



RESEARCH PAPER

Recalibrating Stability: Israel–India Defense Ties, U.S. Enablers, and Pakistan’s Crisis vs Deterrence Balance (1992–2022)

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ABSTRACT

Regional security in South Asia is significantly shaped by changing great- and middle-power alignments. This article looks at the changing India-Israel defense relationship and offers insights into how it threatens Pakistan’s strategic stability. The study aims to determine the impact of Israel–India defense partnership, facilitated by U.S. policy, on the Pakistani strategic military balance, the escalatory threat, and the space of diplomatic maneuver. Since full normalization in 1992, Israel has become a major supplier of advanced military, surveillance, and cyber capabilities to India, with ties deepening under Prime Minister Narendra Modi into counterterrorism, space, and hybrid-warfare domains. The United States serves as an enabling permissive facilitator to this triangle, helping transfer technology and making it acceptable that India has expanded its role, which complicates stability in the crisis and deterrence equation of Pakistan. The study deploys a qualitative approach to attempt to synthesize historical discussions, policy statements, trends in the defense-trade, and secondary literatures in order to follow the curve of cooperation and its security externalities. The results indicate the expansion of the qualitative divide in the favour of India, increased exposure to cyber-espionage and information activities, and an escalation of narratives that can end up isolating Pakistan. Pakistan’s internal debate on whether to recognize Israel or not is also mapped in the paper by considering potential benefits in terms of defense, agriculture and U.S. relationship against ideological and societal impediments. The study concludes that Indo-Israel cooperation, embedded in the U.S. strategy, turns out to be a persistent disrupter of the vulnerable balance of power in South Asia. It is recommended that Islamabad must strengthen its indigenous defense production, diplomatic sphere, as well research capacity to counter the growing Indo-Israel ties.

Keywords: Indo-Israel Ties, Pakistan Security, U.S. Role, Strategic stability, Balance of Power

Introduction

The concept of balance of power is still relevant in contemporary international politics especially when it comes to the archrivals of the sub-continent, Pakistan and India. This balance is being disturbed by Israel’s increasing defense collaboration with India in the last few decades (Muzaffar, et. al., 2017). Since their inception both countries have been striving to have an edge over the others. The rivalry is such that despite India’s continued insistence that its defense policies are not Pakistan centric, its policies have almost always exacerbated the rivalry with Pakistan. In fact, whenever India has increased its defense spending, Pakistan has followed suit, which in turn intensified arms race even further in the conflict prone region of South Asia. It is in that perspective that the burgeoning defense relationship between India and Israel has been ringing alarm bells in Pakistan and causing serious concern in Pakistan’s security circles (Yaseen, et. al., 2023). Given that Pakistan doesn’t recognize Israel’s right to exist hasn’t made things easier either. Whereas the hawkish elements in Pakistan’s society consider Israel’s overtures in South Asia—which have really picked up pace after the end of the Cold War—as provocative and a conspiracy

against the only nuclear-armed Islamic state, the pragmatic ones find the possibility of improving relations with Israel a hard sell.

Historically, USSR was the major supplier of military equipment to India with whom Pakistan too had some connections. But now Israel, technologically a much more advanced country to have become a major defense supplier to India and having no ties with Pakistan has become a matter of grave concern for the latter. According to some, this bonhomie between India and Israel is disrupting the already fragile peace and disturbing the balance of power in the region. More specifically, Pakistan may be worried about the transfer of advanced military technology and weapons systems from Israel to India, which could potentially enhance India's military capabilities and give it an advantage in any potential conflict with Pakistan.

Even worse, Pakistan's historically strained relations with both India and Israel, the nervousness of its society in general and military establishment in particular over the ever-increasing general alliance between its archrival and a country it doesn't recognize, and finally the traditionalist rhetoric pushed by Islamic hardliners has created a potent mixture which if blew up can have implications far beyond South Asia. This paper intends to canvass different angles of India-Israel relations and their implications for Pakistan. It discusses the development of Indo-Israel ties and how they affect Pakistan strategically.

Literature Review

Historical Evolution of India-Israel Relations

Relations between India and Israel have not always been as cordial as they are now. In fact, it took the two countries a long time to get it to the level where they have been cooperating in a wide range of areas including technology, education, agriculture, tourism, and above all defenses (Yaseen, et. al., 2023). A chronological account of the evolution between the two nations can be divided into two phases i.e., the Cold War era, or the time of antagonism between Soviets and the United States, and the period after the Cold War. The latter period can be further divided into the pre-Modi years (1991-2013) and that during the leadership of PM Modi (2014-to date).

The history of relationship India and Israel can be traced back to early 1920's when Zionist leaders tried to get in touch with the Indian National Congress (INC) leaders and sought their support for the establishment of a Jewish homeland. Indian leaders initially favored then opposed the Zionist movement because of its Western/colonial backing. India's founding politician Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi wrote in Harijan on Nov. 26, 1938 that, "Arabs are the true fit in people to Palestine just as French or English to France and England" a remark which he later changed to some extent. This initially caused an unrest among the Jewish leaders who were facing difficulty in persuading Gandhi to support their cause. But Gandhi's political successor and India's first prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru had a different viewpoint, and he suggested for a centralized structure in this conflicted territory of Palestine which would help in defending religious freedom of the Jewish community. It was with such mixed views that Indian leadership opposed in the United Nations the creation of Israel on the basis of religion in 1948. But seeing Israel joining the world body in 1949, Indian leaders felt that Israel is a reality to be accepted. Thus, on 17 Sep. 1950, by submitting the proposal of upgradation of ties with Israel, India gave a de facto recognition to the state of Israel.

From the Indian side, the need to establish military ties with Israel became evident during the 1960's when a skirmish with China uncovered flaws in the former's combat readiness, and led to the alteration of its strategies for external nations. It is widely believed that there was physical military assistance by Israel to India during the wars of 1962, 1965, 1971. In fact, it has been argued that Israel always supported India with arms in times of its

need. In the same period, Indira Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru's daughter and the former prime minister of India ordered to establish close ties between India's and Israel's intelligence agencies, RAW and MOSSAD, respectively.

In 1975, India joined a host of countries in voting in support of the United Nations' resolution stating Zionist movement to be racist in nature, and accepted the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) as the legitimate Palestinian freedom movement, which confused the status of Indo-Israel relations. It is argued that India's support of the Arab cause was motivated in large part by its needs for oil and labor, as well as the fear of backlash from its sizable Muslim population, not to mention its fear of Pakistan manipulating the Arab world against it. However, some of these fears gave way in the following years due to certain events which divided the Islamic world, such as the Iranian revolution, as well as Egypt normalizing its ties with Israel through Camp David accords despite warnings by the Arab League. As fault-lines in the Arab world became visible, India was quick to utilize them to its advantage. India's prime minister, Rajiv Gandhi, met with the Prime Minister of Israel, Shimon Peres, at one of the meetings at the United Nations, and reestablished ties with Israel. In his visit to the United States, Rajiv Gandhi met with American-Jewish leaders as well as pro-Zionist congressman Stephen Solarz, and these meetings proved critical for developing full diplomatic relations with Israel.

Pakistan started to feel the effects of India's cozying up with Israel soon after it intercepted intelligence about a proposed coup de main (surprise attack) on Pakistan's atomic program at Project 708 near Rawalpindi. Allegedly, India and Israel were planning to attack Kahuta Research Laboratories (KRL) along the lines of Israel's strike on Iraq's nuclear facility named Osirak in the early 1980's which had wiped out Iraq's budding nuclear capability altogether.

The Cold War ended with the disintegration of the Soviet Union, which was not only a long-time benefactor of India, but also its major military partner and provider of war ammunition, as well as a great support throughout the period of the Cold War. For instance, at the time of Bangladesh's secession from Pakistan, Soviet Union used its veto power in the United Nations Security Council seven times in favor of India, from 4th to 16th of Dec., 1971. Upon USSR's dissolution, India's neoliberals realized that they needed to recalibrate India's external affairs strategy in the unipolar world. They also realized that, given the outsized influence of Israel in the United States, the path to the American support passes through Israel. Moreover, learning from the sudden disappearance from the scene of their longtime ally, Soviet Union, they felt that India needed to diversify its defense supplies and it was not pragmatic to rely on a single country anymore.

By then, Israel had already made its mark in defense industry with its high-tech weaponry and surveillance equipment, and was looking for buyers to showcase its technological prowess, and found one in the shape of India. So, in a sense it was a natural coalition between the two. Siding with the United States and Israel in the wake of the Cold War had other dividends for India too. India's stagnant economic condition, for example, benefitted immensely from backing by the United States, and New Delhi was able to secure lavish financial support from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank.

Regional Shifts Enabling Normalization (1990-1994)

After the end of the Cold War, Middle East was in a state of flux, and the region was skidding into a crisis due to the fragmentation of the Arab bloc. The differences between Saudi Arabia and Iran had already arisen after the Iranian revolution, pitting two powerful Middle Eastern nations against each other. Egypt was breaking ranks from the Arab League by normalizing relations with Israel, and had signed the Camp David accords which were held under the auspices of the United States. The first Gulf war was splitting the Arab nations, with Palestine standing with Iraq against the wishes of Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.

All these events lessened the chances for Arabs to stand united behind the Palestinian cause. Some past developments like the establishment of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), which had ignored the feelings of Indian Muslims and blocked India from joining it paved the way for India's diplomatic shift towards Israel as well.

Madrid Process and Its Effects on India's Policy

The Middle East Peace Conference which was held in Madrid, signaled an Arab willingness of discussing their differences with Israel. Arab nations seeking to embrace the reality of Israel, along with China's recognition of the Jewish state in January 1992 encouraged India to establish full diplomatic ties with Israel on 29th January, 1992. Senior officials of both countries visited each other and ushered in a new period of trade pacts and agreements. The Arab-Israel peace process facilitated by the US and Russia, as well as the Oslo Accords—declaration of principles for peacefully resolving Israel-Palestinian conflict—came as a blessing in disguise for India. In Dec., 1994 the two nations signed trade agreement and granted the Most Favored Nation (MFN) status to each other; their trade rose from US\$ 200 million in 1991 to US\$ 2.1 billion in 2002. Upon invitation of Indian prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Israel's prime minister Ariel Sharon visited India despite the displeasure and condemnation of the Indian Muslims and leftist parties.

Domestic Drivers in India

Other than the transformed geopolitical situation in the aftermath of the end of the Cold War, the domestic situation in India was also getting ripe for improving ties with Israel. There was no strong opposition to the idea in India as the main opposition party, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), had long been in favor of normalization of ties with Israel. BJP's ascendance to power "removed some hesitations about Israel." Another factor was that prominent Muslim leaders had left the Indian National Congress (INC) party after 1991 Lok Sabha elections and joined the Janata Dal party. So, INC did not feel beholden to Muslim leaders than it had been in the past, and it also lessened the domestic opposition against Israel.

Due to the hospitable conditions in India's domestic politics, in a short period of merely a decade, Israel emerged as a vital player in India's defense and security calculations. After Russia, Israel became the 2nd largest defense dealer for India, and India emerged as the largest export destination for Israeli arms. Moving from air-force, the bilateral defense trade covered other areas as well like upgrades, border management, small arms, intelligent cooperation, naval patrol and counter terrorism. India's search for technological advanced and Israel's quest for a major defense buyer market complemented each other and laid foundation for long-term sustained partnership. As trust between the two nations grew, their alliance expanded from merely a military bond to a more holistic partnership spanning joint manufacturing and investigation between India's Defense Research and Development Organization (DRDO) and Israel's Directorate of Defense Research and Development (DDR&D). In 2006, Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) and Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI) started joint production of unmanned air vehicle division, Malat.

Given that India-Israel defense cooperation covers both conventional and unconventional areas, from the Pakistan's side it has always been viewed as a cause for concern by country's defense establishment. However, what really caused panic in Pakistan's strategic circles was the deal that provided India three Phalcon Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS). India acquired the first of the three Phalcon (AWACS) in 2009. Moreover, former Israeli Ambassador to India, Yehoyada Haim, admitted that Israel had provided remotely piloted vehicles (RPVs), which proved to be of great help in the difficult terrain of Kargil.

The acquisition of modern and sophisticated weaponry gives India not only quantitative but also qualitative dominance over Pakistan. Another factor is the zeal of Israel to help India in any armed conflict against Pakistan, as witnessed in the past. On the contrary, Pakistan does not enjoy any such support from its allies, and the concern is that this imbalance can turn any future armed conflict in favor of India.

Deepening Under PM Modi

In the past few years, particularly since Prime Minister Narendra Modi's assuming office, the bilateral ties of Israel and India have reached unprecedented heights. As previously mentioned, India's tilt towards Israel had already been increasing since the end of the Cold War, but a notable shift under Mr. Modi's leadership can be traced to India's configuration of geopolitics as well as the storyline of the "extended neighborhood." Sushma Swaraj, then India's foreign minister, explained the term in her speech during the 2016 Lok Sabha session that "West Asia, North Africa, and the Middle Eastern Gulf are a part of India's extended neighborhood, which is significant for security reasons. The Indian government is committed to enhancing its ties with all the surrounding nations, especially Israel." One of the major outcomes of this extended definition was to de-hyphenate Israel and Palestine, and establish an alternative perception of Israel, separate from a country embroiled in a the Middle East Peace Process, to a country in West Asia with whom India could have relations as a global player. Another development in Mr. Modi's deft repositioning of India in the global geopolitics was to show solidarity with Palestine without mentioning East Jerusalem as its capital. This was a clever move, one designed so as not to alienate India's allies or economic partners in the greater Middle East, as well as India's sizable Muslim population, all the while continuing to courting Israel as a strategic partner.

Another stark shift that differentiates Mr. Modi's Israel policy from that of his predecessors is its skillful sidestepping of any and all human rights violations that Israel may have carried out. For example, on 23rd July, 2014, India had voted against Israel in the United Nations Human Rights Commission resolution probing human rights violation in Gaza, but when the same report was tabled in July 2015, India abstained from the voting altogether. It could be argued that looking the other way as Israel violated human rights of Palestinians was the beginning of a real change for Israel-India relations and a clear message from Mr. Modi to Tel Aviv. Mr. Modi used the same tactic (of abstaining) when, in 2016, UNESCO passed a resolution condemning Israel for alleged religious rights violation of Muslims at holy places in Jerusalem and Hebron. The budding friendship between the two nations was made official in 2017 when Mr. Modi visited Israel on a state visit, a courtesy which was reciprocated by the Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in January 2018.

In recent years, there has been a marked increase in state level visits as well as the range of cooperation between India and Israel. According to Vinay Kaura, Mr. Modi's administration has made an effort to escape its intellectual silo, and showed their will to prevent the perception that the country is being held captive by Muslims agenda. In particular, he demonstrated steadfastness in carrying out the plan to de-hyphenate dual diplomatic connections between Israel and Palestine in order to highlight the independence, uniqueness, and strength of India's ties with Israel.

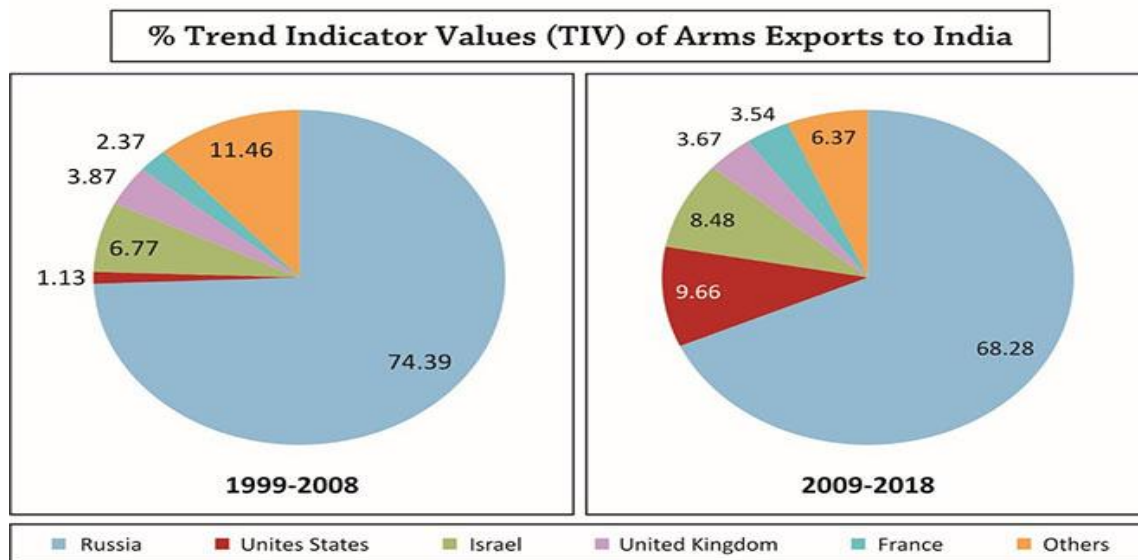
Under Mr. Modi's watch, the radius of India-Israel defense cooperation has widened to other domains like space, counter-terrorism and cyber security which is a powerful tool of hybrid warfare. The collaboration of India and Israel in the cyber space is a potent threat for Pakistan, particularly in this age of hybrid warfare. Recently, misuse of Pegasus Spyware developed by Israel has been reported worldwide which, according to Al Jazeera, has been exported to India. This cybersecurity alliance between India and Israel aiming to conduct espionage or jeopardize contours of national security of neighboring countries should be a matter of grave concern, for intelligence operations of this nature are a clear violation of global norms, and fly in the face of prudent state behavior. Keeping in view the edge India

and Israel already have in IT, if weaponized to destabilize Pakistan may become a real national security challenge.

India has been the top most arms buyer worldwide for decades which is threatening the balance of power in the region and its major suppliers are Russia, US, Israel UK and France. Under PM Modi's regime India and Israel struck a number of deals relating to defense including LRTRs, BARAK 8 LR-SAM, Super Heron UAVs, Harpy Missile-Radar Killing, Harpy Missile-Suicidal Drones, and so forth.

Israel has remained one of the top arms suppliers to India for the last two decades. Figure shows TIV values of the arms imported by India from Israel from 1999 to 2018. The arms trade between India and Israel continued despite US sanctions after Pokhran nuclear tests in 1998. In 2016 India's arms trade with Israel increased from \$267 million in 2015 to \$599 million in 2016, and to US \$ 715 million in 2017.

Figure 1: Country-wise Distribution of Arms Imported by India (1999-2018)



Source: SIPRI Arms Transfer Database

In Pakistan's security establishment, this outsized trade of arms between India and Israel has been looked at as a continuous threat for peace in the region in general and national security of Pakistan in particular.

A (serving colonel) officer of Pakistan's army, when asked about the flourishing defense ties of India and Israel, on condition of anonymity said,

"India-Israel nexus especially defense collaboration poses a potent security threat to Pakistan. Israel has much advanced defense industry as compared to India and Pakistan. Israel's sophisticated tactical and surveillance capability through drones will provide India an edge over Pakistan. As defense analysts have been saying for quite a while that war is being revolutionized by drones.

US Enablers: Technology Transfer, Veto Points, and Triangle Dynamics:

Although it cannot be definitively said that the growing ties between India and Israel have the blessing of the United States or that they were a result of the American mediation, but one thing is clear, the changing geopolitical situation has made India a darling of the West, particularly the United States. With the influence of China overshadowing that of the United States in Asia, it is argued that the United States wants to prop up India in order to counter China's de-facto hegemony in the region. When it comes to the sale of latest and

sophisticated weapon systems as well as the technology transfer to India, United States' preferential treatment of India cannot be falsified. For example, the United States did not raise any objection to Israel's sale of Phalcon (AWACS) system to India in 2004, whereas it had actively foiled the similar deal with China in 2000. Although Pakistan, an important ally of the United States in the War on Terror tried to persuade the United States to stop Israel from transferring advanced technology to India, it fell on deaf ears, leaving Pakistan's political and security leadership to assume the worst.

The normalization of India-US relations following the disintegration of USSR preceded the greater military cooperation between India and Israel as latter's any arms deal requires US approval. In return for the US approval and in accordance with its hunt for procurement of Anti-Ballistic technology, India endorsed the American plan for establishing an Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) shield which contravenes the 1972 ABM Treaty between Soviet Union and the United States.

Despite its claims to be pursuing its national security goals without fixating on Pakistan, India's brazen attempts to cast Pakistan in a bad light and isolating it in the international arena are self-evident. Its growing ties with both Israel and the United States have given India an opportunity to settle old scores with Pakistan. For example, in 2003, while addressing American Jewish Committee, India's National Security Advisor, Brajesh Mishra, floated the idea of "tripartite axis". Arguing that all three democracies, India, Israel, and the United States faced similar potential risks from Islamic terrorism, specifically Pakistan, the only Islamic nuclear power in the world, he asserted that more collaboration among them makes "real sense" and should lead to the formation of a "sustainable partnership" to combat the worldwide threat posed by Islamic terrorists.

More results of India's cozying up to the United States and Israel came in the form of India getting a civil nuclear reactor from the United States in 2006 for dual-use of high-tech, modernized equipment and missile defense, which is widely believed to be advocated by the Jewish lobby of America. And more recently, it has become a member of the four-nation alliance named I2U2—an acronym comprising of the initials for India, Israel, United States and the United Arab Emirates— which aims to strengthen economic, security, space and energy cooperation among the member states.

The growing cooperation of Pakistan's archenemy with the global military powers such as the United States and Israel have caused anxiety in Pakistan. According to the former chairman of Pakistan's Senate, Mian Raza Rabbani, "there is a changing world scenario in which a nexus among the US, Israel, and India is emerging and the Ummah (Muslim world) needs unity to deal with this because today it is Pakistan and Iran, tomorrow it can be any other Muslim country."

Material and Methods

In the paper qualitative research approach was used to analyze how the India-Israel defense relationship has been developed and what it means to the strategic stability of Pakistan. The strategy was based on the primary use of secondary sources, such as academic articles, policy papers, government statements, news releases, and archival evidence that be able to trace the course of bilateral relationships since 1992 to the current time. The mapping of critical turning points by applying a historical-analytical approach, including the standardization of relations, the major defense arrangements, and the intensification of cooperation under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, is used. Through the combination of different views, the analysis aims to place Indo-Israel relations in the context of the more general regional processes. The approach focuses on the interpretive richness rather than numerical information, which is why it is very well applicable to explaining sophisticated geopolitical transformations and their effects on the delicate balance of power in the South Asian region.

Results and Discussion

Implications for Pakistan:

As mentioned earlier, the growing India-Israel ties have caused concern in Pakistan that the defense ties between a hostile nation and an unrecognized nation are a dangerous equation for Pakistan's national security. What is even more concerning is that the United States is backing one of these countries to patrol the Middle East, a region of oil wealth, and the other to contain the growing influence of China in Asia. History has witnessed that Israel rendered its military and logistic support to India in its wars with Pakistan in 1965, 1971, and 1999. It is believed that in dogfight between Pakistan and India in 2019 an Israeli pilot was also arrested along with an Indian pilot which was later denied by Haaretz, an Israeli newspaper that Pakistan is not holding an Israeli pilot and Haaretz did not demand his return. Israel has always looked at Pakistan's nuclear program with a pinch of salt and fears that it is a source of strength for Arab world. Israel is also worried about falling of the nuclear weapons into hands of rightists which it thinks are radicals and target Israel as former US Defense Secretary Jim Mattis once said, "I consider Pakistan to be the most dangerous country, because of the radicalization of its society and the availability of nuclear weapons".

According to reports, RAW and MOSSAD support madrassas run by Indian Muslim clerics that operate against Pakistan and train young recruits to become suicide bombers and terrorists with ideological motives before smuggling them into Pakistan, where they enter in insurgent groups and engage in combat with Pakistani military police. Both Israel and India have succeeded in persuading the world that a nuclearized Pakistan is funding cross-border terrorism in Afghanistan and India by utilizing the terrorism narrative and the anti-Islamic sentiment in the West. Media sources claim that Prime Minister Manmohan Singh warned President Obama that Pakistan has disintegrated and that the country's nuclear weapons are practically in the hands of radicals, and that there is nothing to stop them from seizing power. He continued by saying that Israel and India have the same perspectives on the matter.

For the reasons stated above, a Jewish state has been viewed as politically incorrect in Pakistan for a long period of time, and recognizing it as an independent country remains a contentious issue in Pakistan. However, history shows that both Pakistan and Israel appeared on the world as sovereign countries in the same span of time, not to mention that both came into being as a result of partition of their respective regions in the name of religion. Therefore, Israel seems to have been able to gain the confidence of important Muslim states, and there have been rumors that Pakistan and Israel may build political links as regional geopolitical factors change. Any change in Arab strategy on Israel reignites the discussion in important political circles since Pakistan is inseparable from the Arab world's ideological stance on the Palestinian problem.

Historically speaking, Israel has repeatedly expressed its desire to develop bilateral ties with Pakistan. Abba Eban, Israel's diplomatic representative in the United States, requested acceptance of Israel from Pakistani Foreign Minister Zafarullah Khan in 1954, but Khan declined out of concern for parliamentary disapproval. Israel proposed selling Pakistan Uzi submachine weapons in 1961 and 1963 via the Belgian manufacturer FN, but Pakistan rejected Israel's proposal. During the disastrous floods in East Pakistan (now Bangladesh), Israel offered Pakistan emergency supplies in 1969, but Pakistan again declined.

Islamabad has also been found divided when it comes to the question of Israel's recognition. There are two groups to be named as pro-Israel and anti-Israel, each having its own reasons for their respective viewpoints. But the difference is that now there are voices in Islamabad that openly advocate recognition of Israel, and this issue is not a social or

political taboo anymore. The pro-Israel group extends their reasons such as mitigating Indian influence in the region, having support of the Jewish lobby in US, procurement of advanced military technologies, mediating role of Israel in Kashmir issue, developing soft image of Pakistan on the world stage, and above all assistance in agriculture where Israel is leading the world.

If Pakistan had not been hostile to Israel, it is safe to assume that the latter might not have collaborated with India so closely, especially in the areas of defense and security which affect Pakistan the most. It should not be forgotten that Pakistan being the only Muslim nuclear power is an important country for Israel. A large proportion of Israel's insecurities about Pakistan comes from its fears of the transfer of Pakistan's nuclear technology to an anti-Israel state, and this fear has apparently cemented its military ties with India. If Pakistan assures Israel of not letting its technology be transferred to any other state, it would be an important move on its part.

Despite all the anti-Israel rhetoric that one sees in popular media, if we sift through the annals of history, surprisingly there have always been backdoor diplomacy/connections between Pakistan and Israel. During the Afghan war, for example, Pakistan's ISI and Israel's MOSSAD worked side by side with each other. "The News" in Sep 1995 stated that in the later stages of the Afghan conflict, the head of Pakistan's most prestigious security agency met with a top Mossad operative in Vienna, and highly competent Israelis supplied guerilla training to some Afghan forces. As far as Pakistan's military establishment is concerned, from Gen Zia to Gen Musharraf, all Pakistan's army chiefs have been in favor of establishing diplomatic ties with Israel. The most striking comparison between Pakistan and Israel came from Gen Zia when, in 1981, he stated that "Pakistan and Israel are ideological twins." He shocked a lot of onlookers in March 1986 by asking PLO to accept the Zionist country. The only state level meeting between foreign ministers of Pakistan and Israel was held in Gen Musharraf's era in Istanbul, Turkey in 2005. Maulana Ajmal Qadri, of Jamiat-e-Ulema-e-Islam visited Israel and upon return he was of the view that "in the larger interest of Palestine, Pakistan should recognize Israel". He also added that "India hatches plots in collaboration with Israel against Pakistan because the latter has no diplomatic relations with Israel and that Pakistan should not fight other people's war.

Some scholars in Pakistan are of the view that Pakistan cannot recognize Israel as this policy was formulated by Quaid e Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah. However, to be fair to Pakistan's founding father, he took this stance in the backdrop of Ottoman Empire because from 1915 to 1917 Palestine was part of it. In WWI, Britain occupied Palestine so Muslims in India being loyal to Ottoman Empire started opposing it and same was done by Ata Turk. But when in 1948 Britain left it and Jews established their state with the name of Israel, the United States, Europe, and Soviet Union immediately recognized it, followed by Turkey who accepted it in 1949. Given that a lot has changed now, it is absurd to assume that Mr. Jinnah would have stuck to his position in today's changed geopolitical environment. Before Zulfikar Ali Bhutto came to power, Jews were living in Pakistan and even visiting Israel regularly for religious duties. However, with the eruption of 1967 war between Arabs and Israel and the formulation of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Pakistan chose to stand with Arabs. In fact, owing to a large number of its expatriates working in the Gulf countries as laborers, Pakistan's stance became more severe towards Israel. So, this is not a religious but purely a diplomatic and political issue.

Politically, according to those who support recognition, improved ties with America can be the greatest potential gain for Pakistan. Pakistan would be able to win the alliance of the US, a prominent Israeli backer. During Trump's regime US-Israel relations grew unprecedentedly. He recognized Golan heights as part of Israel's territory and US embassy became operational in Jerusalem along with Tel Aviv during his era. In addition, he offered political and economic incentives to countries like UAE by approving sale of F-35, Morocco by recognizing its sovereignty over Western Sahara and Sudan by delisting it from state-

sponsored terrorism for recognizing Israel. It clearly shows that US sees Israel as long-term ally in the region and project it as regional power, which is in US strategic interests as well. In such circumstances, recognizing Israel will be a plus point for Pakistan and will offer opportunity to rekindle relations with US that were jeopardized during the recent few years. It will earn political support for Pakistan on international forums like FATF and UNO.

Financially, Pakistan can anticipate a growth in its economy when Israel is recognized by establishing trade alliances and importing consumer goods. Israel will also offer a sizable marketplace, allowing Pakistan to maximize its gains. Israel has cutting-edge defense and agricultural technology that is used by a number of highly industrialized nations in the world; Pakistan can utilize this equipment if bilateral ties are established. Even though it is still up for question, Pakistan continues to reject recognition as a state and reaps the benefits of Israeli goods and weaponry by purchasing them indirectly.

Pakistan is an agrarian country and it can gain from Israel having a trade deal for agricultural collaboration as exists between India and Israel. The 2015–18 collaborative road map is now in effect. It intends to expand collaboration into additional industries including livestock as well as freshwater. The former strategy for 2012–2015 increased agricultural assistance into more regions, including Gujarat, Rajasthan, Haryana, Maharashtra, and so on. In such areas, 15 Institutes of Expertise for Agriculture have been officially established. In particular in Haryana and Maharashtra, India has profited from Israeli know-how and technology in horticulture mechanization, sheltered planting, orchard and canopy management, nursery management, micro-irrigation, and post-harvest management. Products and technologies for drip irrigation developed in Israel are now widely employed in India. Pakistan should follow the suit. Israel has become a global leader in agriculture and water management, in addition to achieving a spectacular agricultural turnaround.” In the current scenario of adverse effects of climate change, depleting resources and agricultural yield and water shortage, Israel is recycling nearly 90% of its water which is four times than any other nation in the world and Pakistan being among the top 10 countries facing water scarcity should seek assistance from it.

Moreover, Pakistan has significant ties with Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, which are both pressuring Pakistan to choose acceptance via unofficial routes. In his interview, Prime Minister Imran Khan hinted that once Pakistan says "yes" to Israel's legitimacy, friendly countries' influence will ease and that it will also lead to financial concessions from countries like Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. This suggests that non-recognition of Israel may result in financial sanctions, doing so may result in economic growth for Pakistan.

With Saudi Arabia and Israel in the negotiations process having USA as a mediator, where Saudi Arabia can get two islands of Red Sea, there are bright chances of recognition of Israel. After Saudi Arabia Pakistan will not be able to shy away from the issue of recognition for long. Having such a deplorable economy and dependency on Middle Eastern countries especially Saudi Arabia and UAE, Pakistan should revisit its Israel policy as UAE has already recognized Israel and Saudi Arab is going to the same direction.

Conclusion

The history of the development of India-Israel relations since 1992 shows how alliances and defensive alliances can change the prospects of regional security. The presence of Israel, a major exporter of high technology weaponry, surveillance systems and cyber technologies has contributed significantly to the Indian military posture. As the government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi expands this relationship into new hybrid areas like space and cybersecurity, the scope of the relationship has never had a deeper and permanent look. The United States, meanwhile, has acted as an enabler, allowing technology

transfers and providing political cover that reinforce India's rise as a regional counterweight to both China and Pakistan.

To Pakistan, this trilateral dynamic is a multidimensional challenge. On the one hand, it enhances the military imbalance with India, which raises the question of the stability of the crisis and credibility of deterrence. On the one hand, it adds to the international isolation of Pakistan by supporting the image that it is a security threat and not a stabilization force. Cyber-espionage, drone conflict, and qualitative gap in the military contribute to the vulnerabilities of an already weak regional environment in Pakistan.

However, the paper also mentions a parallel argument in Pakistan on readjusting its Israel policy. Though ideological and societal opposition is still eminent, advocates believe that limited engagement may be fruitful in the agricultural field, technology transfer, and better relationships with Washington. Finally, the quandary facing Pakistan is whether to stick to its historic non-recognition policy or take pragmatic overtures in accordance to the changing Middle East and world trends. What is evident is that the India-Israel-U.S. nexus will be a long run element in South Asian geopolitics with long lasting effects to security calculations in Pakistan.

Recommendations

In light of the evolving India-Israel defense partnership and its implications for Pakistan, several policy recommendations emerge.

- First, Pakistan must strengthen its indigenous defense production and research capacity to reduce reliance on external suppliers. Investment in cyber defense, drone technology, and surveillance systems is crucial to counter India's qualitative edge.
- Second, Islamabad needs to spread its diplomatic interests. In the face of the India-Israel-U.S. nexus, proactive engagement with the United States, China, the European Union, and major nations in the Middle East can be used to counter the strategic isolation it generates. Enhancing relations with Muslim majority states that have normalised their relations with Israel can also enable new lines of communication.
- Third, Pakistan should consider initiating cautious backchannel contacts with Israel. While official recognition remains contentious, discreet communication could mitigate hostility, explore opportunities in agriculture and technology, and reduce India's monopoly over Israeli partnerships.
- Finally, Pakistan must invest in narrative-building to counter negative portrayals of its security posture. Coordinated public diplomacy, highlighting Pakistan's role in regional stability and counterterrorism, will be vital to resist diplomatic marginalization.

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