations, and WIZO organized seminars, and cultural activities in major cities of India on occasions like Israel's Independence Day and others.⁸⁹

The Shalom Alumni Club, of Israel's development cooperation programme MASHAV, through its various social, and cultural activities, promoted ties between India and Israel. The Club was very active in the state of Maharashtra in India and organized discussions, cultural activities, participated in AIDS prevention programme, and fund raising for homeless children and others.⁹⁰ After the establishment of full

⁸⁶ Joan G. Roland, *The Jewish Communities of India: Identity in a Colonial Era* (Hanover, N.H.: Brandeis University Press, 1989), p.246.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ *The Jewish News*, December 01, 1967.

⁸⁹ Ezekiel N. Musleah, "India," in *The American Jewish Yearbook*, Vol.62, (American Jewish Committee, 1961), p.381.

⁹⁰ Itzhak Gerberg, *The Changing Nature of Israeli-Indian Relations: 1948-2005* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 2008), p.417.

diplomatic ties between India and Israel in 1992, a friendship delegation visited Israel in 1995 which consisted of members from various associations and interest groups.⁹¹ Young Men's and Young Women's Hebrew Association (YM-YWHA) organized various social and cultural events, and sports were organized by the Maccabi Association in Bombay.

Culture

Due to the lack of diplomatic relations between them in the Cold War years, limited cultural interactions existed. In 1968, Yehudi Menuhin, the famous Jewish violinist, was conferred the Jawaharlal Nehru Award for International Understanding.⁹² *Imbal*, an Israeli dance troupe performed in New Delhi in a mutual exchange. Shanta Rao, an Indian classical dancer and her troupe performed in Israel in April, 1958.⁹³ The former Prime Minister of Israel, David Ben Gurion witnessed her performance. The Israeli Consulate in Bombay organized various cultural programmes, debates, and literary events to strengthen the interaction between both societies from the 1950s to the early 1990s.

In 1992, India's Zubin Mehta's Israel Philharmonic Orchestra (IPO) established India-Israel Cultural Association. In 1994, Israel's Philharmonic Orchestra organized several concerts in India's major cities such as Mumbai, and New Delhi.⁹⁴ After the normalization of ties, both nations signed a Cultural Agreement and a Frame Work Programme in 1993 during the visit of Shimon Peres, Israel's Foreign Affairs Minister for the promotion of cultural and educational cooperation between Tel Aviv and New Delhi.⁹⁵

Leading Indian and Israeli cultural artists and groups visited various cities in India and Israel, such as Jerusalem, Mumbai, New Delhi, and Tel Aviv, to perform in various events. In an effort to strengthen the cultural relations between India and Israel, cultural exchange programmes were organized. On 5, 7, and 9 September, 1995,

⁹¹ V. B. Singh, "Role of societies in promoting Indo-Israel friendship," *India – Israel, 10th anniversary of diplomatic relations 1992-2002*. (New Delhi: Embassy of Israel, India, 2002), p.67.

⁹² Farah Naaz, "Indo-Israel Cooperation: Agriculture, Trade and Culture," *Strategic Analysis* 23, no.6, (September 1999):901.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Itzhak Gerberg, *The Changing Nature of Israeli-Indian Relations: 1948-2005* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 2008), p. 258.

⁹⁵ Dalia Ray, "Genesis and Fruition of Indo-Israel Cooperation," *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 66, (Indian History Congress, 2005-06):1312.

cultural programmes were organized in Delhi, Kolkata, and Mumbai. In Kolkata, Israeli based East-West Musical Ensemble, *The Gathering*, or a group of six musicians held their soirees.⁹⁶ India also took part in the 1997 Jerusalem Film Festival, wherein Zakir Hussain and Mallika Sarabhai attended the Israel Festival in Jerusalem.⁹⁷ As part of India's yearly participation in the festival, movies were screened and Armon Zodik, the filmmaker, was interviewed. In 1997, Vikram Seth took part in the Jerusalem Poets Festival.⁹⁸

For the first time, Israel became one of the participants in New Delhi's International Book Fair in 1996. Israel based publishers participated in various book fairs held in prominent cities in India, and anthologies of Israel and India were translated and made available in thirteen native Indian languages apart from Hebrew and English.⁹⁹ For instance, India's famous writer, Vikram Seth's landmark novel *A Suitable Boy* was published in Hebrew.

In December 1996, during Israel's President Weizmann visit to India, Tel Aviv and New Delhi signed a new programme for 1997-99. Under the above-mentioned programme, India hosted an Israeli delegation of University Vice Chancellors, and the Institute for Translation in Hebrew Literature participated in the World Book Fair in New Delhi in 1996 and 1998. In 1997, to celebrate Israel's 50th year of independence and the fifth anniversary of diplomatic ties between India and Israel, the Shalom India Festival was organized by the Israel Embassy in New Delhi and the Consulate General in Mumbai.

To facilitate the cultural exchange between artists from both countries and organize various events in India, in 1996, in New Delhi, an Israel cultural centre was opened. With the opening of this Centre in New Delhi, new programmes were initiated, which included Hebrew classes, seminars, film screenings, lectures and so on, to strengthen the cultural ties between India and Israel. Tel Aviv University's Department of East Asian Studies has expanded to include classes on India and Sanskrit. Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi, India, and Hebrew University in Jerusalem, Israel, both started programmes that were similar.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Itzhak Gerberg *The Changing Nature of Israeli-Indian Relations: 1948-2005* (Pretoria: University of South Africa, 2008), p.383.

¹⁰⁰ Sreekantan Nair, *Dynamics of Diplomacy Delayed: India and Israel*, (New Delhi: Kalpaz Publications, 2004),

In February 1997, an Israeli Film Festival was held in Kolkata, which was followed by the folk-dance Hora Dance Troupe in November. An Israeli Fashion Show and Food Festival was organized by the Consulate in 1997 in Taj Bengal Hotel. Similar festivals were held in other Indian cities, such as Mumbai, New Delhi, and Hyderabad. In October-December 1997, the Israeli Photo Exhibition was held in Cuttack (Odisha), Jaipur (Rajasthan), Hyderabad (Telangana), Shimla (Himachal Pradesh), and New Delhi.¹⁰¹

In 1999, the Israeli Embassy and the Consulate General, in association with various friendship and cultural associations from India, to celebrate 50th anniversary of Israel, a festival was organized. The festival showcased Israel's rich cultural diversity, which was held in a few Indian states, such as Rajasthan in the north, Tamil Nadu in the south, Gujarat in the west, Odisha in the east.¹⁰² Two well-known artists, Menashe Kadishman of Israel and Jatin Das of India, put together a workshop about Israel. In the same year, a month-long exhibition on the City of David was held at the National Museum in Delhi, and the Prince of Wales Museum in Mumbai.¹⁰³ Popular music concerts by singers from Israel were performed in Indian cities, such as New Delhi and Mumbai. Several theatre groups from India performed plays based on Israeli culture. For instance, *Uljihe huye log* an Israeli play, was performed by an Indian theatre group in various cities, such as New Delhi, Kolkata, Mumbai, and Jamshedpur (Jharkhand).

In 2007, to celebrate 60 years of India's independence and fifteen years of the full diplomatic ties between the two, *Namaste Israel*, a cultural troupe consisting of the youth of Indian origin, performed in different Indian cities, such as Mumbai, New Delhi and Shillong.¹⁰⁴ The troupe joined hands with Israel Folklore Dance Group and jointly performed on their visit to India. In 2008, a well-known Israeli folk rock band Giraffe, performed in various Indian cities, such as Mumbai, New Delhi, and Goa and dedicated their new album to India.¹⁰⁵

p.155-6.

¹⁰¹ Dalia Ray, "Genesis and Fruition of Indo-Israel Cooperation," *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 66, (Indian History Congress, 2005-06):1312.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ "Namaste Israel, to perform in India," *Hindustan Times*, December 11, 2007.

<https://www.hindustantimes.com/india/namaste-israel-to-perform-in-india/story-0zkTSnpU3yqmc7zOyOu2gI.html>.

¹⁰⁵ Debesh Banerjee, "Indian sounds inspire Israeli bands latest album", *The Indian Express*, December 11, 2008.

In 2009, the Indian community in Israel hosted, *Baila Shinvor*, a cultural evening in association with the Indian Jewish Group, *Namaste Israel*.¹⁰⁶ In May 2011, the Indian Embassy in Israel, in association with *Teamwork Productions*, hosted the first edition of the festival of India, *Celebrating India in Israel*. It was a month-long cultural festival which showcased India's contemporary and classical art and culture.¹⁰⁷ In the same month, a well-known singer-songwriter, guitarist from Israel, David Broza performed in New Delhi on his first visit to India.¹⁰⁸

In the aftermath of the Delhi gangrape in 2012, a well-known Israeli dancer, choreographer, and teacher, Shaked Dagan, started a project called *2nd Home India*,¹⁰⁹ to spread the message of women empowerment through dance and music.¹¹⁰ This project was later made into a documentary by an Israeli filmmaker, Eyal Ben Zeev. This was an attempt in sensitizing and spreading awareness among Indian women about their rights.

To commemorate the 20th anniversary of India-Israel diplomatic ties, the Israeli Embassy, in association with The Imperial Hotel, organized *Israeli Food Week*, in New Delhi. A special culinary presentation of Israel was made by celebrity Chef, Israel Aharoni.¹¹¹ In 2013, another edition of *Israeli Food Week* was held in association with Hyatt Regency Hotel in New Delhi. Similarly, *Critical Mass: Contemporary Art from India*, an art exhibition, was held in Tel Aviv to show case Indian art to the Israeli residents.

With the exchange in theatre and arts, India and Israel created a new synergy in cultural ties. A theatre play, *Stampenyu*, by the Yiddish writer, Shalom Aleichem, was performed in New Delhi by the Jerusalem Train Theatre group. This group brought

<http://archive.indianexpress.com/news/indian--sounds--inspire-israeli-band-s-latest-album/396886/>

¹⁰⁶ "Indian Community in Israel Presents Grand 'Baila Shinvor,'" *The Indian Express*, June 08, 2009.

¹⁰⁷ Maina Chawla Singh, "Indians and Israelis: Beyond Strategic Partnerships," *Israel Studies* 17, No.3 (Fall 2012):30.

¹⁰⁸ "David Broza performs in Delhi", *The Pioneer*, 23 May 2012.

¹⁰⁹ This project includes women of other nationalities, such as Denmark, USA, Poland and Canada. They stayed over two months in Challal in Himachal Pradesh.

¹¹⁰ Debolina Chakraborty, "Steps of Change: Israeli dancer choreographs tribute to gangrape victim," *The Indian Express*, March 27, 2013.

<https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/delhi/steps-of-change-israeli-dancer-choreographs-tribute-to-gangrape-victim/>

¹¹¹ "Israeli Food Week in Delhi", *Times of India*, October 26, 2012.

The *Cube Circus*, which works on Indian mythological stories. They performed *Dooma-Doomi*, based on an Indian folk tale.

Other visual theatres, such as Micheal Svironi Visual Theatre and Clipa Theatre, also performed in India. In the words of Chana Anzi, the Israeli embassy's cultural attaché, "We would love to promote cultural exchanges. Right now, the bulk of the exchange programme is limited to theater and arts."¹¹² For instance, Israel's Idan Cohen collaborated with Sapphire Creations in Kolkata on contemporary dance. A theatre exchange programme was envisaged between David Zinder, the National School of Drama, New Delhi, and Samahara Theatre in Hyderabad.

In September 2013, three prominent Israeli artists, Shai Azoulay, Ayelet Albenda, and Iddo Markus, exhibited their art work in United Art Fair, New Delhi. In January 2015, the Bruno Art group participated in India Art Fair held in New Delhi. In 2016, the Israeli Jazz band, *Katamon Cherry*, performed in various Indian cities such as Chennai and Bengaluru.

In 2017, an exhibition, *The Plate and The Palette*, was hosted in the Museum of Fine Arts, Panjab University, Chandigarh, and Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi, which was artistic cooperation between two ancient civilizations. Madan Lal, an Indian painter, and Shirley Siegel, Israeli painter collaborated for an art exhibition, which called for women empowerment in both societies.

On 12 September, 2019, dance artists from India and Israel performed *End of the Wall* in Bengaluru.¹¹³ This performance was an attempt to transcend the physical, cultural, and mental barriers between Tel Aviv and New Delhi. Every year in the summer, in the Galilee mountains in Israel, musicians who learnt India's classical music, such as Hindustani ragas, hosts a night long *Ragamalika*, along with Israeli rock musicians.¹¹⁴

These cultural programmes resonated with Israeli and Indian citizens, which facilitated several artists, and the common people in fostering the cultural interactions of both societies. These initiatives by India and Israel actively promoted the *soft power*

¹¹² Madhusree Chatterjee, "India, Israel bonding over new cultural initiative," *IANs*, 11 April, 2013.

¹¹³ Simran Ahuja, "Blurring boundaries", *The New Indian Express*, 09 September, 2019.

<https://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/bengaluru/2019/sep/09/blurring-boundaries-2030992.html>

¹¹⁴ David Shulman, "Sweet note: How Israel fell in love with Indian classical music," *Hindustan Times*, January 28, 2017.

<https://www.hindustantimes.com/music/sweet-note-how-israel-fell-in-love-with-indian-classical-music/story-sE1lbBhPdJPh9se4fvMV3J.html>

as they acquainted themselves with the diverse culture and traditions by enabling them to learn a lot from the experience of both nations.

Tourism

Until the normalization of ties between two countries in 1992, overall tourist traffic between Tel Aviv and New Delhi remained very meagre. In 1993, a tourism cooperation agreement was signed between them which helped in accelerating much needed momentum to Indo-Israel tourism. In the initial years, tourism was mainly confined to Indian pilgrims visiting Jerusalem.¹¹⁵ In 2011, this agreement was rectified in a meeting between the Tourism Minister of Israel, Mr. Stas Misezhnikov, and India's Tourism Minister, Subodh Kant Sahai in New Delhi.¹¹⁶

After the normalization phase between Tel Aviv and New Delhi, the number of tourists increased exponentially in the last few years. For instance, in the early 1990s, Indian citizens were only issued between 3,000-4,000 visas to travel to Israel.¹¹⁷ The Israeli tourists visiting India began to expand considerably from 10,000 in 1992 to nearly 40,000 in 2008. Despite the terror attack in Mumbai in 2008, wherein six Israeli nationals lost their lives, they continued to visit various destinations in India. The tourists included pilgrims, students, businessmen etc.

Year	No. of Arrivals From Israel	No. of Indian Nationals Departure to Israel
1992	9468	NA
1993	9646	NA
1994	12098	NA
1995	14806	NA
1996	18387	NA
1997	20162	NA
1998	21103	NA

¹¹⁵ Farah Naaz, "Indo-Israel Cooperation: Agriculture, Trade and Culture," *Strategic Analysis* 23, no.6, (September 1999):901.

¹¹⁶ Press Information Bureau, "India and Israel to Enhance Tourism Cooperation," last accessed June 23, 2022. <https://pib.gov.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=75604>.

¹¹⁷ Sreekantan Nair, *Dynamics of Diplomacy Delayed: India and Israel*, (New Delhi: Kalpaz Publications, 2004), p.152-3.

1999	23417	14823
2000	25631	15947
2001	28774	12012
2002	25503	9330
2003	32157	8431
2004	39083	12743
2005	42866	19018
2006	42735	20233
2007	47553	24091
2008	45771	29413
2009	40581	23058
2010	43456	40109
2011	48089	38481
2012	47649	42992
2013	48737	39025
2014	49312	34642
2015	50134	39317
2016	59231	44564
2017	58131	58222
2018	67366	70517
2019	73137	35091
2020	17444	8533
2021	4601	7512

Source: India Tourism Statistics, Market Research Division, Ministry of Tourism, Government of India.

In view of the above information, Israeli nationals' visit to India was composed of various categories, which include: businesses and professional, leisure holiday and recreation, medical treatment, education and employment and others. In 2003, Israelis constituted nearly 1.2 percent of the foreign tourist arrivals to India, 87.6 percent of Israeli nationals visited India for tourism and others purpose, and 11.76 percent were for business.¹¹⁸ In 2006, the Israeli nationals who visited India for education and employment was 12.1%, as both countries seek to expand the economic cooperation

¹¹⁸ *India Tourism Statistics*, (New Delhi: Market Research Division, Ministry of Tourism, 2003), p.26.

between them, the Israeli business community visit to India also grew multifold. For instance, in 2011, (45.1%), of tourist arrivals from Israel were for the purpose of Business and Professional, followed by (22.2%) for Leisure, Holiday and Recreation, and (18.3%) others.¹¹⁹ Similarly, a majority of Indian tourists to Israel include for the purpose of MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, Exhibitions), corporate sector, leisure seeking and others. In changing times, the film industry visit to Israel for shooting in the beautiful landscapes and historic sites in Israel can boost tourism.

As per the Israeli Ministry of Tourism, around 58,700 tourists from India visited Israel in 2018, which was a 21 percent growth in Indian tourist arrivals.¹²⁰ Similarly, the number of Israeli tourists arrival to India stands at 73,137. The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted tourism between India and Israel. India emerged as a favourite destination, particularly for Israeli youth. Several popular tourist destinations Israelis visit in India include: Kasol, Dharamkot, Malana in Kullu valley, Manali (Himachal Pradesh), Panaji (Goa), and Pushkar (Rajasthan).¹²¹ Israeli tourists account for nearly 70 percent of the total foreign tourist arrivals in the state of Himachal Pradesh. In the words of India's diplomat Ambassador Navtej Sarna, "Himachal Pradesh emerged as a mini Israel and became a favourite destination for young Israelis visiting India, with many places turning into Jewish settlements."¹²² Most of the places of tourist importance in this state are rich in showcasing Israel's cultural diversity with eateries offering Israeli cuisines, hoardings in Hebrew, cafes, restaurants, and guest houses replicate with Israel's history and culture.

The ease in the issuance of visas and better connectivity can boost tourism ties between India and Israel. Prior to Narendra Modi's visit to Israel, Tel Aviv eased its visa policy to facilitate the entry of Indian businessmen, and tourists visit to Israel.¹²³

¹¹⁹ *India Tourism Statistics*, (New Delhi: Market Research Division, Ministry of Tourism, 2010), p. 43.

¹²⁰ "Israel saw 21% growth in tourist arrivals from India," *The Financial Express*, January 16, 2019.

<https://www.financialexpress.com/lifestyle/israel-saw-21-growth-in-tourist-arrivals-from-india-in-2018/1445874/>

¹²¹ "These 5 places in India are thronged by Israeli tourists; here's why," *India Today*, last accessed November 06, 2022,

<https://www.indiatoday.in/travel/photo/mini-israel-india-travel-dharamkot-manali-malana-kasol-pushkar-lifetr-989397-2017-07-03/1>

¹²² Personal Interview, Mr. Navtej Sarna, Former Ambassador to Israel, USA, UK, *WhatsApp Audio Call*, June 04, 2022.

¹²³ "Israel eases visa policy for Indian businessmen," *The Economic Times*, 06 April, 2017.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/nri/visa-and-immigration/israel-eases-visa-policy-for-indian-businessmen/>

Israel reduced its visa fee from the existing Rs.1,700 to 1,100 for all Indian nationals along with fast-track visa processing.¹²⁴ To ease the connectivity between India and Israel, in March, 2018, New Delhi based Air India introduced direct flight operations from Tel Aviv to New Delhi with a frequency of five flights per week aiming towards boosting the connectivity between India and Israel. In September, 2019, to boost the connectivity further, Israel based Arkia airlines, commenced direct flight operations between Tel Aviv to Goa and Kochi.¹²⁵ The fact that Israeli flights pass over Saudi Arabia's airspace is an important development of changing dynamics within the West Asian region. Except towards the east, there are flight operations now from Israel to the north, west and south of India, which has the potential to attract tourists between India and Israel.

Despite the robust diplomatic ties between India and Israel, tourism remains very limited between them. For instance, the pilgrims from India visiting Al Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem are very limited compared to Mecca and Madina, situated in Saudi Arabia. Similarly, Christians in India can be considered potential tourists for pilgrimage to Israel. The investments to boost tourism between India and Israel are very low.

In 2016, the Israeli Ministry of Tourism invested nearly three crores in the digital campaign *Begin your journey to Israel*, in India to increase tourist footfalls. The cooperation in tourism can deepen the ties with the Indian diaspora in Israel. In 2012, the TAFI (Travel Agents Federation of India) conference project was initiated to promote Indian tourism to Israel.¹²⁶ To showcase Israel's myriad tourist destinations, its Tourism Ministry hosted *Where Else* an official tourism conference wherein India along with its tour operators was one among 18 countries to take part.

Israel should promote its tourism in a few Indian states such as Maharashtra,

articleshow/58050260.cms?from=mdr.

¹²⁴ Saurabh Sinha, "Israel reduces visa fee to Rs 1,100 from Rs 1700 for Indian travellers," *The Times of India*, 02 June, 2018.

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/business/india-business/israel-reduces-visa-fee-to-rs-1100-from-rs-1700-for-indian-travellers/articleshow/64429336.cms>

¹²⁵ Saurabh Sinha, "Israeli carrier Arkia to have direct flights from Goa, Kochi to Tel Avi," *The Times of India*, February 19, 2019.

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/business/india-business/israeli-carrier-arkia-to-have-direct-flights-from-go-kochi-to-tel-aviv/articleshow/68061826.cms>

¹²⁶ Maxim Ryabinin, Roni Ezuz, Amelie Nassar, Yehonatan Daniel, "Israel-India and Public Diplomacy," *The Argov Fellows Program in Leadership and Diplomacy*, (IDC Herzliya, 2015), p. 31.

Kerala, West Bengal, and Goa because of the former Jewish population in these states. The Indian and Israeli tour groups can create awareness among their citizens in promoting tourism ties. Specifically, the unveiling of new marketing strategies by Indian and Israeli tour operators/travel agents can boost tourism ties. The dissemination of information about various tourist destinations in India and Israel through print, electronic, and digital media can truly transform the tourism marketing between Tel Aviv and New Delhi.

The Film Industry

In recent times, Israel became a popular destination for Indian filmmakers to shoot, especially Hindi language films in Israel.¹²⁷ For instance, Dharma Productions based *Drive*, was the first Hindi film to be shot in Israel's coastal Jaffa and Tel Aviv. This movie was partially funded by the Israeli government agencies, including the Israeli Tourism Ministry and Prime Minister's Office.¹²⁸ In a conference held in Mumbai University in 2017, the university was considering a collaboration with the Steve Tisch School of Film and Television at Tel Aviv University. During the Prime Minister of Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu's visit to India in 2018, India and Israel signed an agreement on film co-production.¹²⁹ To woo the Bollywood filmmakers to shoot in Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu met a galaxy of Hindi film stars, directors, producers at *Shalom Bollywood* event hosted in Mumbai during his visit to India.

The Bollywood, Tamil, and Telugu films which enjoy wide popularity among many Israeli nationals, give a fillip to tourism between India and Israel as the production houses prefer Israel as a shooting destination. In the words of former Israel Ambassador to India, Alon Ushpiz, "the Dead Sea, the lowest point on the Earth's

¹²⁷ Itay Stern, "What brings a group of Bollywood Film Makers to Israel?," *Haaretz*, December 25, 2017. <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2017-12-25/ty-article-magazine/.premium/what-brings-a-group-of-bollywood-filmmakers-to-israel/0000017f-f566-d044-adff-f7ff295b0000>.

¹²⁸ Shubhajit Roy, "Shalom Bollywood: Benjamin Netanyahu to woo film industry in India trip," *The Indian Express*, January 09, 2018.

<https://indianexpress.com/article/india/shalom-bollywood-benjamin-netanyahu-to-woo-film-industry-in-india-trip/>

¹²⁹ "Cabinet approves Agreement between India and Israel on Film Co-production," *Business Standard*, February 20, 2018.

https://www.business-standard.com/article/news-cm/cabinet-approves-agreement-between-india-and-israel-on-film-co-production-118022000502_1.html

surface and the deepest hypersaline lake in the world, was a favourite among Telugu filmmakers from Hyderabad.”¹³⁰ The collateral efforts of Tel Aviv and New Delhi in joint film production can lead to the creation of jobs in Israel, diminish the cultural isolation of Israel on a global scale, and raise awareness about the beautiful picturesque locations in Israel to promote tourism among Indian citizens.

To bring the audiences of both countries closer to each other, cinema is an effective medium which binds nations together. Israelis have a great fascination for India’s culture and history. Long before the diplomatic ties normalized between India and Israel in 1992, Bollywood films enjoyed wide popularity among Israelis. Shai S Sampson, Director of Shai Motion Pictures Pvt Ltd, was the distributor of Indian films in Israel whose father, Solomon Sampson, moved to Israel in the 1960s. He owns a TV channel which shows Bollywood films in Israel.¹³¹

The absence of full diplomatic relations between India and Israel did not inhibit the immense popularity of Indian films in Israel’s public sphere. Several Indian film stars, such as Amitabh Bachchan, Raj Kapoor, and Nargis Dutt, were very popular in Israel. Raj Kapoor’s movies, *Aawara* (1951), *Shree 420* (1955), *Sangam* (1964), became huge hits in Israel. Popular Hindi film songs from India, such as *Ichak Dana*, *Bichak Dana*, *Mera Jhoota Hai Jani* (*Shree 420*), resonated amongst the Israeli audience in the early 1950s and 1960s. In the late 1990s, songs from the popular Hindi film, *Dil To Pagal Hai*, were played every day on Israeli Army Radio.¹³² In Israel’s mediascape, two channels, *Hot Bombay* and *Yes India*, are devoted to Bollywood films since 2004.¹³³ These are credible examples to show the penetration of India’s popular culture into Israeli minds.

In yesteryears, several Indian Jewish stars contributed to the Hindi film industry. By evading the patriarchal notions and misogynistic comments, women artists of Jewish descent dominated the world’s largest film industry. Noted ones include Nadira, Sulochana, Pramila, and Rachel Saffaer. A well-known Australian documentary filmmaker Danny Ben-Moshe made a documentary named, *Shalom*

¹³⁰ “Tourism between India and Israel impressive: envoy Alon Ushpiz,” *United News of India*, May 29, 2014.

¹³¹ Shubra Gupta, “How the 39th Jerusalem Film Festival offered a chance to experience in Israel, in reel and real,” *The Indian Express*, August 06, 2022.

<https://indianexpress.com/article/express-sunday-eye/39th-jerusalem-film-festival-experience-israel-reel-and-real-8074501/>.

¹³² “Bollywood is the flavour of the season in Israel,” *The Mint*, 20 August, 2007.

¹³³ *Ibid.*

Bollywood: The Untold Story of Indian Cinema, in which he narrated the stories of Jewish film stars in Indian cinema.¹³⁴ This documentary received good reviews and was screened in several international film festivals worldwide. Similarly, Indian documentary film maker Rohan Sabharwal, chronicled the stories of Jews of Cochin in a film titled, *Where the Heart Is*.¹³⁵ These documentaries and short films depict the tales of the lesser-known contributions of Jewish communities to India for young audience of both nations. Reclaiming the fading memories of the past through films is a valuable contribution to both societies in this bilateral relationship.

Though only limited Bollywood films release in Israeli theatres, film festivals in both nations play an important role in featuring Indian and Jewish films. These festivals, hosted in various Indian and Israeli cities, provide a platform for the cinema fraternity to interact, collaborate and explore new avenues for joint film production. These film festivals have witnessed enthusiastic participation from the local citizenry in both nations. In August 2013, an Israeli Film Festival was held in association with the Chandigarh Film Society of India and the Embassy of Israel.¹³⁶ Israeli films were screened at the 4th edition of the IndiEarth Xchange 2015 festival in Chennai and the Bengaluru International Film Festival in 2017. Israel was the Country of Focus in the 49th edition of the International Film Festival of India (IFFI), held in Goa, in November, 2018. A Life-Time achievement award was conferred on Israeli filmmaker, Dan Wolman.

There is keen interest from Indian film makers to invest in Israeli technology for their films. The film start-ups in Israel specializing in animation to databases augur well for Indian film makers. For example, an Israeli start-up, Muvix, is re-imagining the way we watch movies in theatres.¹³⁷ The film and television institutes from India and Israel can collaborate for mutual film production, exchanging of artists, curators, and producers can be encouraged to strengthen the people to people contacts in this bilateral relationship. In the words of India's senior diplomat Ambassador Anil Trigunayat,

¹³⁴ Rich Tenorio, "When Jews ran....Bollywood?", *Times of Israel*, 04 April, 2018.

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/when-jews-ran-bollywood/>.

¹³⁵ Chintan Girish Modi, "Resurrecting Jewish History," *The Hindu*, September 23, 2016.

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/mumbai/entertainment/Resurrecting-Jewish-history/article13998265.ece>

¹³⁶ "Israeli film festival kicks off in Chandigarh," *The Tribune*, August 01, 2013.

¹³⁷ Indrani Baghchi, "Indian film makers scouting for business in Israel," *The Times of India*, January 13, 2018.

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/indian-filmmakers-scouting-for-business-in-israel/articleshow/62482064.cms>.

“Projects like Shalom Bollywood could enhance people to people understanding and mutual cultural appreciation.”¹³⁸

Academia

In the ongoing bilateral interactions between Tel Aviv and New Delhi, academic and research cooperation is significant as it facilitates personal interactions between students of India and Israel in various disciplines. In the mutual interests of India and Israel, joint research programmes, and conferences, can be promoted by academic and research institutions. The higher education institutes (HEIs) in India, such as O.P. Jindal Global University in Sonipat (Haryana), and the Indian Institute of Management (IIM) in Bengaluru (Karnataka) have established dedicated centres for Israel studies. Other prominent universities in India, such as Delhi University (DU), and Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), offer courses on Israel’s domestic affairs, foreign policy. The Presidency University in Kolkata (West Bengal) offers an undergraduate course on Global Jewish History.¹³⁹

Similarly, prominent Israel-based universities such as Tel Aviv University, Haifa University, and Hebrew University offer courses on India’s culture, history, foreign policy, and philosophy. Israel Universities have partnerships with various Indian higher education institutes such as IIT Delhi, IIT Bombay, IIT Madras, and O.P. Jindal University. There are nearly 1000 Indian graduate students studying in Israel, of which nearly half of them are post-doctoral fellows.¹⁴⁰ After the USA, UK, and Australia, Israel is emerging as one of the attractive destination for Indian students due to its highly ranked and reputed universities for its cutting edge research and innovative ecosystem.

To promote joint academic exchange between India and Israel, Tel Aviv University opened a centre for Israel Studies in Mumbai University in 2017 as both

¹³⁸ Personal Interview, Email, April 21, 2022.

¹³⁹ Gulam Jeelani, “India’s only Hebrew Univ teacher hopes Modi-Netanyahu bonhomie will boost Israel language,” *Hindustan Times*, July 06, 2017.

<https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/india-s-only-hebrew-univ-teacher-hopes-modi-netanyahu-bonhomie-will-boost-israel-language/story-Q0k7wRXBgYSO70bX81gvxJ.html>.

¹⁴⁰ “Israel to expand partnership with Indian academic institutions and industries,” *The New Indian Express*, 26 October, 2021.

<https://www.newindianexpress.com/world/2021/oct/26/israel-to-expand-partnership-with-indian-academic-institutions-and-industries-2376029.html>

countries observed the establishment of twenty-five years of diplomatic ties. In enduring bilateral relationship, language plays an important role for fostering P2P contacts. The difference in language limits the proximity of people of both nations. In view of the above, Tel Aviv University began teaching Hebrew classes in its established centre located in Mumbai. Prior to this, JNU was the only university in India to offer an optional course in the Hebrew language to its students in the curriculum.¹⁴¹ In Indian academia, Dr. Khurshid Imam, Assistant Professor at the School of Language, Literature and Culture Studies, is the only Hebrew language teacher in JNU. Besides these, Hebrew was taught in India by Christian seminaries and theological centres such as United Theological College in Bengaluru, and Israeli Jewish organizations in India's north eastern states such as Mizoram, and Manipur.

Being two knowledge based economies, India and Israel can broaden their engagement in higher educational institutions to enhance academic mobility. Both countries have recognized the importance of education in the relationship. In 2013, both countries, as part of government-to-government initiatives, launched *India-Israel Joint Academic Research Programme*, to boost academic research between the two countries. As part of this initiative, fellowships were awarded to students from various science streams such as (mathematics, computer sciences, chemistry, physics, computational biology), and humanities (archaeology, cultural studies, cinema, television, and theatre arts).¹⁴² These fellowships are funded by higher education bodies of India and Israel such as University Grants Commission (UGC), Israeli Council for Higher Education, and the Israel Science Foundation.

The student and faculty exchange programmes in higher education institutions can promote bilateral cooperation in research. In the words of former Israeli Ambassador to India, Alon Ushpiz, "*Israel offers 200 post-doctoral fellowships of which about 80 percent are availed by Indian students.*"¹⁴³ Apart from the above

¹⁴¹ Gulam Jeelani, "India's only Hebrew Univ teacher hopes Modi-Netanyahu bonhomie will boost Israel language," *Hindustan Times*, July 06, 2017.

<https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/india-s-only-hebrew-univ-teacher-hopes-modi-netanyahu-bonhomie-will-boost-israel-language/story-Q0k7wRXBgYSO70bX81gvxJ.html>.

¹⁴² "Israel beckons Indian Students," *The Hindu*, September 21, 2014.

<https://www.thehindu.com/features/education/college-and-university/israel-beckons-indian-students/article6429959.ece>

¹⁴³ "India, Israel take up joint research programmes," *The Business Standard*, May 29, 2014.

<https://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/india-israel-to-take-up-joint-research-programmes-114052>

mentioned initiatives, there are several other scholarships offered by both countries for their students. Israeli Government offers various scholarships to Indian students to study in Israel, which included: Ministry of Foreign Affairs Scholarships, Excellence Fellowship Programme for Researchers, and Ph.D. Sandwich Fellowship Programme. Both countries signed an agreement with leading academic institutions to expand the partnership in the field of education and research. The Welingkar Institute of Management Development and Research (WeSchool) campuses in Bengaluru and Mumbai signed MoUs with three Israel universities which included Ben Gurion University, Negev, Reichman University (Israel's first private university), and Tel Aviv University. SP Jain School of High Technology, affiliated to SP Jain School of Management, signed MoU with Reichman University to offer a six month long course on cyber security in Israel to its students.¹⁴⁴ In the words of India's senior diplomat Ambassador Anil Trigunayat, "both nations can identify opportunities for collaboration through think tanks for quality education as it is non-conflictual nature of the bilateral ties."¹⁴⁵

As the new National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, allows foreign universities to set up their campuses in India, Israel needs to explore this option. Both countries can further strengthen student exchange programmes at the undergraduate and post graduate level to accelerate academic cooperation between Tel Aviv and New Delhi. Israel, being a leader in the innovation and entrepreneurial ecosystem, with a tech incubation system in its university campuses it provides immense opportunities for Indian students to choose the courses for their research and careers. The courses related to Agriculture, Water Management, Cyber Security, Conflict Resolution, Law and Public Policy, offer a unique experience for Indian students in shaping their careers towards policy making and providing long-term sustainable solutions. In the wider bilateral relationship, education is an important dimension where opportunities for collaboration can be identified. Long term investment in academia and research will be essential to facilitate the regular two-way flow of students in future.

In thirty years of the establishment of diplomatic ties, this was merely limited to

901802_1.html

¹⁴⁴ "India, Israel institutions ink pact for education, training," *The Business Line*, January 15, 2018.

<https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/news/national/india-israel-institutions-ink-pact-for-education-training/article9362264.ece>.

¹⁴⁵ Personal Interview, Mr. Anil Trigunayat, Former Indian Ambassador to the Indian Missions in Cote d'Ivoire, Bangladesh, Mongolia, USA, Russia, Sweden and Nigeria, Libya and Jordan, Email, April 21, 2022.

Academia (A2A), Business (B2B), Government (G2G) partnerships. Beyond this, the bilateral partnership can be extended to non-government, people, and private sector collaborations. Despite the normalization of ties, the people-to-people contacts remained as a symbolic significance in the partnership. Both countries need to launch awareness campaign for active engagement with their societies. For instance, The *Know India Programme* (an initiative for engagement with the Indian diaspora abroad) has been a very effective platform in binding the Indian origin youth to connect with their homeland.¹⁴⁶ In the words of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry, “This can be an effective programme in binding the youth of both nations which can also be seen as a catalyst in strengthening people to people contacts.”¹⁴⁷

In 2011, an innovative initiative named, The Israel Project (TIP) was launched by Israel to connect with Indian journalists, and policy makers, for the promotion of bilateral cooperation between Tel Aviv and New Delhi. The contacts can be enhanced through the interactions of various professional bodies like industry chambers and associations, voluntary organizations, joint ventures, and the collaboration between academic institutions, exchange of artists, musicians, etc. Several Indian states which have/had a Jewish population can launch initiatives to woo Israeli tourists to India to visit the Jewish heritage sites located in their states. The allocation of resources, investment in areas such as tourism, joint academic and research cooperation, preservation of Jewish heritage sites, and easing of visa norms can bridge the gap by bringing both Indian and Israeli people together.

To conclude, being vibrant democracies, the civil society interactions have strengthened the existing India and Israel relationship. The non-governmental ties will have a large role to play in the bilateral relationship as they seek to reinforce people to people contacts at the grassroots level between the two societies. The exchange programmes in diverse fields between the two countries can have an enormous influence in deepening and broadening the relationship. In sum, soft power diplomacy is one key factor which can add great impetus and substance to it in the long run.

¹⁴⁶ Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, July 2021, p.5.

¹⁴⁷ Personal Interview, Arab & Israel Desk, Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry, *Email*, 26 May, 2022.

Conclusion

India's ties with Israel followed a strange trajectory after India officially recognized Israel on September 17, 1950. The exchange of ambassadors was deferred, and full diplomatic ties were not established until 1992.

Despite the lack of diplomatic ties with Jewish state, it figured prominently in India's foreign policy and was regularly tested in the Cold War years. New Delhi's approach towards the West Asian region during the Cold War was largely influenced by the partition of the subcontinent on a religious basis, which led to the creation of Pakistan, the dispute with Islamabad over Jammu and Kashmir, which is a Muslim majority province, and the existence of a large Muslim minority population in post-partition India. Due to various historical reasons, India's pre-independence days had a strong bearing on its policy towards Israel and the Palestinian question. Throughout the Cold War, the Indo-Israeli ties rested on the pillar of *recognition without relationship*. In the early 1950s and 1960s, New Delhi remained vocal and consistent in its diplomatic support to the Arab states, particularly towards the Palestinian cause. Though India's Israel policy was not driven by anti-Semitism or any bilateral dispute between them, Israel's endeavor to normalize ties with India turned out to be futile despite India remaining a major priority in Israel's foreign policy agenda after its establishment. New Delhi sought Arab states' support on its Kashmir dispute with Islamabad because the support from numerically significant Arab states was important whenever the issue was discussed in the United Nations and other international forums. However, this pro-Arab policy has not yielded any major dividends for India during the Cold War years.

Limited contacts with Tel Aviv did not, however, constrain New Delhi from seeking military and agricultural assistance from it. For instance, India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, sought agricultural assistance in the early 1950s and arms from Israel in India's war with China in 1962. Further, Israel provided military support to India in its two wars with Pakistan in 1965 and 1971. In turn, New Delhi assisted Tel Aviv with the required spare parts for its Ouragan fighter aircraft, Israeli Mystere, and the AMX-13 tanks during the Six Day War against the Arabs in 1967.¹ Though India quietly pursued *limited ties* with Israel, they were rarely publicly acknowledged by India. However, the arm sales by Israel to India did not play a significant role in its

¹ Jacob Abadi, *Israel's Quest for Recognition and Acceptance in Asia*. (London: Frank Cass, 2004).

defence needs until the disintegration of the Soviet Union.

During the Cold War years, India's engagement with West Asia in general, and Israel in particular, was largely viewed through a Cairo-centric policy. However, this consistent policy, backed by various governments under the leadership of the Indian National Congress Prime Ministers, evoked wide criticism whenever India's policy towards West Asia was debated in the Parliament or outside. There was a limited consensus on this policy, but it was opposed by various opposition parties who urged India's ruling political dispensation to revise its policy towards Israel as they desired normalizing relations with the Jewish state. They saw this as compatible with Indian interests. Nevertheless, when the opposition was in power under Moraji Desai, even he did not take any step to remedy the existing policy.²

Apart from the reasons mentioned above, several other factors have strengthened India's pro-Arab policy: The birth of the Organization for Islamic Cooperation in 1969, and the shift in India's policy towards West Asia from political to economic interests in the region. The oil boom in West Asia in the mid-1970s, in general, India's dependence on the energy resources from the region and the importance of India's stakes in trade and transit routes from West Asia to other parts of the world reinforced India's pro-Arab policies. There were a large number of Indian expatriates ranging from skilled workers to laborers living in the Gulf countries. The remittances and welfare of nearly half a million Indian citizens residing in Arab states emerged as an important factor. Israel's hostile relations with the Arab states and a series of military conflicts in 1948, 1956, 1967, and 1973 ensured that Arab-Israeli relations remained in a stalemate.

During the Cold War years, *non-relations* with Israel and any change in policy by India towards it was viewed as the dilution of India's commitment to the Palestinian cause. However, India's refusal to upgrade its diplomatic ties with Israel in the Cold War years and enhanced engagement with the Arab States has not achieved any major outcomes as anticipated by India.

The lack of reciprocity from Arab states, despite India consistently advocating the Palestinian cause was disappointing to India. India's policy towards Israel remained lacklustre without any reorientation, but even when the strategic environment in West Asia itself was undergoing major changes in the 1970s and 1980s. New Delhi was not only reluctant to change its policy but also failed to understand the consequence of interests between the two countries. Thus, the relationship was mostly under wraps

² Ibid. p.214.

during the Cold War years.

Setting the Stage for Change in Policy

The disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the emergence of the USA as a unipolar power in global politics brought a major shift in international politics. Apart from the changes in international politics, developments within the West Asian region, such as the West Asian peace conference in the 1990s, and the weakening of the Palestinian cause as a result of Iraq's invasion of Kuwait necessitated the revision of India's policy towards the region.

Apart from the above-mentioned factors, external powers such as the USA did play a significant role in changing the course of Indo-Israeli ties towards the end of the century. The Jewish lobby and pro-Israeli interest groups in the USA have played a crucial role in changing India's traditional policy towards Israel. In 1991, a delegation led by the World Jewish Congress embarked on a visit to New Delhi to convince the then Prime Minister of India, P. V. Narasimha Rao, to normalize ties with Israel. In the meeting, it was conveyed to Rao, by one of the members of the delegation that the *"leaders of the American Jewish community ... would regard him as no different from the Head of Iraq or another Third World country if he continued with the hypocrisy of refusing to recognize some sort of normalization of relations with Israel."*³

At the domestic level, New Delhi faced innumerable challenges on the economic front with a sharp reduction in capital inflows, foreign exchange reserves at less than \$6 billion, which was inadequate to meet India's import needs, double digit inflation, fiscal deficit of 8% of GDP (Gross Domestic Product), current account deficit of 2% of GDP, and a sluggish economic growth rate.⁴ All this contributed to the deterioration of the Indian economy and clamour to mitigate the crisis was growing.

Against this background, the then Prime Minister of India, P.V. Narasimha Rao, believed that the support of U.S. based Jewish lobby can be influential in securing aid from International Monetary Fund (I.M.F) to tide over the economic crisis and the diasporas from India and Israel can play an important role in attaining India's much needed financial assistance. It goes without saying that the changes in the global order, shifts in West Asian politics, and developments in India's economy and domestic politics culminated in India normalizing relations with Israel.

³ Shalom Salomon Wald & Arielle Kandel, *India, Israel and the Jewish People, Looking Back, Looking Ahead, 25 Years After Normalization*, (Jerusalem: The Jewish People Policy Institute, 2017) p. 174.

⁴ India, Ministry of Finance, *Economic Survey* (New Delhi: Ministry of Finance, Government of India, 1991-92.)

Prior to the establishment of diplomatic ties with Israel, the first sign of change in India's policy towards Israel surfaced when New Delhi, along with a majority of the UN members, voted in favour of repealing the General Assembly Resolution No: 3379 of 1975, which equated Zionism with racism. This move by India can be considered as a quantum leap in altering its traditional policy towards Israel.

Though Narasimha Rao's government faced criticism due to the change in the policy towards Israel largely driven by Washington's pressure and international monetary bodies, the decision can be considered a *hallmark* policy of India's external affairs in the post-Cold War era. Notwithstanding the challenges he faced, Narasimha Rao's decision was an economic and political necessity that augured well for India's foreign policy, and Narasimha Rao crossed the rubicon by upgrading India's diplomatic relations with Israel on January 29, 1992.

From the Israeli point of view, it was a major diplomatic breakthrough as it normalized relations with most of the countries in the Asian continent in the post-Cold War years, such as China, Cambodia, India, Vietnam, followed by others. In the wake of their rising political and economic clout, formal diplomatic ties with major powers such as China and India were seen by Israeli diplomats as a diplomatic success story in Israeli foreign policy.

Following the normalization of Indo-Israel ties, the bilateral relationship flourished in three areas: (a) defence (b) economy (c) people-to-people contacts.

In strategic terms, the defence cooperation strengthened the bilateral partnership between India and Israel in the post-Cold War years. After the Cold War, due to the collapse of India's largest defence supplier, the Soviet Union, India diversified its military procurement from other countries such as the USA, Israel and France. Indo-Israeli military ties have been on an upward trajectory since the normalization of ties between them. India, being one of the largest defence markets in the world and Israel's robust military industry to export its equipment enabled the two countries to converge on military and security cooperation.

For instance, in a span of nine years, from 1992 to 2000, there were over fifty defence-related visits by both countries. In 1999, Israel provided military assistance to India during the Kargil war. During the first decade of the 21st century, Tel Aviv transferred nearly US\$10 billion worth of military equipment to India.⁵ In recent times,

⁵ Efraim Inbar and Alvite Singh Ningthoujam, "Indo-Israeli Defense Cooperation in the Twenty First Century," *Mideast Security and Policy Studies* 93, (Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies, Bar-Ilan

during 2016-20, New Delhi, with 42%, accounted for Israel's major share of arms exports, followed by Azerbaijan (13.9%), Vietnam (11%), and United States of America (6%) respectively.⁶ According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), military weapons sales to India from Israel increased by 175 per cent between 2015 and 2019. However, during 2017-21, France accounted for nearly 27% of India's total arms imports, the United States of America (USA) for 12 %, thereby displacing Israel to the fourth position.⁷

With changing times, New Delhi aims to modernize its military infrastructure and armed forces, and Tel Aviv wants to commercialize its defence capabilities. From being an exporter-importer relationship, both countries aim towards joint production, research and development (R&D) as they face security challenges emanating from their borders. Defence industries in Israel can invest in India as part of India's flagship programmes, such as *Make in India* and *Atmanirbhar Bharat* (self-reliant India), as New Delhi aims to attain self-reliance in producing military hardware. The joint production of military equipment such as missiles like long-range surface-to-air, radars, MRSAM, UAVs, and assault weapons can explore new markets, especially in countries where they face insurgency, and terror to export Indian manufactured Israeli products.

Israel's cutting-edge technology, particularly in defence and security, benefits India in upgrading its military equipment. In the last three decades, the defence partnership has grown considerably in three areas: intelligence sharing, military equipment, and training and technology. The coordination between India and Israel intelligence agencies, Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), and its counterpart Mossad, can be helpful in curbing terror. The joint military exercises involving Indian and Israeli military forces acquaint each other with the best operating procedures of the two countries. The collaboration between India's Defence and Research Organization (DRDO) and Israel's MAFAT (Directorate of Defence Research & Development) can identify the scope for mutually beneficial technologies between India and Israel for robust defence engagement.

India and Israel, can also explore opportunities in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). Israel's interest in IOR is particularly due to the eight-kilometre long coastline in the Gulf of Aqaba, which is part of the Red Sea. However, Israel faces challenges from

University January 2013).p.6-7.

⁶ Pieter D. Wezeman, Alexandra Kuimova and Siemon T. Wezeman, "Trends in international arms transfers 2020," *Stockholm International Peace Research Institute*, March 2021, p. 2.

⁷ Ibid.

its neighbours like Iran due to its ongoing geopolitical rivalry and its political adversary Pakistan as these two countries are located in IOR. From national security and economic interests point of view, the mutuality of interests between India and Israel is very significant on issues such as the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), and threats to maritime security.

The strengthening of military cooperation between India and Israel was driven by the shared terror threat perception as they are surrounded by hostile neighbours. Though it can be argued that the roots and nature of terrorist threats of two differ, they have faced the challenge of terrorism since they emerged as independent nations. The recent developments in West Asia and the Afghanistan-Pakistan region could make this challenge even more complex to deal with. In 2017, a joint article authored with Benjamin Netanyahu, Narendra Modi, emphasized, “*We both recognize the threat terrorism poses to our countries and to global peace and stability . . . India and Israel are committed to working together to fight this scourge.*”⁸ The security and defence partnership between the two play a critical role in addressing India’s security challenges primarily due to four reasons:

- First, on the external front, India continues to face cross-border terrorism from its immediate neighbour, Pakistani safe havens. The political instability in Afghanistan after USA withdrawal from the region in 2021, can pose a strategic risk for India due to Pakistan’s proximity and undeniable link with the Taliban, especially the Haqqani group. On the domestic front, insurgency in some parts of the North East and naxal violence in a few Indian states pose a major challenge to India’s security environment.
- Second, Beijing expanding its footprint through its military cooperation with Islamabad with the delivery of the latest advanced military equipment can adversely affect India’s security apparatus as it poses a major challenge near LOC, especially after the withdrawal of Art.370 to the state of Jammu and Kashmir.
- Third, China’s enduring military presence in the Line of Actual (LAC), and on India’s periphery is a major concern, which can threaten India’s internal and

⁸ Narendra Modi and Benjamin Netanyahu, “Hand in hand into the future: Indian PM’s historic visit to Israel reflects how the two countries are working together on many fronts,” *Times of India*, 4 July, 2017.

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/blogs/narendra-modis-blog/hand-in-hand-into-the-future-indian-pms-historic-visit-to-israel-reflects-how-the-two-countries-are-working-together-on-many-fronts/?source=app&frmapp=yes>.

external security. Beijing's expanding presence due to its strategic and security interests in South Asia has emerged as a major implication for New Delhi's national security.

- Fourth, the undeniable link of Kashmiri militant organizations with Palestinian based non-state actors can derail the peace and lead to the resurgence of terror groups in South and West Asia. In addition, the expanding presence of global Islamic militancy based terror groups such as ISIS emerge as a common threat to both countries as they can destabilize their regions. For instance, in April 2019, ISIS influenced terror groups unleashed attacks targeting civilians in Sri Lanka churches and hotels on Easter Sunday.⁹

Thus, the defence partnership between India and Israel is one of the most salient dimensions, which has bolstered the bilateral relationship in the post-Cold War years. The robust cooperation in defence between the two countries fulfils India's quest for technological advancement in the defence sector. After establishing full diplomatic ties between India and Israel in 1992, successive Indian governments in the last three decades gave new impetus to this security partnership. In the following decades, Israel remains a key partner in India's strategic calculus and in addressing its growing defence requirements in nurturing this bilateral defence partnership.

Though the defence and security partnership between India and Israel emerged as one of the significant dimensions in India's Israeli policy, the relationship was further deepened and broadened, covering trade and investment, science and technology, agriculture, health, education, and cyber security. Because of the upgradation of diplomatic ties in the post-Cold War years, the vibrant people-to-people interaction between the two countries played an important role, thereby, adding a new dimension in enhancing the ties between Tel Aviv and New Delhi.

India's normalization of relations with Israel also concurred with its liberalization of foreign investment policy, and new licensing and tariff arrangements. Over the course of three decades, the economic relationship between them has registered an upswing. India-Israel bilateral trade in overall goods and services increased from US\$ 200 million in 1992 to US\$ 1.2 billion in 2003, involving various items such as agricultural commodities, diamonds and textiles. The frequency of high level visits by business delegations from both countries facilitated trade and investment opportunities in Tel Aviv and New Delhi. In view of the shared economic interests, several dialogue mechanisms came into being to draw two countries towards each other

⁹ Country Reports on Terrorism 2019, (Bureau of Counterterrorism, U.S. Department of State), p. 168.

on economic and trade issues.

The bilateral trade which was confined to diamonds and precious stones, is now increased and diversified to various other items such as electronic machinery, pharmaceuticals, nuclear equipment and others. The overall trade in goods and services increased from US\$ 900 million in 2000 to US\$ 7.86 billion (excluding defence) in 2021.¹⁰ The total Israeli investments during April 2000 to March 2022, in Indian development projects is valued at US\$ 270 million with wide ranging investments in various areas such as agriculture, biotechnology, clean energy, infrastructure, space applications and others.¹¹ India is Israel's third largest trading partner in Asia after China and Hong Kong and the seventh largest globally.

Given Israel's impressive strides in agriculture and allied sectors, the reusage of its wastewater, it deepened its engagement with India in these areas. Under India's diverse federal polity, the collaboration between India and Israel in agriculture and water flourished within a short span of time. Currently, we have twenty-nine fully active Centres of Excellence (CoE) under the framework of the Indo-Israel Agricultural Project (IIAP), benefitting millions of farmers in various parts of India. These two pillars were very essential in the bilateral relationship as it shifted Israel's engagement from New Delhi to India's state capitals.

With limited availability of resources, these centres play an important role in improving the yields of various crops such as citrus fruits, mangoes, oranges and vegetables. The beekeeping and animal husbandry are other non-farming activities where these centres provide training with the latest technologies. However, an increase in the productivity of crops must also lead to the creation of a market to sell the produce otherwise, the farmers may not be keen to adopt Israeli technology that otherwise would enhance the yield of crops.

From the traditional areas such as agriculture, and water conservation, India and Israel explored new frontiers such as startups and innovation ecosystem. As per World Bank's 2018 data, Israel spends 4.95% of its GDP on Research and Development (R&D). Due to its technological superiority and an impressive entrepreneurial model, it emerged as a *Start-Up Nation*, which has the highest number of start ups per capita in

¹⁰ Director General of Foreign Trade, 2020-21.

¹¹ Embassy of India, Tel Aviv, Israel, "India-Israel Economic and Commercial Relations," last accessed November 25, 2022,

<https://www.indembassyisrael.gov.in/pages?id=nel5a&subid=7ax9b#:~:text=India%2DIsrael%20Economic%20and%20Commercial%20Relations&text=From%20US%24%20200%20million%20in,2.>

the world. Israel's unique entrepreneurial and innovation ecosystem and India's young human capital and talent pool make India and Israel as natural allies in fostering partnership. New Delhi can emerge as a major market place for Tel Aviv's innovative companies.

To advance the relationship further, both countries can converge together in the field of new and emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), crypto technology, cyber technology, and quantum technology. The collaboration in these areas can transform the way we live and work. Currently the relationship has flourished in every prominent field such as cyber, military, and space. Both countries can make efforts to increase collaboration between corporate houses, entrepreneurs, and universities, which can influence the business landscape in years ahead.

In the post-COVID-19 pandemic world, digitalization and innovation can widen the scope of the partnership. The advancement of digital technologies and inter-connectivity in the era of digitalization is very crucial. For instance, the cutting edge technologies in Israel can provide technological assistance to India in digitalization of its health care. To consolidate economic ties further, trilateral cooperation with the US can be explored to deepen the economic partnership in the areas of entrepreneurship, innovation, water and renewable energy.

To further expand trade between the two countries, India and Israel started Free Trade Agreement (FTA) negotiations in May 2010. Though both sides aimed to conclude the talks regarding FTA by mid-2022, they have failed to make headway so far. The rising economic clout of the Chinese in international monetary bodies, disruptions due to COVID-19, and the war in Ukraine have disrupted the supply chains across the globe and altered the global economic landscape. Given these developments, India and Israel need to explore new opportunities in economic partnership.

At Track One level-i.e., government-government- the India-Israel relationship is framed within the defence and/ or economic prism. Although trade and security dimensions are primary drivers of India's Israel policy, the nature of civil society, i.e., people-to-people contacts, usher in a new dawn in the bilateral relationship. Joseph Nye, coined the term *smart power*, which is a combination of hard and soft power. The element of soft power opened a new chapter in Indo-Israel ties and a window of opportunity for many Israelis and Indians to interact with each other.

The historical and cultural connections, parliamentary democracy, multi-ethnic and multi-lingual population bind India and Israel together. The Indian diaspora in Israel and Jews in India have played an influential role in various fields ranging from

administration, governance, films, dance, theatre arts, and others. Additionally, the globalization and advancements in science and technology added new momentum in enhancing India's ties with Israel. Due to the absence of diplomatic relations between the two countries, civil society dimension was *a missing link*, in the Cold War years. Upon the normalization of ties, both countries deepened their engagement in various arenas such as academia, health, tourism, film and TV industry. Heralding anew era in connectivity through the introduction of several flights connecting various parts of India with Tel Aviv gives a big boost to tourism, which acts as an important economic driver for both nations. For most Indian and Israeli academics, who had little contact with each other in the Cold War years, steps have been taken to promote research and academic linkages between the two countries.

The mutual understanding and deep admiration for each other's civilization and culture is a new component of this relationship. In redefining and revitalizing the relationship, the people-to-people contacts strengthen the soft power diplomacy in Indo-Israel relations. The momentum gained in areas of security and trade post normalization of ties must also be accelerated in other areas such as culture, education, and tourism. The greater interaction between Indian and Israeli nationals, particularly the youth, infuses new energy and enhances the goodwill in both countries in respect of each other. Thus, the civil society interactions between two democracies and open societies constitute the upward trajectory of Indo-Israel relations.

Israel and Palestine : India's Balancing Act

Despite India's growing ties with Israel after the end of Cold War, it has not diminished its longstanding support for an independent Palestinian statehood. Within the context of changed global realities, India not only increased its engagement with Israel but also imparted new dynamism with other players in West Asia such as Saudi Arabia and Iran. India pursued its relationship with Israel without diluting its ties with other actors in the region. Though Jana Sangh and its offshoot Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), always had a deep admiration for Israel and foster growth of ties with it, it continued to maintain India's traditional stand towards the Palestinian cause.

In April 1999, Vajpayee assured Arafat of India's support for the Palestine national movement during his visit to Delhi. During Ariel Sharon's visit to India, New Delhi made it clear *it would not dilute its traditional support to the cause of Palestinians*.¹² Indeed, then Prime Minister of India rejected Israeli request to declare

¹² "Unequivocal Support for Palestine Cause,' Says PM," *The Hindu*, 25 September 2003.

Hamas and Hezbollah as *terrorist organizations*. In the 53rd session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), New Delhi co-sponsored United Nations draft resolution on “*the right of Palestinians to self-determination*.”¹³ In 2003, Indian government offered assistance to the Palestine National Authority (PA) for a diplomatic enclave in New Delhi and voted in favour of the UNGA resolution against construction of a separate wall by Israel. All these diplomatic moves by BJP make it clear that India remained unequivocal in continuing its support to the Palestinians. In addition to the above diplomatic gestures by New Delhi, the bilateral trade between Palestine and India reached \$20 million in 2001, which was mostly related to telecommunications and pharmaceuticals.

The return to power by Congress under UPA (United Progressive Alliance) with outside support from the left parties in 2004 did not reverse India’s Israel policy. Though Left parties were critical of UPA government in cosying up to Israel, it did not inhibit India in deepening its engagement with Israel. Undoubtedly, India’s engagement with Israel enjoyed greater consensus within the domestic political setting. Parallel to the growing partnership with Israel, the Congress government also took a strong pro-Palestinian stance in multilateral bodies. Even as the India-Israel partnership flourished during 2004-2014, regular political interactions with the Palestinian leadership have been an integral element in its policy towards Palestine.

After the UPA government was sworn in under the leadership of Dr. Manmohan Singh, E.Ahamed, India’s External Affairs Minister visited Palestine and assured Arafat of India’s support to the people of Palestine. In an interaction with Saudi Arabia journalists, Dr. Manmohan Singh reiterating India’s policy towards Palestine and said, “*it is an article of faith for us*.”¹⁴ India’s former Permanent Representative to the United Nations who served as special envoy for West Asia visited Palestinian territories six times (February and November 2005, August 2006, February, September, and October 2007). Palestinian National Authority President Mahmud Abbas embarked on a visit to India thrice during 2005 and 2010.

In addition, to the regular high-level political interactions between India and Palestine, New Delhi continued with its economic aid and humanitarian assistance for the people of Palestine. Over the last two decades, India’s development partnership with

¹³ India, Ministry of External Affairs, *Annual Report* (New Delhi: External Publicity Division of the Ministry of External Affairs, 2003-04).

¹⁴ “PM’s Interview with Saudi Journalists,” February 27, 2010. Last accessed November 27, 2022, http://pmindia.nic.in/saudi_journalists.htm

Palestine has had three foundational elements: (a) infrastructural projects, (b) capacity building programmes (c) humanitarian assistance. Since 2005, New Delhi has assisted the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) with economic aid of more than \$50 million. It included \$15 million development assistance as assured by India during the Palestinian President Mahmood Abbas, visit to India in May 2005, \$5 million at the Paris Donors Conference in 2007, \$10 million for development programmes during the Palestinian President Mahmood Abbas visit to India in October 2008, \$20 million budgetary support to the Palestine Solidarity Network (PSN) in 2009 and 2010, \$3 million to the Palestinian refugees during the same period.¹⁵ In view of the above, it can be stated that India consistently supported the cause of Palestinians in various multilateral forums but also played an active role in the development of Palestine, which was crucial to regional stability in West Asia.

Ever since Prime Minister Narendra Modi assumed office in 2014, it was widely believed that due to his party's favorable orientation and ideological affinity with Israel, it may change India's traditional policy towards Palestine. However, he viewed *Israel* and *Palestine* within the larger framework of New Delhi's West Asia policy and engaged with every nation in India's extended neighbourhood. He made visits to UAE in 2015 and 2019, Saudi Arabia in 2016 and 2019, Iran and Qatar in 2016 and Bahrain in 2019.

A subtle shift in policy can be seen when he became the first Prime Minister from India to visit Israel in 2017, which was a standalone visit to the Jewish state and not engaging with Palestine simultaneously, although Abbas visited New Delhi before Modi travelled to Tel Aviv. Later, he also became the first Prime Minister of India who embarked on a visit to Palestine in February 2018. All the former External Affairs Ministers, including the late Sushma Swaraj, since the upgradation of diplomatic ties with Israel, included Palestine in their itinerary whenever they visited Israel. By embarking on a visit to Israel without a stopover in Palestine, Narendra Modi made a clear departure from tradition, thereby, *de-hyphenating* India's Israel policy vis-à-vis Palestine. Toeing the Prime Minister's line and not following the pattern set by his predecessors, the External Affairs Minister, Dr. S. Jaishankar, also embarked on a visit to Israel in 2021 without going to Palestine.

Though New Delhi had not abandoned its diplomatic support to the PLO for the two-state solution, unlike in the past, when India voted against Israel on the platform

¹⁵“India Palestine Relations,” February 2011. Last accessed December 06, 2022, from <http://meaindia.nic.in/meaxpsite/foreignrelation/palestine.pdf>.

of the United Nations whenever a resolution went against the interests of the people of Palestine, for the first time, New Delhi abstained in the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC), in July 2015 against *war crimes* by Israel as well as Hamas during the 2014 war.¹⁶ Second, India once again abstained from the same UNHRC resolution when it was voted upon in March 2016 and 2017. However, in a landmark shift from its decades-old policy, India voted in favour of Israel at the UN's Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). New Delhi voted against the resolution on conferring an observer status to a Palestinian human rights organization, named *Shahed*.¹⁷

One sticking point in India's balancing act towards Israel vis-à-vis Palestine, remains the city of Jerusalem. Though New Delhi reiterates its commitment towards a two-state solution, during Modi's visit to Palestine in 2018, in a public statement issued by the Indian Prime Minister, he had not made any reference to *East Jerusalem* as the capital of sovereign, independent Palestine state, which was significant. In 2016 and 2017, New Delhi chose to abstain when the UNESCO led 58 member executive board moved a resolution sponsored by Arab countries on explicitly endorsing Islamic claims to the city of Jerusalem without any reference to Jewish history. However, India did not toe the line of the USA led by the Donald Trump administration when it decided to move its embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem and voted in a resolution against it. India's response remained very measured to this unilateral move by the USA, keeping in mind its interests in its future policy formulation towards West Asia.

On the political front, though India wanted to strengthen ties with Israel without alienating Palestine by reiterating its unequivocal support to the people of Palestine, New Delhi wanted to engage with these two countries independently and bilaterally unlike through the traditional Israel-Palestine prism. While New Delhi continued its long standing support to Palestine and deepening strategic engagement with Israel, the economic engagement with Palestinians on development issues remained robust.

In 2018, New Delhi enhanced its annual contribution to the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) from existing \$1 million to \$ 5 million; Indian Council for Cultural Relations enhanced its scholarships from 50 to 100

¹⁶ Suhasini Haidar, "India abstains from UNHRC vote against Israel," *The Hindu*, July 3, 2015,

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/india-abstains-from-unhrc-vote-against-israel/article7383796.ece>

¹⁷ Nayanima Basu, "In a first, India votes in favour of Israel at UN against Palestine human rights body," *The Print*, 11 July 2019,

<https://theprint.in/diplomacy/in-a-first-india-votes-in-favour-of-israel-at-un-against-palestine-human-rights-body/248543/>.

; New Delhi is setting up the Institute for Diplomacy in Surda, Ramallah at a cost of \$ 4.5 million; India-Palestine Techno Park in Ramallah at a cost of \$12 million, several MoUs were signed between Palestine and India in various fields such as agriculture, health, information technology and others. During Modi's visit to Palestine, India pledged one time project assistance of US\$ 42.1 million for Palestine Nation Building in education, health, and women empowerment. Eight development projects at a cost of nearly \$ 60 million are in progress. Nearly 1,000 Palestinians have participated in Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC), programme of which 150 slots are offered to Palestinian nationals annually.¹⁸ Through the above mentioned economic assistance in various forms, India not only added political clout but also economic weight to its traditional Palestine policy.

With the churning in geopolitics on India's western frontier, with the Abraham Accords and a multilateral grouping, popularly known as I2U2 (India, Israel, United States of America, and United Arab Emirates), the normalization of ties between Gulf nations and Israel opened new avenues for India's diplomacy towards Israel where New Delhi's engagement with Israel moved from bilateral to multilateral engagement covering various areas of cooperation. As New Delhi seeks to strengthen its ties with Israel, Tel Aviv's engagements with its other partners within the region is in the mutual interests of both nations as it advances India's political and economic stakes in its larger West Asia policy. In the words of Ambassador Anil Trigunayat, *"This is an economic partnership among four major powers each one of which is India's strategic partner. Hence synergies are aplenty and need to be harnessed for mutual advantage, tech flow will become easier."*¹⁹

In the end, two ancient civilizations but two young states summarize the relationship between India and Israel as the establishment of full diplomatic ties between the two completed thirty years. For India, a relationship that began on *hesitations of the past*, with alienating Israel and leaning towards Arab states, has now grown to be *multifaceted*, ranging from defence, trade, education, and healthcare. As the two nations enter into the fourth decade of their bilateral ties, their engagement with each other will be broadened and deepened further as both countries find new opportunities for future cooperation.

¹⁸ "India Palestine Relations," September 2019, last accessed December 06, 2022, https://mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/Bilateral_Brief-Sept_2019.pdf.

¹⁹ Personal Interview, Mr. Anil Trigunayat, Former Indian Ambassador to the Indian Missions in Cote d'Ivoire, Bangladesh, Mongolia, USA, Russia, Sweden and Nigeria, Libya and Jordan, Email, April 21, 2022.

In this thesis, I have assessed India's Israel policy in the post-Cold war years (1992-2022). The aim of this thesis has been to examine India's Israel policy through its various areas of engagement in the post-Cold War years. In the preceding chapters, the study discussed the broad areas of engagement in India's policy towards Israel. Building on the theoretical framework of *neorealism*, this thesis makes an important contribution to the study of India's Israel policy in the post-Cold war period. Theoretically, the thesis provided a macro overview of various dimensions of India's Israel policy.

Furthermore, a brief historical background of the evolution of India's Israel policy was necessary through a close analysis of various debates and policy changes in the colonial and post-independence era in the initial chapters. Against this setting, the study looked at India's policy shift towards Israel in the post-Cold War years along with various areas of cooperation.

After the Cold War, the regime change in New Delhi and its policy towards Tel Aviv largely remained unaltered from regional and domestic politics. Both countries aimed at strengthening the bilateral relationship in areas where they converged with each other. Notwithstanding their differences on certain key global and regional level issues, they did not inhibit both countries from embracing each other.

The existing literature has often overlooked the various multi-faceted dimensions of India's policy towards Israel, such as trade and civil society. The thesis attempted to look at these dimensions in detail and their role in reassessing the relationship between India and Israel. Additionally, unlike Indian states engagement with other nations in world politics, *Israel* remained the most attractive partner for India's federal polity to strengthen contacts with the Jewish state to address their immediate challenges covered in the chapter on *economic partnership*. All the Indian states (provinces), irrespective of their political ideology, actively engaged with Israel in various sectors such as agriculture, water, and alternative energy.

Apart from the security and economic partnership, the thesis looked at the role of people-to-people diplomacy, which can play a major role in strengthening Indo-Israel ties. The interactions between the two countries through non-governmental organizations, films, tourism, and academia were clearly elaborated in the thesis as this inter personal connect between India and Israel consolidates and deepens the relationship. This dimension in India's Israel policy and its *soft power* may act as a significant pillar in the growth of Indo-Israel ties in the future.

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India- Israel Relations

Katari Akhilesh Kumar*

[India and Israel share the civilization which signifies through the ancient realm of culture and diversity, and they became independent nations in 1947 and 1948, respectively. In the aftermath of independence, India pursued a policy of non-alignment, wherein, it remained aloof from both the superpowers i.e., the United States of America (USA) and the Soviet Union, while Israel pursued a policy of non-identification. Both the countries faced several challenges after the attainment of independence from colonial yoke from their immediate neighbours. Full-scale diplomatic relations were not established between India and Israel during the Cold War years despite India's recognition of Israel as a sovereign independent state in 1950.]

In the pursuance of its national interests, West Asia occupies a pre-eminent place in India's foreign policy due to its geopolitical and geostrategic considerations. The oil reserves in West Asia (which nearly possesses 60 percent of the world's petroleum reserves) are a major factor that drove Western powers like the United States of America (USA) to shape relations with Arab countries as it acts as a major link between Europe and Asia. The three factors which played a key role in shaping the politics of West Asia in the 1900s include Zionist nationalism, Western colonialism and imperialism, and Arab nationalism. It is through this lens, Indian National Congress advocated its policy towards West Asia. In the words of M.S. Agwani, "Geo strategists have described it as "the gateway of Asia and Africa" and the "backdoor of Europe."¹

In the context of India's policy towards West Asia, firstly, India's foreign policy tool of non-alignment into West Asia was envisaged to counter the Western powers' efforts to build anti-Soviet alliances there. Secondly, Pakistan's loyalty towards Islamic states in the West Asian region remained a huge concern for India's foreign policy calculations. Pakistan signing the Baghdad Pact in 1955 also became a major security threat to India. Thirdly, the Muslim factor that constituted a major minority population in India also became another critical factor in determining India's West Asia policy.² Subsequently, India became a major stakeholder in the diplomatic isolation of Israel during the Cold War years on various platforms such as Non- Aligned Movement (NAM), Bandung Conference, etc.

In the early 1960s, India aimed to strengthen cooperation with Arab countries in trade and economy. Despite overt unfriendliness by India towards Israel, the political waters were tested in India's Israel policy when war broke out between India and China in 1962. Despite the hostile relationship between Israel and India, military assistance was sought by Nehru to avert the invasion by the Chinese.

However, necessary technical and military assistance was provided by Israel to India.³ There was no change in India's Israel policy under other Prime Ministers Lal Bahadur Shastri and Indira Gandhi in the late 1960s and 1970s.

In later years, in war with Pakistan in 1965 and 1971, some military wherewithal was obtained from Israel by India. Though India had displayed a lackluster attitude to admit the same in the public domain, it had not remained averse to approaching Israel whenever the need arose. Though India anticipated support from Arab countries during the wars against Pakistan in 1965 and 1971, it had not received any support in its hour of crisis. The Arab nations such as Iran, Lebanon, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia remained unsympathetic in India's war against Pakistan.

Whenever there was a litmus test for the efficacy of India's Israel policy, the support it received from Israel was never placed in the public domain and thereby remained highly secretive. The cooperation that was received was never officially recognized by India. Despite the absence of diplomatic reciprocity from Arab countries, India maintained a 'principled distance' from Israel and had not brought any major shift in India's policy towards Israel.⁴

Unlike Nehru and Indira Gandhi, there were signs of improvement in ties with Israel in Rajiv Gandhi's years. Though there was no major reversal in India's Israel policy, he signaled a fresh approach in dealing with Israel. Unlike the former Prime Ministers who never met the leaders from Israel, Rajiv Gandhi initiated talks with Israel despite domestic constraints. Notwithstanding the inhibitions and political, domestic constraints of India's Israel policy, Rajiv Gandhi met his counterpart Shimon Peres in the United Nations' 40th session held in New York in 1985. From the side of Israel also, hopes were harbingering, and the mood was upbeat that time had come for both the countries to enhance the bilateral ties and diplomacy.⁵

After the demise of Rajiv Gandhi, due to the era of coalition politics, the space for diplomatic maneuvers

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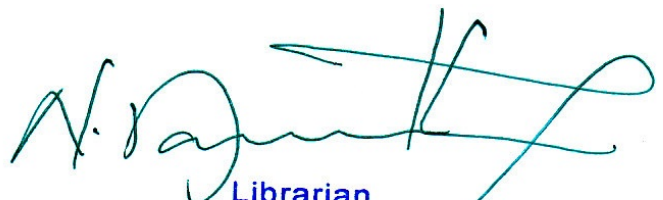
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INDIA AND ISRAEL IN THE POST COLD WAR WORLD: EMERGING STRATEGIC AND ECONOMIC DIMENSIONS

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