

India-Israel relations

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Introduction

By the second decade of the twentieth century, the British faced growing challenges to their global empire from the restless native populations. Their policy was to devise strategies by which the imperial era could be prolonged. The Second World War exhausted Great Britain and it was realised that the process of empire's disintegration would get accelerated. By and large, this realisation led to the grant of independence to colonies, the largest project of its kind being the independence of India. The British expectation was that a friendly India and friendly Pakistan would perpetuate its influence in the key strategic area of the Indian Ocean. In the case of the Middle East, Britain opted for implementing the Balfour Declaration in the shape of new State of Israel. From the very beginning, Israel was designed to be a Western outpost in the Muslim heartland.

India and Israel share a common national psyche which makes them natural allies. They both have been extending their respective roles in Muslim lands. India and Israel see themselves as democracies surrounded by hostile and implacable adversaries. In their perception, no other two countries in the world have suffered so much at the hands of "State-sponsored Islamic terrorism" as India and Israel.

Despite attempts made by New Delhi to keep the flourishing bilateral relationship under wraps, the steady strengthening of India's relations with Israel could not escape full public view. This bilateral relationship assumed an altogether new dynamic with the first ever visit by a ruling Israeli Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon, to India in September 2003.

National security and economics are the two major determinants of any country's foreign policy. However, in the case of India-Israel relations, the national security determinant has evolved as the predominant factor due to the convergence of their national security interests. Their growing ties have the potential to make a significant

impact on global politics by shifting the balance of power particularly in South Asia and the Middle East. The present paper attempts to analyse this growing relationship in different fields and its impact on the Muslim world, particularly Pakistan.

Pre-recognition era

In 1947, as a member of the U.N. Special Committee on Palestine, India voted for a minority plan which called for the establishment of a federal Palestine with internal autonomy for the Jews. When the UNGA voted for the majority plan, India joined the Arabs in opposing the partition of Palestine. When Israel came into existence in May 1948, India opposed its creation and even voted against it. India also opposed the U.N. membership for Israel in 1949. However, India recognised Israel in 1950 and permitted an Israeli consulate to function in Mumbai. Nevertheless, the absence of full diplomatic relations did not come in the way of pursuing a close clandestine relationship between the two countries. Behind the façade of a pro-Arab stance for decades, India ran parallel, covert diplomacy with Israel.

New Delhi's anti-Israel stance during almost four decades was mainly because India was a founder member of Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) which supported anti-colonial struggles around the world. In January 1975, India recognised the Palestinian Organisation which opened its office in New Delhi. In March 1980, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi granted diplomatic recognition to PLO and permitted it to upgrade its office to a full-fledged embassy. In addition to that, in November 1988, India became one of the first non-Arab State to recognise the State of Palestine proclaimed by the Palestine National Council in Algiers.

India was also interested in countering Pakistan's influence in the Arab world and to safeguard its oil supplies from the Arab countries particularly after the 1973 oil crisis. Besides, jobs for thousands of Indians in the Gulf region helped India keep its foreign reserves afloat. India also feared that by formally recognizing Israel, it would alienate its large Muslim population. During the Cold War era, India and Israel were in different camps as Israel was supported by the U.S., whereas Indian sympathies were with the Soviet Union.

However, during this time, the Israeli consulate in Mumbai actively worked to bring important personalities under its influence. Activities like symposiums, debates, lectures and exhibitions were held to reach important individuals. In 1962, an agreement was signed between the two countries for nuclear cooperation. Similarly, in April 1963, Israeli General David Shaltiel visited India for talks with his counterpart and a secret agreement was signed according to which Israel agreed to supply arms to India. The two countries also agreed to train their officers in each other's military establishments. In 1967 when France imposed embargo on supply of arms to Israel, Brigadier General Ariel Sharon, commander of the Israeli armoured division in Sinai in the 1967 Arab-Israel war, visited India for the purchase of spare parts of Mystere and Ouragan planes and AMX 13 tanks. Following years saw many high-level visits taking place between the two countries. Top Indian nuclear scientists also secretly visited Israel in 1984.

Soon after the June 1967 Arab-Israel war when Israel successfully attacked and annexed Arab territories, Indian Defence Minister Swaran Singh praised Israel and said that India was keen to find out how Israel had been able to mobilise its entire force in less than 24 hours and in a manner which ensured positive results. A founder member of the Indian Parliamentary Defence Council and member of the Lok Sabha from Uttar Pradesh, Major Ranjeet Singh, who visited Israel for an on-spot study of the 1967 war operations against Arabs, recommended the use of the same defence system for India against Pakistan and China.

The heavy losses suffered by the United Arab Republic (UAR) air force in the 1967 Arab-Israel war came as a shock for the entire Muslim world. Under the Indo-UAR Defence Cooperation Agreement, Indian Air Force (IAF) personnel had been training the UAR air force for several years. The UAR had been warned about the reliability of Indian armed service personnel due to evidence about contacts between the instructors and the Israeli Consul General in Bombay. It was suspected that a number of secrets of the UAR air force were disclosed to Israelis by the IAF personnel. The kind of training IAF officers gave to UAR can be gauged by the fact that nearly all of its fighter planes were lined up in rows on the morning of June 5 which made the task for the Israeli Air Force a lot easier. Israel also acknowledged that some of the tactics used by the India army units against Pakistan in the 1965 India-Pakistan war were of great advantage for the Israelis in its 1967 war against the Arabs.

India-Israel relations saw a new boost with Rajiv Gandhi's visit to the U.S. in 1986. U.S. Congressmen Stephen Solarz helped Morris Abraham, a Jewish lobbyist, to establish cordial relations with India.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, India was forced to review its foreign policy. The disappearance of the USSR not only meant a great loss of a very important arms supplier but also implied that India had lost a reliable partner on the international diplomatic front. The role played by the USSR in the creation of Bangladesh by casting veto seven times in the U.N. Security Council between December 4 and 16, 1971, in favour of India is just one example. India was also interested in upgrading its civilian and military capabilities in order to fulfil its “grand power” dream. Relations with the Arab world, which was technologically far behind Israel, were not serving India’s purpose.

Furthermore, the Organisation of Islamic Countries (OIC), in almost all its meetings adopted resolutions on Kashmir calling for a plebiscite. It was observed by the Indians that the support it gave to the Arab world over the Israeli-Palestinian issue was not being reciprocated to India over Kashmir. It was also perhaps an effort to appease the sole super power in the world that India decided to shift its foreign policy and to establish full diplomatic relations with Israel. It was believed by the Indians that good relations with Israel would soften U.S. towards India. This policy shift also coincided with India’s introducing economic liberalization and opening up of its market to other nations.

Israel, which had faced relative isolation across the globe, viewed India as its strategic partner in Asia. Israel also saw major benefits in coming closer to a country with a big Muslim population (the second largest in the world), hoping that it would help dilute the importance of the religious component in the Arab-Israeli conflict. India had cordial relations with most of the Arab countries, and Israel hoped that India would act as a facilitator between the Arab world and Israel. Besides, India’s being projected as a regional power and an emerging economic market also influenced Israel’s decision to develop closer economic ties with India.

Post-recognition era

India announced the establishment of full diplomatic relations with Israel on January 29, 1992. While Rajiv Gandhi, during his tenure as prime minister, took certain steps to normalise relations with Israel, the final credit went to P.V. Narasimha Rao. By establishing full diplomatic relations with Israel, he fulfilled the promise made by Jawaharlal Nehru to his Israeli counterpart David Ben-Gurion in early 1952.

Following the establishment of full diplomatic relations, a steady flow of political and commercial visits indicated the scope for cooperation in various fields including security relations. Following Israeli President Ezer Weizman's visit to India in early 1997, a series of high-level visits was undertaken by both the countries. This upward trend in the bilateral relationship was deliberately kept low-profile in an effort to secure India's interests in the Middle East region. However, Ariel Sharon's visit to India in September 2003, with a delegation of 150 members mostly from the defence industry, is widely seen as a milestone in India-Israel relations. Six pacts were concluded with India including the sale of three PHALCON airborne systems.

Ariel Sharon's high-profile visit to India and the growing security relationship between Israel and India caused great concern not only in Pakistan but also among the Indian Muslims and the Islamic world as it clearly indicated how far India's foreign policy had shifted from its support to the Palestinian issue. The visit was seen as clear evidence of a Jewish-Hindu axis against Islam. Furthermore, the Israeli prime minister's visit came at a crucial point when the entire strategic calculus in the Middle East and South Asia stood totally changed due to 9/11 and wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

It is also interesting to note that U.S. Jewish community has been actively engaged in promoting the Indian cause. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh met top leaders of the American Jewish community when he visited the U.S. in September 2004 and praised the contribution made by them to Indo-American and Indo-Israeli friendship.

Since the establishment of formal diplomatic relations, India-Israel ties have grown spectacularly. Although, as mentioned above, national security is the main determinant, both the countries have successfully diversified this relationship by cooperating in almost every field.

Economic ties

In December 1994, the two countries signed an agreement on trade and economic cooperation which granted Most Favoured Nation (MFN) status to each other and cleared the way for import of Indian goods to Israel without import permits except for certain items.

There has been a multi-fold increase in trade between India and Israel. Rough diamonds and chemicals together constitute about 83 per cent of Israel's exports to India. Other important exports include fertilisers, agro inputs, and medical equipment. Meanwhile, polished diamonds and cotton yarn account for approximately 76 per cent of India's exports to Israel, along with precious stones, tea, coffee, spices and handicraft. In an effort to expand this two-way trade, both the countries frequently host trade exhibitions.

Israeli infotech firms are setting up offices in the Indian IT hub, and an increasing number of Indian professionals are moving to Israel. According to some estimates, India's non-military trade with Israel reached from \$ 202 million in 1992 to \$1.27 billion in 2002. It was reported in the media that bilateral trade is set to touch \$3.3 billion, some 20 per cent more than in 2007. India is emerging as one of Israel's largest global trading partners in Asia as it has already overtaken China and is placed after Hong Kong and Japan.

In 2007, Elbit Medical Imaging, an Israeli medical equipment maker, signed an agreement with Ambuja Realty of India to invest over \$1 billion in hospitals and hotels, besides establishing a chain of hospitals in partnership with Ambuja. Similarly, another Israeli group, Alony Hetz, has set up a consortium with Israeli and Australian companies to invest in Indian real estate sector. Alony Hetz holds 40 per cent shares in the consortium that plans to invest \$100 million. An MoU was also signed worth \$160-200 million, to build a 450,000 sq m holiday home project near Mumbai.

Cultural Ties

India and Israel maintain close cultural relations. Many visits of cultural delegations take place. An Israel dance troupe, Imbak, was invited to perform in India in exchange for a visit to Israel by Indian dancer Shanta Rao and her troupe in April 1958. Famous Israeli Violinist Yehudi Menuhin was also awarded the Jawaharlal Nehru Award for International Understanding in 1968.

Agreements on cooperation in education and tourism were signed during Peres' visit of May 1993 which was followed by the finalisation of the detailed Cultural Exchange Programme (CEP) in September 1993. The second CEP was signed during President Weizman's visit in December 1996.

It is also interesting to note that Shimon Peres is a Bombay-born Jew. Founder of Israel Ben Gurion had immense regard for three world figures: Moses, Socrates and Gandhi and kept their pictures on his desk. Similarly, prominent Indians like Nehru, Tagore, and R. K. Narayan are well known in Israel, and some streets have also been named after them.

Within India there are three different Jewish communities: the Cochin Jews, the Beni Israel (Children of Israel) and the Arabic-speaking Jews. Cochin is an important Jewish centre with a 400-year-old Synagogue. Prime Minister Indira Gandhi went to Cochin to inaugurate the centennial celebrations and paid compliments to the Jewish community for providing men of distinction in business, industry, civil service and the armed forces. Jews have been a part of India for centuries, and the absence of discrimination or persecution by the majority has also been appreciated by Israel.

There are around 70,000 Jews of Indian origin in Israel who are now Israeli nationals. The main wave of immigration from India to Israel took place in the 1950s and 1960s; this generation maintains an Indian lifestyle and have close cultural links with India.

Similarly, research and study scholarship are granted to Indian students. Apart from business visits and tourists, a large number of Israeli youths take a break in India after completing rigorous mandatory military training. Goa, Himachal Pradesh and Mumbai are popular tourist destinations for Israelis.

Defence ties and counter-terrorism cooperation

India-Israel defence relations have been growing steadily. Both Israel and India aspire to become unchallenged military powers of the Middle East and South Asia, respectively. Israel helped India in its war against China in 1962 and against Pakistan in

1965 and 1971. Similarly, tacit Israeli help was available to the Indian army during the Kargil crisis which, according to the Israeli ambassador to India, Mark Sofer, turned around the situation in India's favour. India, on the other hand, helped Israel during the 1967 Middle East conflict by covertly sending military equipment to Israel. Though never acknowledged in public, this cooperation signalled a shared security understanding.

Even prior to the establishment of full diplomatic relations, high-level Indian and Israeli defence delegations visited each other's country. In 1963, General Shaltiel, Israeli Chief of Army Staff, visited India for a secret meeting with his Indian counterpart. In 1979, Indian Prime Minister Moraji Desai secretly invited Israeli leader Moshe Dayan. Indira Gandhi continued the policy of covert relationship with Israel and even allowed collaboration between the Indian intelligence agency, the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), and Mossad. After the assassination of Indira Gandhi, Israeli security services were requested for assistance in overhauling the security apparatus.

In the 1980s, it was suspected that Israel and India were secretly planning to undertake a joint operation against the Pakistani nuclear facility in Kahuta. However, the operation was called off due to fears of a retaliatory attack on Indian nuclear facilities. Besides, it was also believed that the CIA had tipped off Pakistani President Gen. Zia-ul-Haq about these plans. Since at that time Pakistan was a frontline State against Soviet Union and a close ally, the U.S. did not want it to lose focus from the Afghan jihad. Therefore, the State Department also warned India against any such attack.

After Pakistan detonated its nuclear device in May 1998, intelligence was received that six ultra-modern aircraft, loaded with sophisticated missiles and flown by Israeli pilots, had landed on different air bases in Indian-occupied Kashmir. With the help of Israelis, the Indians also laid Electronic Counter Measure (ECM) frequency-operated equipment network to neutralise Pakistan's electronic network at its nuclear facilities, particularly at the Kahuta plant. As a result, Pakistan placed more than 125 surveillance planes over Kahuta round the clock. This speculation of a strike on Pakistan's nuclear facilities was once again raised after Sharon's visit to India when a decision was taken to keep a mutually watchful eye on "fanatic Islam".

India and Israel have fought wars against their respective opponents in almost every decade. Both the countries share concerns regarding the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and terrorism. A campaign has been launched to malign Pakistan as

India and some Western countries have been showing concern about the nuclear arsenal of Pakistan. Israel, on the other hand, has also been propagating about the proliferation of missiles in its own neighbourhood and about the possibility of Pakistani nuclear weapons transforming into an Islamic bomb.

Though this relationship is multifaceted, it is the menace of terrorism that particularly holds the attention of both these countries. India and Israel describe fighting terrorism as a major national challenge. Both consider themselves democratic, pluralistic States with large domestic Muslim minorities. Both the countries blame their neighbours for sponsoring terrorism in their countries. In this regard, the proposal made by Indian National Security Advisor Barjesh Mishra for the formation of a formal alliance between India, U.S. and Israel to combat the common threat of “Islamic fundamentalism” in a speech to the American Jewish committee in May 2003, was an important development. He argued that democratic nations face the menace of international terrorism and should form a “viable alliance” and develop a multilateral mechanism to counter the menace. He also added that a “distinctions sought to be made between freedom fighters and terrorists propagate a bizarre logic.” That was strongly supported by Israel which declared that an “unwritten and abstract” axis with India and the U.S. has been formed to combat terrorism.

Since then, India and Israel have been cooperating closely on the counter-terrorism front. India has been learning from the Israeli experience of tackling cross-border infiltration. Both the countries feel that terrorism in their respective countries not only comes from the local marginalised groups but also aided by the neighbouring States. A declaration was signed during Sharon’s visit to India in which States and individuals that aided terrorism across borders or provided sanctuary or financial support, training and patronage, were condemned.

India and Israel exchange crucial intelligence information on “Islamic terrorist” groups. Israel has been providing India material and training to fight dissidents in Kashmir. It has also provided India important logistical support such as specialised surveillance equipment, cooperation in intelligence gathering, joint exercises and cooperation to stop money-laundering and terror-funding. Tactics used by Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) in the guerrilla and urban warfare in its war against Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip can be adopted by the Indian security forces in countering insurgency in Kashmir. Israel’s experience in training, equipping and operating elite undercover units in Palestine to gather intelligence, spot targets and engaging Palestinian gunmen is yet another example for the Indian security forces in Kashmir. In 1991, it was reported in the media that about 600 Mossad or Israeli commandos were present in Indian-held

Kashmir. In 1993, during the Hazrat Bal crisis, around five hundred Israeli commandos were flown in to Occupied Kashmir at the request of then Prime Minister Narisimha Rao.

Israeli army officers have also been imparting training to the Indian army officers to curb the freedom movement in Indian-held Kashmir. The Israeli Army Chief, Major General Avi Mazrahi, also visited Indian-occupied Kashmir on September 10, 2008, and interacted with senior Indian army officers. He gave a lecture on counterterrorism, and was given a briefing on security situation. A team of Israeli experts also visited Indian-occupied Kashmir and surveyed sites for establishing new electronic warfare detachments along the Line of Control (LoC) and the working boundary. In addition to that, another team visited Indian-held Kashmir and advised the Indian army on improvement of LoC fencing including construction of walls at selected locations. This fencing of LOC is also fitted with Israeli anti-personnel devices like thermal imagers. Indian fencing of the LoC can be equated with the separation wall build by Israel in occupied Palestinian territory. Furthermore, following Israel's footsteps, India has also been trying to bring about demographic changes in Kashmir so that the Muslim majority can be converted into a minority.

During Sharon's visit, Israeli Deputy Prime Minister Josef Labeled declared that Israel would strengthen India's defence capability by giving it latest technology to fight terrorism as both Israel and India are the victims of terrorist attacks by the "fanatic Muslims". Soon after Sharon's visit, India and Israel decided to hold a joint military exercise for their elite special forces to further strengthen defence collaboration. Israel has also been training Indian soldiers for specialised anti-insurgency strikes, adding to their training in desert, mountains, forests and counter-hijacking and hostage crisis situation. India also bought Tavor assault rifles, Galil sniper rifles, night vision and laser range finding and targeting equipment in order to improve the capabilities of its forces to effectively tackle the insurgency.

It is also speculated that Israel, in view of its size, could be seeking strategic depth by setting up logistical bases in the Indian Ocean for its navy. For that, cooperation with the Indian Navy is essential which is taking part in many ways. In this regard, in addition to seven already procured Israeli Barak anti-missile defence systems, the Indian Navy intends to acquire about ten more. This system will provide India with a close-in-point defence system against the Harpoon and Exocet missiles acquired by Pakistan. Projects are also underway to jointly develop a supersonic 70-km-range Barak-2 surface-to-air missile (MR-SAM) for the Indian Navy at the cost of Rs. 2,606 crore. India has also decided to launch joint programmes with Israel in the field of electronic warfare.

With the disintegration of the former Soviet Union, the arms market for India also diminished. Israel, on the other hand, with specialisation in upgrading Russian equipment, emerged as an alternative source of hi-tech defence procurement. Israel has been playing a vital role in India's attempts to enhance its conventional defences in order to counter Pakistan by providing surface-to-air missiles, avionics, sophisticated sensors to monitor cross-border infiltration, remotely-piloted drones and artillery. In June 2002, when India was planning to carry out a limited military strike against Pakistan as part of "Operation Parakram", Israel supplied hardware through special planes.

A number of Israeli weapons technologies are developed with funds from the U.S. As a result, the U.S. has a strong say in matters of Israeli military sales to other countries. The nature of relations between India, Israel and the U.S. can be gauged from the fact that U.S. opposition led to the cancellation of the sale of Israeli Phalcon Airborne Early Warning and Control (AWACS) radar systems to the Chinese in 1999, but allowed the same to India in 2004. The Phalcon early-warning systems would give India the capability to look nearly 200 kilometres inside Pakistan territory and would make it difficult for Pakistani troops and war planes to move without being detected. The Phalcon system acts as a major force multiplier which would drastically alter the military balance in South Asia. The first of the three Phalcon (AWA&C) arrived in India on May 24, 2009, whereas the second would arrive in late 2009 and the last one by mid-2010.

Indo-Israeli military, intelligence and counter-terrorism cooperation is extremely close. Over the past several years, India has purchased military equipment from Israel worth billions of dollars which also includes the Green Pines radar system employed by Israel's Arrow anti-ballistic missile batteries. India's defence-related purchases from Israel amount to some \$1.5 billion annually.

This relationship has had a very positive impact on the Israeli economy which is dependent on its defence industry. Defence deals help fund the country's research and development of advanced weaponry. Israel has become India's largest defence supplier, overtaking Russia. From anti-missile systems to hi-tech radars and from drones to night-vision equipment, there has been no limit to Indo-Israeli defence cooperation. According to figures released by the Israeli Defence Ministry, India accounts for 50 per cent of Israel's military exports.

India-Israel military relationship has transformed from a buyer-seller one to that of joint production and research. Both the countries are working to upgrade their existing weapon technologies and development of new technologies. Work on the development of an unmanned helicopter has already been initiated by Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd and Israel Aerospace Industries' unmanned air vehicle division, Malat.

In July 2007, India's cabinet committee on security chaired by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh approved a \$ 2.5 billion defence project with Israel for the development of missiles capable of intercepting aircraft and other aerial targets at a range of 70 kilometres by India's Defence Research and Development Organisation and Israel Aerospace Industries. This is the largest single deal involving Israel. G-550 "conformal" AWAC (airborne warning and control system), the latest offering presented by the Israeli companies during the Aero India 2009 show, was one of the main attractions.

Cooperation in the nuclear field is another very important dimension of Indo-Israeli relations which has been used to maintain qualitative superiority over Pakistan. Clandestine cooperation in the nuclear field between India and Israel is traced back to 1962 when the chairman of the Israeli Atomic Energy Commission visited India. India wanted to expand its nuclear armament programme and in this regard Israel possessed the most advanced technical know-how. On the other hand, Israel lacked the needed raw material and India had the largest thorium reserves in the world. A group of Jewish financiers in Switzerland agreed to finance the two and a half million pound project for an extraction plant in India in exchange for the use of facilities and its products by Israel. This extraction plant was established at Jaduguda.

It is also speculated that the Indian nuclear tests of May 1998 were actually conducted to test Israeli nuclear technology, as there are no testing grounds available in Israeli territory.

Indo-Israeli relationship witnessed yet another milestone with India launching an Israeli spy satellite into space much to the distress of the Muslim countries, particularly Pakistan and Iran. The TecSar satellite, also referred to as the Polaris, is said to have enhanced footage technology which allows it to transmit images regardless of daytime and weather conditions. That also indicates that both India and Israel want to develop close relations in the space sector with Israel reducing its dependence on the U.S.

In the wake of the Mumbai terror attacks, India also bought from Israel the aerostat radar system to help defend its coastline in a deal worth \$600 million. Israel was quick to despatch two high-ranking security men to India to assist with the investigation in Mumbai. It was also reported that an official of the Israeli foreign ministry and another from the Shin Bet security service were already in Mumbai taking part in the investigation and coordinating security at Israeli sites in India with local authorities.

Both India and Israel have gone out of their way to enhance and develop relations not only at the government level but also in the private sector which has enabled them to concentrate on and build strong defence ties.

Cooperation in agriculture

Since the establishment of diplomatic ties in 1992, more than 60 joint ventures in agriculture sector have been initiated in India in the fields of irrigation and water management, fertilisers, greenhouses, tissue culture horticulture, use of solar energy, animal husbandry and dairy development. Joint ventures have been established in India for the manufacture of drip irrigation systems, floriculture and horticulture. A bilateral agreement on cooperation in the field of agriculture was signed in December 1993 during the visit of Israel's minister for agriculture.

During President Ezer Weizman's visit, an Indo-Israeli research and development farm was inaugurated in the Indian Agriculture Research Institute at Pusa in New Delhi. Another project was that of a cotton demonstration farm in Akola in Maharashtra between the state government and the Agricultural Development Company of Israel. Other projects included one between the Punjab Agro Industries Corporation and Ozcot company of Israel, and the Indo-Israeli demonstration farm in the field of dairy development in Karnal.

Tahal, the Israeli water management company helped India in Rajasthan, Gujarat and Tamil Nadu for wasteland development, irrigation and water and modern agriculture pilot projects. During Indian Agriculture Minister Sharad Pawar's visit to Israel in November 2005, it was decided that a work plan would be drawn up between the two countries for collaboration in five specific areas: micro-irrigation, dairy, protected cultivation of horticulture crops, organic farming, and date palm production.

Implication for Pakistan

The growing Indo-Israeli relationship has not only raised alarm bells in Pakistan but also in the entire Muslim world as it has given Israel access to and partnership with the main Indian Ocean power. With one country policing the region of oil wealth, the other is engaged in an effort to contain the growing influence of China, thereby serving the interest of a third party, i.e., the U.S.

India and Israel have come together on the common objective of weakening Pakistan while, ironically, the U.S. turns a blind eye. India considers Pakistan as an obstacle in its plans to extend hegemony to the neighbouring countries. Pakistan, as a frontline State in the global war on terror, has been a victim of terrorism itself, and despite making huge sacrifices in terms of human and material loss, has repeatedly come under pressure by the U.S. to “do more” to tackle the problem of growing militancy in Afghanistan. The Mumbai attacks provided India a golden opportunity to malign and isolate Pakistan.

Israel, on the other hand, has never been comfortable with Pakistan’s nuclear programme. It fears that nuclear Pakistan is a source of strength to the Arab world. Since Israel’s security lies at the base of American foreign policy in the region, the U.S. wants to defend it against any potential danger. For the U.S., a powerful and progressive India supported by Israel is perhaps also a means to counter China. A close look would reveal that this triangle happens to be actively engaged in hostilities against Muslims: the U.S. in Iraq and Afghanistan; Israel in Gaza, the West Bank, along with the surrounding Arab countries; and India in its occupied Kashmir, together with missing no chance to undermine Pakistan’s interests.

India has a long history of religious and ethnic prejudice against Muslims. RAW, which was created in 1968, has been working as an invisible actor in the formation of India’s domestic, regional and global policies. A new role was given to it by Indira Gandhi, commonly known as the “Indira Doctrine”, in early 1980s to undertake covert operations in neighbouring countries, especially Pakistan. The role RAW played in dismembering Pakistan in 1971 is no secret. It is also said that before that, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and Israeli Foreign Minister Abba Eban had held a secret meeting somewhere in Europe for two hours after which an agreement was signed for

raising an army consisting of Bengalis to be supported by Israel. Israel also agreed to send its experts to train this army besides providing arms and ammunition.

Since 9/11, RAW has been playing a clandestine role along side CIA, Mossad and the Afghan intelligence agency in arresting and torturing suspected Muslims, particularly in India and Afghanistan. An India-Israel-U.S. dialogue held in Delhi on February 6 and 7, 2003, concluded that the three governments would set up “a joint trilateral mechanism to pool resources, capabilities and experience of the three countries for concerted action against international terrorism”. In this regard, the Indo-Israeli lobbies in the U.S. have been playing an active role in launching an anti-Muslim and anti-Pakistan campaign. With the help provided by their secret agencies, these lobbies have brought in a socio-religious dimension by equating the war on terror with war on Islam.

Following the suicide attack on the Indian Embassy in Kabul in 2008, Pakistan and its intelligence agency were blamed. The incident was used as an excuse by the Indian government to announce that with increased security threat to Indian assets in Afghanistan, India would send a fresh contingent of its Indo-Tibetan Border Police troops to the war-torn country to enhance the security of key Indian assets. There is also speculation that in order to control this strategically important country linking Central and South Asia and to sabotage Pakistan’s political and economic interests there, India wants to deploy 150,000 troops in Afghanistan.

There are clear signs that the unrest in FATA and Swat regions of Pakistan has much to do with the Indian presence in Afghanistan as arms and ammunition are being supplied generously by RAW agents from there. The Indian Border Road Organisation is being used to facilitate the supply of weapons to anti-Pakistan elements. Apart from its embassy in Kabul, India has established four consulates in cities which are close to Pakistani border and training camps in Afghanistan where Indian intelligence officers with the help of Afghan intelligence agency are busy to destabilising Pakistan by sending weapons to the separatist elements in Balochistan as well as in FATA and the Swat region.

This view was validated by an independent and renowned scholar, Christine Fair of RAND Corporation, who said that “having visited the Indian mission in Zahedan, I can assure you they are not issuing visas as the main activity. Moreover, India has run operations from its mission in Mazar (through which it supported the Northern Alliance) and is doing so from the other consulates it has reopened in Jalalabad and Kandahar

along the border. Indian officials have told me privately that they are pumping money into Balochistan.”

These Indian consulates provide cover to the Indian intelligence agencies to run covert operations against Pakistan. It is also said that madrasas of Indian Muslim clerics are functioning under the patronage of RAW and Mossad where young boys including Afghans, Uzbeks, Tajiks and Caucasians are recruited and trained to become ideologically motivated terrorists and suicide bombers before they are infiltrated into Pakistan where they join the Taliban militants and fight against Pakistani security forces.

These militants are also responsible for the unprecedented rise in sectarian violence in Pakistan, besides destroying the social infrastructure and carrying out most heinous crimes against humanity – all in the name of Islam. During Afghan President Hamid Karzai’s visit to Pakistan, President Musharaf even presented him maps of locations with suspected Indian activity and urged him to rein in the Indians.

Pakistan’s apprehensions of encirclement by India rose with the establishment of the Indian Air Force’s new facility in Farkhor, Tajikistan, which may house MI-17 helicopter gunships. The Indian army is also providing training to the Afghan National Army.

The absence of diplomatic relations between Pakistan and Israel has been exploited by India. The growing cooperation between India and Israel certainly causes great discomfort to Islamabad, and in order to counter the nefarious designs of this nexus, Pakistan even went to the extent of reconsidering its policy of non-recognition of the State of Israel. However, due to strong public outcry, the government of Pakistan could not change its policy of non-recognition of Israel.

After the Mumbai attacks, accusing fingers were pointed by India towards Pakistan and the ISI. The purpose was perhaps to tarnish the image of Pakistan and get the ISI declared a rogue institution. There were some reports that Israeli intelligence and military authorities were collaborating with their Indian counterparts to work out a plan for surgical strikes inside Pakistan against militants. Some quarters in the Indian establishment as well as some of the Israeli experts also suggested that India should learn some lessons and emulate Israel in dealing with Pakistan. They argued that, like Israel, India also has a right to defend itself and has a duty to protect its citizens against

acts of terrorism emanating from Pakistan. Others suggested deniable covert action as a means to teach Pakistan a lesson. Offensive diplomacy was used by India by sharing the so-called evidence of Pakistan's support to the Mumbai attacks with other nations in order to isolate Pakistan for allegedly supporting terror as an instrument of foreign policy. It was also reported that Israel despatched a number of intelligence officers to India to assist in analysing the terrorist plot.

The events of 9/11 quickened the pace of Indian, Israeli and American strategic partnership. This is also reflected in the increasing cooperation between the Jewish community in the U.S. and the Indian diaspora. Jewish organisations in the U.S. share a very close relationship with the Indian-American community and together they have played a vital role in helping these two countries develop their relationship. Recently, around 100 influential Indian-American leaders of a newly formed task force of Indian American Organisation (IATF) asked top lawmakers in Washington to reckon the Mumbai attack as "your own problem and not merely an Indian problem" and demanded that the U.S. pressurise Pakistan to act fast against those responsible for the carnage. The IATF also emphasised that, unlike in the past, Pakistan should not be simply let off this time. The group also released its "information document" authored by U.S. India Political Action Committee (USINPAC), a group founded in the aftermath of 9/11 with the help of American Jewish Committee (AJCommittee) and the American Israel Political Action Committee (AJPAC). Both Indian and the Jewish lobbyists have been propagating and equating Muslims with terrorism and the war on terror with war on Islam.

Following the Indian government's success in securing a deal with the U.S. that gave India access to civil nuclear technology despite the fact that it has not signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, the Indians have also been able to remove the issue of Kashmir from the job description of Holbrooke. This omission is seen as a significant diplomatic concession for the Indians which reflects their warm ties with the U.S. With the help of the Jewish lobby, the Indians have been trying to distract the attention of the Obama administration from Kashmir and highlighting the menace of terrorism relating to Afghanistan and Pakistan thereby exaggerating Islamophobia in the U.S. and other Western countries.

Using the phenomenon of terrorism and the anti-Islam approach of the West, both India and Israel have been convincing the world that a nuclearised Pakistan is sponsoring cross-border terrorism in Afghanistan and India. According to some media reports, Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh tried to persuade Obama that Pakistan has collapsed and its nuclear assets are already partly in the hands of extremists and there is no way to prevent them from taking control. He further added that Israel and India

have identical views about the situation. However, before reaching any conclusion and making any judgement, the Obama administration and the international community at large must keep in mind the huge sacrifices made by Pakistani people and the Army in the fight against the menace of terrorism.

Conclusion

The India-Israel nexus has never been a secret, but in view of the current scenario, this collusion is now presenting a real threat to the security and territorial integrity of Pakistan.

India has a dream of becoming not only a regional but global political and military power. The recent 34 per cent increase in the defence budget announced by the UPA government reinforces that view. At present, India is not threatened by any of its neighbours. Instead of using this money in social development projects to improve the condition of its masses, India has chosen to spend it on weapon purchases.

India-Israel defence collaboration has seriously endangered the strategic balance in the region, and Pakistan is finding it increasingly difficult to match the conventional military capability of its neighbour. It has especially expressed its concern regarding the sale of the Arrow anti-missile system that would neutralise part of Pakistan's nuclear arsenal by seriously affecting its ballistic missile capability.

It is astonishing that the Indian government is taking advice from a government which itself has not been successful in creating stability on its own borders and preventing the so called "Islamic terrorists" from attacking it. Even after 60 years of military action against the Palestinians, Israel still lives in an atmosphere of fear. Israel's counterterrorism strategy has been a complete failure which the Israeli government has been trying to hide by brutally using its fire power against innocent Palestinians. Two years ago, Israel marched into Lebanon, thinking it could destroy the Hezbollah but ended up retreating in disgrace. To emulate Israel would never serve India's interests and would pose a serious threat to the stability of the entire South Asian region.

One should in this context also keep in mind that Pakistan is not as weak as the Arab States surrounding Israel or Hamas with its limited arsenal. Pakistan is a nuclear State. Instead of blaming Pakistan, India should admit that the Mumbai attacks could not have been carried out without some sort of help from local elements.

India has been trying hard to equate unrest in occupied Kashmir with terrorism. Taking advantage of the post-9/11 situation, both India and Israel are killing Muslims, and any reaction from the Kashmiris and the Palestinians is labelled terrorism by the American and Western media. The world and particularly President Obama must understand that Kashmir is an unfinished agenda of the partition and there can be no peace in this region unless this issue is resolved according to the wishes of the Kashmiris.

Cuban leader Fidel Castro wrote in one of his articles that the U.S. has used the war on terror to interfere in the affairs of other countries while encouraging terrorism when it suited its national agenda. Atrocities in Kashmir and Palestine and American occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan are the major factors responsible for growing terrorism worldwide. Both Israel and India need to understand that denying people their basic human rights will only result in more violence.

Due to the presence of the Jewish lobby in the U.S., Israel exerts unprecedented influence on U.S. policies which in the current situation has been benefiting India. As an ally in the war on terror, Pakistan should pressurise the U.S. to take care of its interests. Being the sole superpower in the world, it is America's moral responsibility to ensure peace in the world which cannot be achieved without justice to the oppressed people in Kashmir and Palestine.

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