

INDIA: ISRAEL'S NEW ECONOMIC AND MILITARY PARTNER?

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Özet

İsrail ve Hindistan iki farklı devlettir. Ancak, uzun bir süre normal ilişkiler kuramamış olmalarına rağmen, bu iki ülke birçok benzerliğe ve ortak yöne sahiptir. Buna karşın, son dönemlerde İsrail ve Hindistan arasındaki ilişkiler askeri ve ticari alanlarda gelişme kaydetmektedir. Söz konusu ilişkiler göz önünde bulundurulduğunda, İsrail ile Hindistan arasında farklı alanlardaki iş birliğinin stratejik bir ortaklığa doğru evrilip evrilmediği cevaplanması gereken önemli bir soru olmaktadır. Bu kapsamda, bu makale iki devlet arasındaki ilişkilerin ve söz konusu ilişkilerin niteliğinin incelenmesini amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: İsrail, Hindistan, dış politika

HİNDİSTAN: İSRAİL'İN YENİ EKONOMİK VE ASKERİ PARTNERİ Mİ?

Abstract

Israel and India are two different countries. However, even two countries distanced from each other for decades, they still have many similarities and have much in common. There is a growing military and commercial relationship between India and Israel. Given the nature of the Indo-Israeli relationship, there is particularly one question to be answered: whether the Israel-India relations form a strategic partnership. This article gives a short account of the relations between two countries and tries to identify the character of the mentioned relations.

Keywords: Israel, India, foreign policy.

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Introduction

Israel and India are two different countries. India is one of the largest countries in the world, while Israel is a very small country and can hardly be pointed out in world atlas. However, both countries gained statehood around the same time from the British in the 1940s. And even two countries distanced from each other for decades, they still have many similarities and have much in common. Before independence both of them were under British control. Both of these countries were established after World War II, adopted the democratic system, and each also has a large Muslim minority population. They have experienced dynamic, technology-driven economic growth. Since their independence both of them had wars with their neighbors over border issues. India had wars with Pakistan and China and its borders with these countries are disputed, whereas Israel had wars with Syria, Egypt, Lebanon and Jordan and its borders aren't clear. More importantly, both of the countries face ballistic missile threats from at least one close state. India faces the nuclear threat posed by Pakistan, and Israel has to deal with the same kind of threat from Iran. And while Jews have always been a small religious minority in India, they have historically encountered very little anti-Semitism, and there is almost 1 percent of the Jewish population who has Indian ancestry living in Israel.¹

There is also a growing military and commercial relationship between India and Israel. Israel is India's one of main arms suppliers, and Israeli-Indian military cooperation extends to technology upgrades, joint research, intelligence cooperation, and even space. Israel helps India upgrade old armor and aircraft, and provides India with missiles, surveillance systems, border monitoring equipment, night vision devices, and other military support. These are some important examples of the military cooperation between India and Israel.

After the formal relations established in 1992, the cooperation between two countries have been productive. Both Israel and India have much to gain from the developing relationship between the two countries. Cooperation in the economic and military-security arena has grown, and there are widespread popular exchanges between the people of the two countries. As for Israel, India might become Israel's political friend, given the growing isolation of Israel around the world. On the other part, there are many potential benefits that both countries will accrue by associating themselves with and cementing their friendship. For all these reasons, this article aims to explore the relations and

¹ Noah Beck, "Israel and India: A Sensible Alliance?", *Charisma Magazine* (28 August 2013), [<http://www.charisamag.com/blogs/standing-with-israel/18538-israel-and-india-a-sensible-alliance>, accessed 24 October 2013]

possible cooperation areas between Israel and India, and looks whether the relations between two of them go to an intimate partnership.

Diplomatic and Economic Relations Between Two Countries

Israel was founded in 1948. Even though India recognized the newly established state shortly after its formation, India voted against partition of Palestine both in UNSCOP and in the UN General Assembly.² Mahatma Gandhi reasoned that Palestine “belongs to the Arabs just as England belongs to the English and France to the French”³, and Indian leaders considered Palestine as an Arab land, the Zionists to be allies of British imperialism. However, Israel sought to normalize its relations with India, which had recognized the Jewish state in 1950.⁴ Although an Israeli consulate was opened in Bombay in 1953, this development did not lead to full diplomatic ties and instead, the relations between two countries remained tense. For instance, the Sinai Campaign in 1956 ruined Israel’s prospects of building a working relationship with India and Nehru viewed Israel’s invasion of the Sinai Peninsula as a proof that “Israel was an ally of imperialism.”⁵ Against this backdrop, it is little wonder that there had been an absence of formal relations between two countries for decades.

During the 1990s, there has been an improvement in Israel’s relations with countries in Asia and Africa. As part of this development, India officially normalized relations with Israel on 29 January 1992⁶ and full diplomatic ties were established between Israel and India.⁷ Israel’s relations with India has been indeed a breakthrough for Israel’s standing in Asia. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the peace negotiations between Israel and the PLO in 1990s removed India’s fears of a hostile reaction on the part of the Arab states. The loss of Moscow’s support increased the importance of India’s relations with the US as well as with its Jewish community. These developments influenced India’s decision to normalize the relations with Israel, and with the

² Benyamin Neuberger, *Israel’s Relations with the Third World (1948-2008)* (Ramat Aviv: The S. Daniel Abraham Center for International and Regional Studies, Tel Aviv University, 2009), p.16.

³ P.R. Kumaraswamy, “India and Israel: Emerging Partnership”, in *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol.25, (December 2002), p.193.

⁴ P.R. Kumaraswamy, “Israel-India Relations: Seeking Balance and Realism”, in Efraim Karsh (eds), *Israel: The First Hundred Years Volume IV Israel in the International Arena* (London: Frank Cass, 2004), p.259

⁵ Benyamin Neuberger, *Israel’s Relations with the Third World (1948-2008)*, p.17.

⁶ Arielle Kandel, “The Significant Warming of Indo-Israeli Relations in the Post-Cold War Period”, in *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, Vol.13, No.4, (December 2009), [<http://www.gloria-center.org/2009/12/kandel-2009-12-07/>], accessed 24 October 2013].

⁷ Benyamin Neuberger, *Israel’s Relations with the Third World (1948-2008)*, p.22.

establishment of formal relations, comprehensive ties rapidly evolved in the field of security, agriculture, medicine, culture, science, and aviation.⁸

A number of ideological, strategic, and political factors affected the relations between India and Israel. Whereas strategic loss of Soviet Union for India and the Middle East peace process in 1990s have affected the relations positively, religion also has been a highly influential factor. India's fear of the reaction of the Muslim world and its large Muslim minority prevented normalizing relations with Israel. However, official relations were established between the two countries in 1992 following the rise to power of the the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), a party with favorable views towards Israel. In contrast to the Congress Party, which considered India to be a suprarreligious secular state, the BJP has been a Hindu party which underscored the religious differences between India and its Muslim neighbors, Pakistan and Bangladesh. As a result, the impact of the Muslim factor on India's foreign policy decreased and the BJP identified India's shared national interests with Israel.⁹

Since the end of the Cold War, there has been significant progress in relations between India and Israel on the diplomatic and political level. Israeli President Ezer Weizman's visit to India in December 1996 signaled the new bilateral warmth.¹⁰ The two states signed various trade agreements and initiated joint agricultural and industrial projects. Some top Israeli business leaders accompanied President Weizman on his trip to India, and after the Most Favored Nation CMFN agreement between the two countries was put in effect, trade between the two countries not only grew, but also diversified. As a result, India became Israel's second largest trading partner in Asia in 2002.¹¹ The bilateral relationship between India and Israel has steadily increased since its formal establishment in 1992, nevertheless, it was Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's visit to India in September 2003 that stepped up the relationship. It was the first ever visit by an Israeli prime minister to India. The visit was a significant milestone signaling the change of atmosphere, and an opportunity to enhance each other's understanding at the highest levels to promote bilateral defense and trade ties. During the visit, Sharon held talks on a wide range of issues with India's Prime Minister and other senior Indian officials. And six bilateral agreements were signed as a result of these discussions which included the agreements on environment protection, drugs trafficking, visa free

⁸ Ibid, p.23.

⁹ Efraim Inbar, "The Indian-Israeli Entente," in *Orbis*, Vol.48, No.1, (Winter 2004), pp. 90-91.

¹⁰ Ramtanu Maitra and Susan Maitra, "Weizman Visit Boosts Indo-Israeli Ties", *Executive Intelligence Review* Vol.24, No.6 (31 January 1997), [http://www.larouchepub.com/eiw/public/1997/eirv24n06-19970131/eirv24n06-19970131_008-weizman_visit_boosts_indo_israel.pdf, accessed 9 April 2014]

¹¹ Efraim Inbar, *Israel's National Security Issues and Challenges Since the Yom Kippur War*, (London: Routledge, 2008), p.176.

travel for diplomats and cooperation in health, education and culture.¹² In the years that followed, Israel and India strengthened their relations. Furthermore, Israel became one of India's largest arms providers.¹³

When full diplomatic relations were established between Israel and India, the developments on the diplomatic front were paralleled by those on the economic one. India instituted the policy of economic liberalization in 1991, and its newly accessible markets emerged as an objective for many corporations. This process was accompanied by a growing interest in economic opportunities in India on the part of the Israeli business sector, and an increasing volume of trade between the two countries. Though it did not initially form the main impetus for improved ties, economic cooperation between the two countries has steadily increased since 1992. Economic ties have greatly expanded in the fields of agriculture, science, and technology. Joint research and development projects in the fields of telecommunications and software have been main cooperation areas. Additionally, Indian and Israeli companies and research institutes formed many joint ventures for cooperation in agriculture, mainly in the areas of irrigation, water management, and crop production.¹⁴ Moreover, both countries emphasized that efforts should be made to fully utilize the potential for enhanced economic cooperation. India and Israel commenced the negotiations on a probable Free Trade Agreement (FTA) in 2007 to boost economic and bilateral ties. They concluded the seventh round of talks in June in 2013.¹⁵ Israeli authorities have expressed confidence that the FTA would change the composition of trade between both the countries. Alon Ushpiz, the Ambassador of Israel in India, have stressed in 2011 that the main areas of focus by Israel would be information technology, bio technology, bio chemistry and agriculture. He also expressed confidence that bilateral trade would touch \$12 billion mark in the next five years and "the agreement would change the composition of trade between both the countries."¹⁶ However, as the talks for

¹² Jyoti Malhotra, "Sharon's Visit to Clear Six Joint Pacts", *The Indian Express* (5 September 2003), [<http://archive.indianexpress.com/oldStory/31020/>, accessed 11 April 2014]

¹³ Harsh V. Pant, "India-Israel Partnership: Convergence and Constraints", in *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, Vol.8, No.4 (December 2004), [<http://www.gloria-center.org/2004/12/pant-2004-12-06/>, accessed 9 March 2014].

¹⁴ Arielle Kandel, "The Significant Warming of Indo-Israeli Relations in the Post-Cold War Period"

¹⁵ "Free Trade Agreement May Double India-Israel Trade to \$10 bn in 5 Years", *The Economic Times* (7 October 2013), [http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2013-10-07/news/42794527_1_india-alon-ushpiz-free-trade-agreement-israel-minister, accessed 11 April 2014]

¹⁶ "FTA to Become a Gamechanger in Trade with India: Israel", *Business Standard* (14 September 2011), [http://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/fta-to-become-a-gamechanger-in-trade-with-india-israel-111091400040_1.html, accessed 11 December 2013]

FTA between both the countries reached third round and looked positive, there has not been any deal signed yet.

In August 2012, India and Israel signed a \$50 million academic research agreement. The agreement included the joint research program and cooperation in the sciences, humanities, technology and other fields. The program is supposed to support research and cooperation “in the areas of the sciences, including life sciences and social sciences, as well as IT, technology, the humanities and agriculture.”¹⁷

There are many reasons for Israel to have close economic relations with India. Because the Israeli domestic market’s limited size is a major constraint on Israel’s economic development, it is necessary for Israeli companies to sustain growth and generate profits through exports. That’s why the huge size of the Indian market is lucrative and the high prospect of export opportunities makes India particularly attractive to Israeli companies. Moreover, cooperation with Indian firms facilitates Israel’s access to Southeast Asia and the Third World through India’s own ties with these countries. Whereas Israel has advantages from its economic relations with India; at the same time, India benefits from the transfer of Israeli advanced technology and expertise. First of all India’s cooperation with Israel contributes to the modernization of and strengthens the Indian economy. And, joint ventures in the fields of agriculture, science, and technology allow India to undertake research and development projects requiring important financial resources. In addition, Israel’s good relations with the United States and the European Union facilitate the access of Indian goods to these markets.

Since establishment of diplomatic relations between India and Israel in 1992, bilateral trade and economic relations progressed rapidly. Since 1992, trade between two countries diversified and reached almost \$ 4.4 billion in 2013. In 2013, India was Israel’s 10th largest trade partner and Israel’s third largest trade partner in Asia after China and Hong Kong. In the same year, India was the tenth largest import source of Israel including diamonds and India continued to be a ‘focus’ country for Israel’s increased trade efforts.¹⁸

Since the 1990s, an area of strategic importance for both states for cooperation has been the space sector. India has the indigenous launch capability and Israel has the capability to develop small and advanced satellites. India and Israel share a similar approach to national space activity, and both nations adopted a pragmatic approach to space from the beginning stages of their space programs. Given the strong technological background in both

¹⁷ Lior Dattel, “India, Israel Sign \$50 Million Academic Research Pact”, *Haaretz* (7 August 2012), [<http://www.haaretz.com/business/india-israel-sign-50-million-academic-research-pact-1.456468>, accessed 22 October 2013]

¹⁸ “India-Israel Economic and Commercial Relations”, *Embassy of India, Tel Aviv* (February 2014), [<http://www.indembassy.co.il/pages.php?id=14>, accessed 10 April 2014]

countries, they realized that in space technologies they have complementary capabilities, and therefore, cooperation has been perceived as an advantage. For this reason, both countries saw the other as an important companion in the quest for exploring and utilizing space and, they aspired to increase bilateral cooperation in this field. When Chairman of the India Space Research Organization visited Israel in August 2003, he expressed interest in the Israeli concept of small satellites and their employment, and added that “Israel has much to offer in terms of cooperative programs for the future.”¹⁹ As a result, Israel and India have stepped up their relationship in the space sector and in 2003, India launched the Israeli-built Tel Aviv University Ultraviolet Experiment (TAUVEX) on one of its satellites. In 2008, India also launched the Israeli TECSAR reconnaissance satellite, and launched a similar Israeli-built, Indian-operated satellite (RISAT-1) in 2009.²⁰ On 20 April 2009, India launched its RISAT-2 satellite. This satellite had all-weather capability to take images of the earth and was beneficial in mapping and managing natural disasters, besides amplifying defence surveillance capabilities of India. As per specifications, RISAT-2 was different from previous remote sensing satellites, because it used Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR), which was equipped with many antennas to receive signals that are processed into high-resolution pictures. SAR was built by Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI), the state-owned flagship of Israel’s defence industry, and it gave the satellite the defence capabilities.²¹ This cooperation was one of the important examples of a burgeoning relationship in the space arena between India and Israel.

Military and Strategic Ties

Arms sales and defense cooperation are two core issues which show the improved relationship between India and Israel. Military ties between both countries have considerably expanded since 1992. India’s quest for the latest military technologies complements Israel’s need to broaden the market for its military products, and today, military cooperation continues to form the core of the relations between two countries. Several strategic interests account for the development military ties since diplomatic relations were normalized. When

¹⁹ Siddharth Ramana, “India and Israel: Together in Space”, *Pakistan Defense* (16 February 2008), [<http://defence.pk/threads/india-and-israel-together-in-space.9941/>, accessed 22 October 2013]

²⁰ “Israeli Telescopes to Explore Space on Indian Satellite”, *Siliconindia News* (26 December 2003), [http://www.siliconindia.com/shownews/Israeli_telescopes_to_explore_space_on_Indian_satellite_-_nid-22326-cid-2.html, accessed 19 December 2013]

²¹ “India Successfully Launches Spy Satellite RISAT-2”, *NDTV* (20 April 2009), [<http://www.ndtv.com/article/india/india-successfully-launches-spy-satellite-risat-2-2146>, accessed 19 March 2014]

Soviet Union was dissolved, India lost its primary strategic and military partner, and Israel rapidly emerged as an alternate military supplier for India. For Israel's part, the country's limited domestic market and the need to finance the development of new weapons systems requires Israeli defense companies to generate revenues through exports.²² That's why India, with its large domestic market and growing defense budget, is an attractive partner for Israel.

Initially, a buyer-supplier relationship was formed between the two countries, and India procured from Israel advanced weapons systems and technologies. Israeli companies helped India upgrade some of its old Soviet platforms. Soviet immigrants in Israel who worked as technicians and engineers in the Soviet military industry were very useful when needed to retrofit the old Russian military equipment.²³ In addition to large volume of military sales by Israel to India, the joint military ventures were also formed for the development of specific weapons systems and technologies. This has been a new phase in the military relationship, indicated the trust and synergy in military affairs between the two states.²⁴ Especially after Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon visited India in 2003, the cooperation in defence area have continued to expand, and in 2009, it was reported that Israel became India's prime supplier of weapons and military technology.²⁵

When Israel's President Ezer Weizman became the first head of the Jewish state to visit India in December 1996, he negotiated the first weapons deal between the two nations, involving the purchase of Barak-1 vertically-launched surface-to-air missiles from Israel. Missiles have been a key element in Israel-India military partnership, and that has required intensive high-tech cooperation. The Barak-1 has the ability to intercept anti-ship missiles such as the Harpoon.²⁶ In 1996, India purchased 32 IAI 'Searcher' Unmanned Aerial Vehicles, Electronic Support Measure sensors and an Air Combat

²² Zeev Maoz, *Defending the Holy Land: A Critical Analysis of Israel's Security and Foreign Policy* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006), p.7.

²³ Efraim Inbar, *Israel's National Security Issues and Challenges Since the Yom Kippur War*, p.179.

²⁴ P.R. Kumaraswamy, "Indo-Israeli Military Ties Enter Next Stage", *International Relations and Security Network* (3 August 2007), [<http://www.isn.ethz.ch/Digital-Library/Articles/Detail/?lng=en&id=53611>, accessed 22 October 2013]

²⁵ "End of an Era: Israel Replaces Russia as India's Top Military Supplier", *World Tribune* (25 March 2009), [http://www.worldtribune.com/worldtribune/WTARC/2009/me_military0246_03_25.asp, accessed 20 November 2013]

²⁶ "Israel-India Military and Civil Trade Ties Skyrocket", *The Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs* (25 August 1997), [<http://web.archive.org/web/20061002180249/http://www.jinsa.org/articles.html/function/view/categoryid/105/documentid/367/history/3,2359,947,653,105,367>, accessed 20 October 2013]

Manoeuvring Instrumentation simulator system from Israel.²⁷ Moreover, IAI signed several contracts with the Indian Air Force (IAF) including the upgrading of the IAF's Russian-made MIG-21 ground attack aircraft and there have been further sales of unmanned aerial vehicles as well as laser-guided bombs.²⁸ In 2007, IAI signed a \$2.5 billion deal with India to develop an anti-aircraft systems and missiles for India, which was the biggest defence contract in the history of Israel at the time. According to the contract IAI developed the Barak-8 missile for the Indian Navy and IAF which was capable of protecting sea vessels and ground facilities from aircraft and cruise missiles. The missile system was supposed to replace the obsolete Russian system used by India.²⁹ Additionally, in 2008, India signed a \$4.1 billion deal to purchase a shore-based and seaborne anti-missile air-defense system based on Israel's Barak long-range naval weapon built by IAI and in August that year, signed a \$2.5 billion contract with IAI and Israel's Rafael armaments company to jointly develop an advanced version of the Spyder surface-to-air missile.³⁰

Whereas Israel surpassed Russia as the largest arms supplier to India,³¹ military relationship between two countries did not confine to Israeli arms sales to India. Both Israel and India share the common goal of seeking technological independence, and India's search for technology led to joint projects to be realized which is the foundation for a sustained and long-term partnership.³² For instance, in November 2008, Indian military officials visited Israel to discuss joint weapons development projects and additional sales of Israeli equipment to the Indian military. These talks were seen as a significant expansion of the military partnership between Israel and India.³³ Moreover, in June 2011, High-Tech Industry Association of Israel has signed a memorandum of understanding with its Indian counterpart to boost cooperation in advanced technology.³⁴ This was an important development for both

²⁷ "Israel-India Military and Civil Trade Ties Skyrocket", *The Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs*

²⁸ "India-Israel Military Ties Continue to Grow: Troop Training to Supplement Arms Sales", *The Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs* (8 April 2003), [<http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/f-news/893451/posts>, accessed 11 December 2013]

²⁹ Arie Egozy, "IAI Signs \$2.5 Billion Deal With India", *Ynetnews* (15 July 2007), [<http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3425400,00.html>, accessed 30 November 2013]

³⁰ "Israel Signs High-Tech Deal with India", *United Press International* (6 June 2011), [http://www.upi.com/Business_News/Security-Industry/2011/06/06/Israel-signs-high-tech-deal-with-India/UPI-41641307392006/, accessed 20 October 2013]

³¹ "End of an Era: Israel Replaces Russia as India's Top Military Supplier", *World Tribune*

³² P.R. Kumaraswamy, "Israel-India Relations: Seeking Balance and Realism", p.267-268.

³³ Rajat Pandit, "New Heights: India, Israel Step Up Defence Ties", *Times of India* (9 November 2008),

[http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/India/New_heights_India_Israel_step_up_defence_ties/rssarticle/3690525.cms, accessed 30 November 2013]

³⁴ "Israel Signs High-Tech Deal with India", *United Press International*

countries which is supposed to increase both Israel's defense sales to India and joint projects.

In May 2009, India took the delivery of the first of three Israeli Airborne Early Warning Command and Control (AWAC) Systems. With the integration of the IAI Phalcon system on IL-76 aircraft supplied by Russia, the Indian air force became the first in South Asia with advanced AWAC aircraft. Considered the most advanced AWAC system, the Phalcon was supposed to provide tactical surveillance of airborne and surface targets, and the gathering of signal intelligence. The delivery of the Phalcon system was part of a \$1.1 billion deal signed between India, Russia and Israel in January 2004.³⁵

India's military Chief of Staff, General Deepak Kapoor visited Israel in November 2009,³⁶ and in December 2009, Chief of Staff of the Israel Defence Forces (IDF), Lieutenant General Gabi Ashkenazi, made a historic visit to India to cement the defence ties between the two countries. According to the Israeli officials, "the visit to India was part of the process of strengthening the ties between Israel and India, and the nations' militaries."³⁷ This was the first official visit to the country by an Israeli military chief. During the visit, IDF chief met with the Indian National Security advisor, the commander of the Indian Air Force, and the commander of the Indian Navy.

In short, a partial list of the important munitions that India has purchased from Israel in the past decade includes radar for the Arrow missile-intercept system, sea-to-sea missiles, IAI warning planes, communications systems and various types of ammunition. Moreover, there have been major developments in defense cooperation between Israel and India in 2013, most of which involved enhancing arms trade and furthering joint projects. India considered buying Israel's Iron Dome and David's Sling missile defense systems. Israeli Chief of the Ground Forces Command, Maj. Gen. Guy Zur visited India in November 2013, and this visit opened more prospects in defense cooperation. Discussions were held not only on joint military training and exchanges, R&D projects, and arms deals, but also on the security situation in South Asia and the Middle East. The visit also coincided with India's decision to reconsider buying Spike missiles and transfer technology.

³⁵ Nissan Ratzlav-Katz, "India Acquiring Israeli Airborne Early Warning System", *Israel National News* (22 May 2009), [http://www.israelnationalnews.com/News/News.aspx/131503#.U02UTT1_sjY, accessed 26 November 2013]

³⁶ "Israel Tightens Defense Links with India", *United Press International* (10 November 2009), [http://www.upi.com/Business_News/Security-Industry/2009/11/10/Israel-tightens-defense-links-with-India/UPI-39521257875041/, accessed 1 April 2014]

³⁷ "IDF Chief Set to Visit India to Strengthen Military Ties", *Haaretz* (6 December 2009), [<http://www.haaretz.com/news/idf-chief-set-to-visit-india-to-strengthen-military-ties-1.2697>, accessed 1 September 2013]

Furthermore, India and Israel agreed to collaborate in the production of high-tech systems for Indian troops at an estimated cost of \$3 billion.³⁸

One of the mutual strategic interests other than enhanced defense ties is the growing interest of the two states for the Indian Ocean. The India-Israel relations have various Indian Ocean implications. India is an important international actor in the Indian Ocean, and in recent years, the Indian Ocean has become an area of growing interest also for Israel. India is not averse to a greater Israeli presence in the Indian Ocean. Israel sees great strategic value in an alliance with the Indian Navy, given India's dominance of South Asian waters, and it sees the potential of establishing a logistical infrastructure in the Indian Ocean with the help of the Indian Navy. In 2000, Israeli submarines reportedly conducted test launches of cruise missiles capable of carrying nuclear warheads in the waters of the Indian Ocean.³⁹ On the face of modern weapon systems its enemies have, Israel considers most of its land based strategic installations vulnerable to a long-range first strike. As a result of this, the deployment of a sea-borne second-strike capability emerged as a strategic imperative for Israel. In this regard, the Indian Ocean has been an important location for a logistic infrastructure for Israel by facilitating the deployment and maintenance of this capability. As a matter of fact, this fact has been talked about in various quarters, and Israel is likely to set up its logistical bases in the Indian Ocean for its navy with the coordination of India.⁴⁰ Ephraim Inbar gives more details about why Indian Ocean concerns Israel so much:

“Historically, Israel has seen the Indian Ocean as the transit route to countries in the East, particularly because it could not use land routes, which were blocked by hostile Arab neighbors. Jerusalem was especially interested in one of the Indian Ocean chokepoints, the Bab El Mandeb straits, through which all its exports to South and East Asia pass. Israel's past attempts to establish a military presence in Ethiopia, and, afterwards in Eritrea (following its secession), were made with the straits in mind. Kenya and South Africa, also on the Indian Ocean littoral, have similarly attracted Israel's attention.”⁴¹

³⁸ Alvir Singh Ningthoujam, “India-Israel Defense Cooperation”, *Israel National News* (14 February 2014), [http://www.israelnationalnews.com/Articles/Article.aspx/14531#.U0cDsD1_sjY, accessed 1 April 2014]

³⁹ Martin Sherman, “India and Israel Forge a Solid Strategic Alliance”, *Free Republic from The Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs* (25 March 2003), [http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/f-news/893455/posts, accessed 20 October 2013]

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ephraim Inbar, “The Indian-Israeli Entente,” p. 100.

India: Israel's New Frontier?

There has been practical and regional considerations, such as political, economic, and strategic interests, which makes it necessary for Israel to develop close ties with various countries. It has been widely accepted that a state surrounded by enemies must align itself with a second circle of countries surrounding the first, and Arab hostility compelled Israel to look beyond its Arab neighbors in search of friends and markets. Consequently, Turkey, Iran, and Ethiopia has been strategically important to Israel as they were the primary targets of its periphery doctrine⁴², and since Muslim Pakistan became a nuclear power, Israel has attached great importance to the strategic relations with India.⁴³

Israel's relations with the countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America has shown the changing patterns in the shifts in Israel's global position, priorities, policies and self-perceptions. Today, despite the resumption of diplomatic relations with many states that never had any links with Israel in the past, its interest has turned to China, India and the economic tigers of Asia; to the growing economies of Eastern Europe; and to Mexico, Brazil and Argentina. As part of the Asian continent, Israel has been interested from its inception in good ties with Asian states, China and India in particular. And especially Israel's relations with India have taken on an ever greater significance since the beginning of the new millennium.

Despite Israel and India have great demographic and geopolitical differences, the two countries share many things in common. From an Israeli perspective, the similarities attribute great strategic value and potential to the alliance with India. Both countries are two democratic states of Asia. Each country has large domestic Muslim minorities and this realization has the potential to draw the two nations closer, as described by H.V. Pant, "with India being the first close friend Israel has to its east and Israel being the first close friend India has to its west."⁴⁴

Israel has several advantages, which makes it attractive for India to seek good relations with it. First, it had expertise in science and technology, particularly in agriculture, which could be of an immediate use for India; and second, it has good relations and strong connections in the U.S. By normalizing relations with Israel, India can improve its relations with Washington. Third, both countries want to be self-reliant and technologically independent. This is why the cooperation between Israel and India in different areas helps to serve as a strong impetus, and they have invested greatly in science and technology

⁴² Aharon S. Klieman, *Israel and the World After 40 Years*, (Washington: Pergamon Brassey's, 1990), p.92.

⁴³ Benyamin Neuberger, *Israel's Relations with the Third World (1948-2008)*, pp.14-15.

⁴⁴ Harsh V. Pant, "India-Israel Partnership: Convergence and Constraints"

to speed up their development and prosperity. They both share the similar perspective on the role of national investments in science and technology for self-reliance and national development, and it is no coincidence that India and Israel have identified technology as a potential area for cooperation. As India's ambassador to Israel, Navtej Sarna said in 2010, that "this cooperation in hi-tech is an example of how complementarities can be maximized, how the tremendous growth of India's IT and telecom and the immense innovation of Israeli hi-tech industry can be advantageous to the people of both countries. It's a win-win situation."⁴⁵

The links between Israel and India seem to be stable beyond the convergence of their interests as sellers and buyers. Trade has been booming, and opening up to the huge market in India has many economic benefits for Israel. The relationship is also similarly beneficial for India. It seems that both states have found the right approach to putting the bilateral relationship on track. As explained in this article, in the last two decades there has been a rapprochement between the two countries. Both countries share similar interests, and it is normal to expect that the relationship will not change and continue in its path. Israel respects and appreciates India's rationale to improve its social and economic conditions and upgrade its international status. Israel also shares the perspective that the Indian space program contributes substantially to India's position as a dominant political power in Asia.

In addition to the many military and economic reasons for India and Israel to strengthen their ties, there are also strong geopolitical motivators. The relationship has geostrategic implications beyond the strength it gives these two powers. It solidifies the Arab nations' reluctant acceptance of Israel and enhances the deterrence capability of India. The diplomatic traffic generated by this relationship also strengthens the links of both countries among West, Central and South Asia. Moreover, "both countries perceive their non-conventional ambitions as an integral part of their search for technological independence, as a source of national power and as the tools for furthering national interest."⁴⁶

As for Israel, it is a tiny country and is particularly vulnerable to external military threats. That's why it is compelled to make strategic use of seaborne offensive and defensive military capabilities. An important component of these capabilities is Israel's submarine force. It requires friendly waters in which to deploy and maintain such a force, and the Indian Navy can provide it with its dominance of South Asian waters. One other area where

⁴⁵ "Israeli, Indian High-Tech Industries to Collaborate", *Ynetnews* (20 June 2010), [<http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3907185,00.html>, accessed 20 October 2013]

⁴⁶ P. R. Kumaraswamy, "India and Israel Evolving Strategic Partnership", *Begin Sadat Center for Strategic Studies, Bar-Ilan University*, September 1998. [<http://www.biu.ac.il/SOC/besa/books/40pub.html>, accessed 24 June 2013]

Israel could deepen its relations with India is on the issue of Iranian nuclear ambitions. India is the second largest importer of Iranian crude oil after China, and both states agreed to trade in rupees for shipments of oil, rice, sugar and soybeans, to circumvent the sanctions on Iranian oil shipments. While India has its own commercial interests, it has also a strong interest in a peaceful resolution to the Iranian nuclear issue. India's economic and diplomatic clout can help to pressure Iran into a compromise that prevents a catastrophic Middle East war which would likely include Israel as well.⁴⁷

Even though there is an important convergence of Israel's interests with India, there are also a number of constraints for bilateral relations. India's relations with Iran, perceptual differences on terrorism and Israel's relationship with China and Pakistan⁴⁸ are some but few of them. The main constraints which restrict the development of ties between Israel and India can be listed under the headings of "diplomatic and political", "military" and "economic."⁴⁹ India's domestic politics and the Muslim population may be an impediment for Indian officials who seek good relations with Israel. Competition from foreign companies in defence sector is an important factor which Israel has to consider while doing business with India. Moreover, bureaucracy and corruption in India as well as foreign competition have a constraining effect on the expansion of the ties in economic and military areas.⁵⁰

Conclusions

Israeli foreign policy underwent significant changes with the closure of the Cold War. Since then the Jewish state began a rapid process of reaching out to the countries outside its region, especially the countries in the Asian continent. Acknowledging Asia's importance, Klieman said in 1985, "so great is the geographical spread of nations that it fits perfectly the Israeli formula of diversification"⁵¹. Especially the late 1980s and early 1990s were marked by an unprecedented triumph for Israel's Asia policy. Major breakthroughs were achieved in Israel's relations, not only with the countries of the Middle East periphery, but also with the most populous Asian states such as China and India. Yet, the year 2012 was called "the year of Asia in Israel" and the Israeli government sponsored an Asian Science Camp attracting Asian students to join

⁴⁷ Noah Beck, "Israel and India: A Sensible Alliance?"

⁴⁸ Harsh V. Pant, "India-Israel Partnership: Convergence and Constraints"

⁴⁹ Arielle Kandel, "The Significant Warming of Indo-Israeli Relations in the Post-Cold War Period"

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Aharon S. Klieman, *Israel's Global Reach: Arms Sales as Diplomacy*, (New York: Pergamon Brasseys, 1985), p.141.

Israeli students for a week long program of lectures by world class Israeli researchers⁵²

These initiatives further supplemented to Israel's efforts for acceptance in the wake of heightened diplomatic isolation within its own region. Arms sales and other forms of military-security assistance have been used by Israel as a tool to pursue its wider foreign policy objectives. This should not be looked at only from a commercial point of view, but also with political incentive attached to it. Israel discovered those means because of its limited political, economic and diplomatic leverage. In fact, alongside Israel's sale of conventional weapons systems, its willingness to provide military technology and warfare training lure countries.

Given the nature of the Indo-Israeli relationship, there is particularly one question to be answered: whether the Israel-India relations form a strategic partnership. Inbar identifies Israel and India as "strategic partners"⁵³, however, Kumaraswamy stresses that the "the normalization of relations has not transformed India into an ally of Israel."⁵⁴ A strategic partnership means a long-term commitment for cooperation. It also includes two states' common view of world politics and of their respective positions in the international arena. Both countries are moving toward a more mature understanding and closer friendship. Recognition by both countries of the limitations and potentials of the relations enables them to avoid pitfalls of grandiose visions, and both are emerging as a mature, dependable, and accomodating couple.

In 1992 India and Israel established full diplomatic relations imbued with strategic importance for both of them. Since then, both countries pursued a pragmatic policy, which encompassed convergent strategic interests. India perceived that sound relations with Israel were of strategic value, and India's policy on Israel has been pragmatic and controlled. Israel, on the other hand, grasped the growing importance of India in the world, and took its relations with India as a cornerstone of its foreign policy. With normalized ties, both countries developed their military connections based on their security and commercial interests. For Israel, arms exports have been an essential and integral part of its security sector and foreign policy, and India presented an attractive and challenging opportunity as a market for Israel's defence industry.

⁵² Jonathan Adelman and Asaf Romirowsky, "Asia Is Becoming Israel's New Frontier-Here's Why", *Forbes* (14 May 2013), [<http://www.forbes.com/sites/realspin/2013/05/14/asia-is-becoming-israels-new-frontier-heres-why/>], accessed 30 October 2013]

⁵³ Efraim Inbar, *Israel's National Security Issues and Challenges Since the Yom Kippur War*, pp.174-188.

⁵⁴ P.R. Kumaraswamy, "The Maturation of Indo-Israeli Ties", in *Middle East Quarterly*, Vol.XX, No.2, (Spring 2013), p.48.

India's search for technology and Israel's need to make its defence research a viable economical entity have been complementary, and India has gradually emerged as Israel's most important arms market. As a result, bilateral relations enabled both countries to develop their military cooperation as a joint strategic interest. However, the relations between Israel and India can not be identified as a military alliance. Neither side wants to be drawn into the regional conflict of the other. They both emphasize that their defense ties are meant only to enhance national self-defense capabilities.

Since the establishment of diplomatic relations, Israel and India have witnessed tremendous growth in their relations and have implemented many measures to promote them. Israel's relations with India have strengthened significantly in the past decade with both states experiencing a convergence of interests on a range of issues. This relationship is mainly driven by close defense ties. Though attempts are being made by both sides to broaden the base of their relationship, significant constraints remain, preventing this relationship from achieving its full potential. Both sides have to navigate their relationship carefully, and there is still a long way to go before India and Israel to form a strategic partnership. Even though a series of strategic interests underlie the ties between India and Israel, they are not sufficient to characterize the relationship as strategic. However, given the growing military and economic ties between two countries, it would not be wrong to claim that India has been Israel's one of the most important economic and military partners in the world.

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