

3 CHAPTER

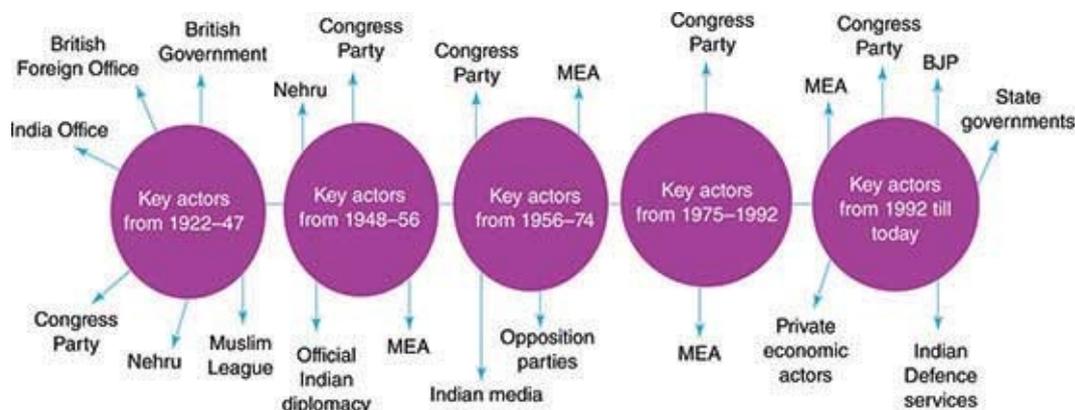
India and Israel Relations

After reading the chapter, the reader will be able to develop an analytical understanding on the following:

- Basic Introduction
- Phase-1: 1922 to 1947
- Phase-2: 1948 to 1956
- Phase-3: 1956 to 1974
- Phase-4: 1984 to 1991
- Phase-5: 1992 till today
- Analysis of bilateral visits

INTRODUCTION

India's relations with Israel have undergone tremendous change since the end of the Cold War. However, the origin of India's Israel policy goes back to the early 1920s. A very unique dimension of the Indo-Israel relationship is that although India recognised Israel in 1950, two years after its creation, it did not establish full diplomatic relations. This stance of India of recognising Israel but not giving it the privilege of full diplomatic relation is a unique instance in the diplomatic history of the world. However, as the Cold War ended, the Indian government in 1992 established diplomatic relations with Israel and became one of the last non-Arab states to accord the privilege of full diplomatic relations to Israel. The entire chapter will explore the Indo-Israel relations in five different time periods. The diagram below represents the time periods and key actors of each time period.



PERIOD 1: 1922 TO 1947: CONFLICTING NATIONALISM: THE GRADUAL FORMATION OF INDIA'S ISRAEL POLICY

India's relations with West Asia and Palestine are historical and can be traced back to almost 2500 BC. The people of Indus Valley civilisation have traded with the civilisations of Mesopotamia. There had also been practices of maritime trade since many centuries

which led to the settlement of Indian communities in the Arab world. During the medieval period, the continuity of relations with West Asia was visible during Mughal rule in India. During this period, Jewish traders from the Middle East traded gold, silver, precious stones with India. The onset of European colonialism saw a rise in migration of Jews from the Middle East to India. As the European powers began colonisation of Asia and the British commenced with the colonisation of India, Jewish immigrants began to move from Iraq to Surat in Gujrat. Some Jews from Iraq also settled down in Bombay. These Jews from Iraq undertook manufacturing and commercial activities in Gujrat and Bombay. Thus, India's relations with West Asia are deeply rooted in its past, which is also indicative of the need of a strong future relationship with the entire block.

As the political control of the British became firmly established over India, the British rulers not only took up the Indian trade routes in West Asia, but also began to establish British protectorates and buffers in West Asia to keep other competitor colonial powers at bay. The British viceroy in India was tasked with the responsibility of controlling the West Asia region. The first thing that the British did was to safeguard West Asia from the French, German and the Russians. In order to achieve this, the British associated themselves with the affairs of the West Asians and also stationed British residents in the region. The British initially had a simple goal—that of safeguarding the maritime frontier of India. Consequently, they occupied Cyprus in 1878 and Egypt in 1882. As the World War–I ended, the consolidation of colonial powers of West Asia was given effect through the Mandate system. The Mandates of Iraq and Palestine were to be governed by the British, who resorted to using administrators from India to run the affairs of the Mandates. In fact, to suppress any potential opposition to the British rule in the territories, the British also used the Indian army in these areas.

The presence of the British in West Asia led to the British being involved in the Ottoman empire—a fact that was exploited by the Indian National Movement to solidify its criticism of British interference. This also made the nationalists in India realise that the people of West Asia also have a same common enemy. Thus, the period after World War–I led to Indian leaders considering the region anew, giving early roots of India's West Asia Policy. Moreover, the position of Nehru and Gandhi on the Palestinian question had considerable influence on India's Israel policy after Indian Independence. Gandhi initially developed his views about Jews and Zionism through his early interaction with Jews in South Africa, whereby he developed a substantial understanding of Jewish nationalism and their demand for a national home. Though he sympathised with the Jews for their horrific persecution in Germany and other European nations, he did not find much legitimacy in the demand of Jews to establish a national home.

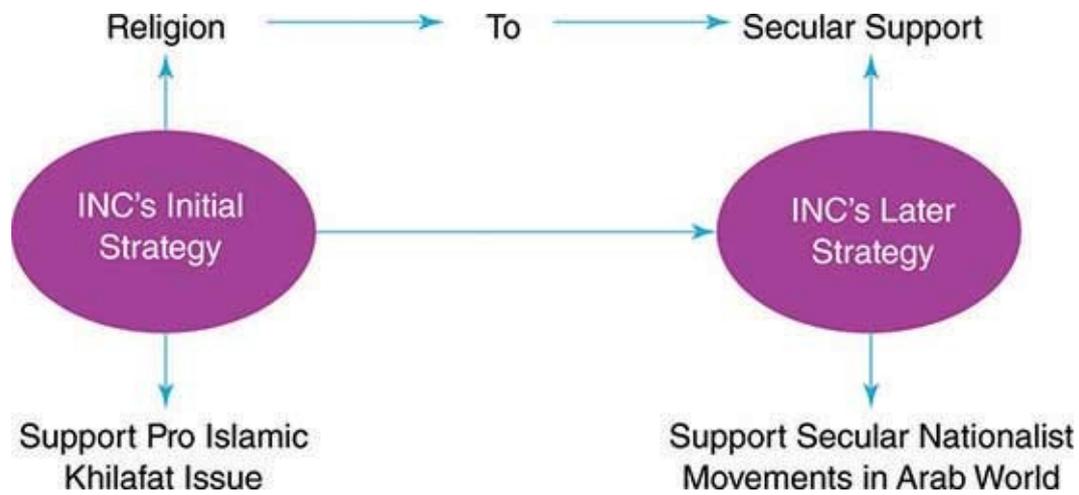
In the initial years after the World War–I, Gandhi insisted that Palestine should not be a Jewish state but should remain under Muslim control. There were two reasons for Gandhi to espouse this view—first, Gandhi had kept domestic Indian Muslim community and their participation in the national movement in mind while forming his opinion; and second, Muslims had ruled Palestine for many centuries and it would have been a wrong strategy on the part of the British to accede to Zionist demand for the creation of a homeland in Palestine. He clarified that he believed Christians and Jews should freely go and worship in Palestine but should not acquire any sovereign jurisdiction over Palestine. But after the dissolution of Ottoman Empire, Gandhi argued that Zionists should not nurse

territorial or political aspirations but rather, realise the Zionist ideas internally and spiritually. Gandhi also was very critical of Zionist cooperation with the British to achieve their demands of a national home as India was fighting British Imperialists. Indians began to perceive Zionist cooperation with British as Zionist intention to colonise Palestine. However, during this period, the Jewish Agency for Israel continued to work in close association with Gandhi and kept him abreast of the developments in Zionist political thought and goals.

Nehru, who became the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of India in the immediate period after Indian independence, was also opposed to the idea of a national home for Jews but did develop affinity with socialist Jewish leaders. The first reference by Nehru to the issue of Palestine can be seen in 1933 when he wrote a letter on the issue from a prison to Indira. In the dialogue, Nehru appreciated Jewish achievements and their contribution to the improvement of living standards of Palestinians through modern industry. He did not, however, support the cause for a Jewish national home. He also did not appreciate the Zionist cooperation with the British for a colonisation of Palestine as he held forcible colonisation to be morally and ethically wrong. Nehru favoured the idea of a united Palestine and not one divided by religion. Nehru articulated his views on the Palestine in a different manner. For Nehru, the Palestine issue was a fight by the Arabs against British imperialists. Nehru inferred that the Jewish issue was a deliberate creation of the British—similar to the divide and rule tactic of British in India—where the British pitted Jews against Arabs in Palestine. Nehru was extremely moved by the plight of the Jews in Germany and Eastern Europe, and after witnessing their persecution first hand during his visit to Central Europe in 1938, he advocated asylum for Jews in India.

The unity in India over the Khilafat question gave India a lead to engage with the leadership of Egypt and Syria. India began to take positions on the Arab Palestine issue and criticised British interference in Ottoman territory after World War-I. The period of late 1920s saw Congress taking a stand in public support of Arab nationalism. Broadly, India perceived the Palestine struggle as a larger Arab struggle against imperialism. In 1937, when the Peel Commission report recommended the partition of Palestine, the INC, in its 1938 Haripura session, condemned the partition scheme and extended sympathy to the Arab cause. The INC was sympathetic to Jewish persecution in Central Europe but did not favour any partition or support for a separate home for Jews. It continued to perceive Zionism as a deliberate British design, and an ideology largely sponsored by the West.

India played a key role in supporting anti-imperial struggles in Syria, Egypt and Palestine and expressed solidarity with their nationalist struggles while refraining from quoting any Jewish organisations. India abstained from developing relations with any Zionist movement as it intended to promote a secular outlook of nationalism.



The INC in India maintained a policy in favour of Arabs while the Muslim League had severely criticised the Zionist movement. The aim of the INC was to show solidarity with Palestine Arabs as also to reassure the Indian Muslims on which side they were. However, the INC and Muslim League differed in the sense that the INC was supportive to Arabs but was not hostile to Jews like the Muslim League was. The Muslim League vehemently opposed the creation of a Jewish Palestine and had also condemned the Balfour Declaration in 1917. Subsequently, when the Peel commission report came and advocated partition of Palestine, India still resorted to showing solidarity with Arab Palestinians. The Muslim League again condemned the report of Peel Commission. The policy of Muslim League on Palestine did exercise influence on the policy of the INC. Due to strong pro-Arab manoeuvring by the League, the INC also decided to align its views. Both parties aimed to make their presence felt within the Muslim community of India. The INC also organised pro-Palestine demonstrations to establish its alliance to the Palestinian cause. The INC, through its policy, made it clear that division of Palestine on religious grounds could not allowed.

The issues in West Asia and Palestine also gave India an opportunity to establish its alternative foreign policy views which were different from the British policy. Thus, initially as we saw that INC followed pro-Arab, pro-Islamic policy up till Khilafat movement but later, after riots and dismemberment of the Khilafat, began to advocate a secular-nationalist Arab view.

PERIOD 2: 1948 TO 1956: REALITY CHECK? RECOGNITION OF ISRAEL AND LIMITS OF INDIA-ISRAEL RAPPROCHEMENT

After the conclusion of the World War-II, the British handed over the Palestine Mandate to the UN. The UN established the UNSCOP (UN Special Committee on Palestine), of which India was also a member. In 1947, New Delhi organised a conference of the Asian Relations Organisation called the Asian Relations Conference (ARC). In the conference, both Arabs and Jewish delegations were invited. This was in sync with the earlier policy of the INC that had evolved support for Arab Palestinians, with conciliatory accommodation of Jews. A 10-member delegation of Jews headed by Samuel Hugo Bergmann, also known as the Hebrew University delegation, participated in the conference. Ironically, the Arab states declined to participate owing to Jewish invitation and this gave an opportunity to the Jews to present their case to India. During the ARC, the Jewish delegation again presented their idea of partitioning Palestine for

accommodating Jews, which did not resonate well with the Indian leadership.

Through the ARC, India also undertook a fine foreign policy manoeuvre by maintaining that Palestine belonged to Arabs, but simultaneously showing sympathy with the Jews. When the British placed the Palestinian issue before the UN General Assembly, Nehru appointed Asaf Ali as the Indian representative to the special session at the UN. Asaf Ali was instructed that he should not commit India to any situation that may affect India's relations with other nations but ensure that India would support the termination of the British Mandate of Palestine. Nehru asked Ali to play a cautious game as India wanted to support Arabs but not upset Jews as doing so would consequently affect India's relations with Western powers. The idea was to remain friendly to both the parties. The UNSCOP presented a final report in September 1947. The majority of members supported partition of Palestine but India, Iran and Yugoslavia advocated a Federal Palestine with both Arabs and Jews as a part of the territory. Thus, India continued to stick to its pre-partition policy of supporting Arabs and accommodating the Jews.

As the partition plan won at the UNGA, it was clear that the partition of Palestine was inevitable. The question before India was what to do once a Jewish state in Palestine was born. On 14 May, 1947, Israel as a state was born and both the US and the USSR recognised the existence of Israel. The task for Israel now was to seek diplomatic recognition from the world. It decided to seek the same from India too. On 17 May, 1948, Israeli foreign minister, Moshe Sharett, sent a letter to Nehru seeking diplomatic recognition of Israel from India. The Indian established decided not to make any hurried decision and adopted a wait-and-watch policy. In August 1948, H V Kamath enquired about the Indian position on Israel in the Constitution Assembly debates where Nehru reiterated the wait-and-watch stance.

There were two important reasons for India to adopt a wait-and-watch policy. The first was that after Israel got created, hostilities broke out in the region and the situation turned rapidly volatile. Secondly, the Indian Muslims had gone through the traumatic experience of partition and making a statement on Israel was not warranted at this stage. Further, during this period Pakistan began to establish proximity with Arabs to ignite the idea of Pan Islamism which they could use against India in Kashmir. However, during this period, Indian diplomats all over the world kept interacting with Israeli diplomat. Israel had become a reality in the international system and there was a growing pressure on India to recognise Israel. On 11th May 1949, UNGA decided to vote on the question of Israel being made the 54th member of UN. India voted positively on this question. India later, however, voted against the motion at the time of Israel's admission to the UN. India clarified that State of Israel had not been formed by virtue of negotiations but by armed struggle and the Indian stand was in sync with its earlier stand of support to Palestinians. But when Israel got accepted as a UN member, it kindled a reconsideration of Israel by India. Nehru, during his visit to the US in 1949, had met with Israeli diplomats and also conveyed to them that as the UN has accepted Israel as a member, India is moving in the direction to recognise Israel which as a question could no longer be postponed.

Between 1948 and 1950, Turkey and Iran too had recognised Israel. There was a direct pressure on India to recognise Israel as it could no longer play the domestic Muslim population card. Nehru announced India's recognition of Israel in February 1950 in a

statement made in the Parliament. But this declaration was verbal. Neither were there any official document that recognised Israel nor was any step taken to establish diplomatic ties. Finally, on 17th September, 1950, a press communiqué was issued to recognise Israel after 28 months of requests from Israel. India thus removed the main obstacle in the recognition of Israel. The delay in Indian response was attributed to the diplomatic backlash India may have had to face from the Arab states. India clarified that the recognition to Israel in no way meant a change to Israel–Palestine policy of India and that it would continue to promote Arab cause.

Other factors played a role in the diplomatic shift undertaken by India. India, through the recognition of Israel, made it clear that its support to Arabs was not unconditional and that India did expect reciprocity. India did not appreciate Egyptian vote at the UN against India on the issue of Hyderabad and its abstention at the UN vote on the Korean issue.

Even though India had recognised Israel, it did not lead to the establishment of diplomatic ties instantly. India made a distinction between legally recognising Israel and the political act of establishing diplomatic relations. India made the right choice in maintaining a balance in the diplomacy related to West Asia. In September 1951, a consular office was opened in Bombay and F W Pollock was made honorary Consular Agent of Israel to India. Israel perceived all these steps to be important because it was surrounded by countries which had declared war on it. Israel was isolated by its neighbours and the only option for Israel was to engage with the West.

In Asia, Israel perceived India as a springboard to the other part of the world. However, the subsequent Suez crisis of 1956 took the relations to a low point. India condemned Israeli aggression, with Nehru branding the military operation of Israel on Egypt as a clear, naked act of aggression. India resorted to a recognition-but-no-relationship policy with Israel in this period. This open-ended foreign policy to pursue relations with both Arabs and Israel gave India the need to stay in touch with the region without complicating relations with anyone in the evolving strategic circumstances. An Indian Friends of Israeli society was formed and it continued to interact on various occasions. This was no doubt appreciated by Israel but the society had a limited influence on foreign policy.

PERIOD 3: 1956 TO 1974: CRISES AND DEBATES: CONTESTATION AND REVISION OF INDIA'S ISRAEL POLICY

The subsequent period after the 1956 crisis saw a change in Israel's attitude towards India. Israel was unhappy with India for not extending full diplomatic relations. Israel realised the need to improve relations with the West were more crucial than with Asia and India. Israel did invite Nehru in 1960 but he declined the invitation as such a visit at this juncture could complicate matters. In 1963, in the Parliament, India clarified that due to less consular work between the two states, it is not appropriate to establish diplomatic missions with Israel. After the death of Nehru in 1964, Shastri continued the Nehruvian legacy with regard to India's Israel policy. In 1964, India accorded recognition to the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO). India continued cooperation with Israel in the field of technology and agriculture.

During the 1962 Indo–China conflict, India asked for military assistance from Israel

and it agreed, considering that this may provide an opportunity for Israel to put in place diplomatic ties with India. In January 1963, top level officials of Israel and India had a meeting and this became the first ever proper contact between the two forces. The coming of Indira Gandhi saw a resurgence of the hardcore pro-Arab policy. In March 1966, Israeli President Zalman Shazar, while on his way to Nepal, requested a 24-hour halt in India. The MEA requested the halt to take place in Calcutta and somehow no official greeting of the Israeli head of the state took place. This reflected the absence of depth in the relations.

In the Six-Days War in 1967, India blamed Israel for escalating conflict and showed support to Egypt and the Arab states. In the 1965 India–Pakistan conflict, Pakistan succeeded in garnering the support of Arabs. The only Arab state standing with India was Egypt, which offered mediation in the Casablanca Summit of Arabs in September 1965. India had again requested for Israeli assistance for heavy mortar and ammunition. Israeli Foreign Minister Golda Meir was non-committal, but Prime Minister Levi Eshkol sent shipments of ammunition to India. Despite the support, no steps were taken by Shastri regime for modifying Israel–India ties. However, the lack of Arab support during 1965 war for India and outright support to Pakistan led the opposition in India to heavily criticise India’s West Asia Policy. In 1966–67, the Arab–Israel conflict began again, with the situation becoming volatile along the Syria–Israel and Jordan–Israel border. India was affected when, in 1967, Egypt asked the UN Emergency Force (UNEF) to withdraw from Egypt controlled areas near the border. India was a significant contributor to the UNEF. But due to Israeli aggression, many Indian UNEF officials and soldiers had died. India, at that time, was a non-permanent member of UNSC and again condemned Israel for escalation of conflict and strongly objected to the pre-emptive attack of Israel on Egypt.

The opposition in India blamed the Indian government for supporting Arabs without reciprocity and stated that India should not favour Arab world as they supported Pakistan. There was a gradual rise in India of this new orthodoxy which was not anti-Israeli but lacked assertion as they were out of the power structure. As Israel expanded its territory in 1967, India advised that Israel should follow UN Resolution 242 and go back to pre-1967 borders. However, the government toned down the anti-Israel rhetoric and began to attribute its pro-Arab policy to energy and economic considerations. India also began to use UN Resolution-242 as a new benchmark for Indo–Israel rapprochement. After the creation of R&AW in 1968, India opened up lines of communication with the Israeli Mossad and thus began intelligence cooperation. The R&AW officers in Geneva acted in collaboration with Mossad and collection of intelligence on Pakistan and thereby began a new phase of cooperation, albeit low in tone.

In August 1969, the Al Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem witnessed a fire. The mosque is the third holiest site in Islam after Mecca and Medina. The Arab states blamed Israel for lack of protection of Islamic sites and Saudi King Faisal called for the convening of an Organisation of Islamic countries (OIC) Conference. The criteria was that only countries that have Muslim majority population or a Muslim head of State would be able to participate. Pakistan long used the OIC as a forum to propagate anti-India feelings related to Kashmir. India decided to participate in the OIC meeting planned in Rabat in September 1969. With no official invite coming despite an expression of interest by India, India insinuated that the OIC had been neglecting the interests of Indian Muslims. India also lobbied with Egypt and Indonesia, who convinced Faisal to allow an Indian delegation to

allow the representation of minority Muslims of India. Pakistani President Agha Muhammad Yahya Khan decided to walkout of the Summit on 23rd September since India had garnered the support of Algeria, Egypt, Sudan and Libya. Morocco and Saudi Arabia convinced Yahya Khan to attend the last session after it was agreed that India would not be a part of last session. The final declaration by the Islamic Muslims condemned Israel for its actions.

The issue caused public embarrassment for India but the government tried to justify its participation asserting the need to block Pakistan from using the OIC for its anti-India propaganda. The Arabs again stood by Pakistan in the 1971 conflict and showed inadequate appreciation of the refugee crisis India faced. In contrast, Israel supported India and recognised Bangladesh. In 1973, when the Yom Kippur war started with Egypt and Syria attacking Israel, India blamed it on Israel, citing its refusal to vacate territories captured in 1967 as a cause of Arab frustration, leading to aggression.

The period after 1967 saw lesser reliance of India on Egypt as a focal point of relations in the Arab world. India shed off its past inhibitions and began to engage with both Iran and Iraq. Both of them emerged as crucial suppliers of oil for India. India's relations with Iraq picked up at other bilateral levels also apart from oil. Economic and energy interests ensured that India's Israel policy did not veer completely away from UN Resolution 242.

PERIOD 4: 1984 TO 1992: SETTING THE STAGE FOR CHANGE: FROM ESTRANGEMENT TO ENGAGEMENT WITH ISRAEL

In 1980, Indira Gandhi came to power. In 1979, the Soviets invaded Afghanistan and all Arabs condemned it. India did not condemn the Soviet invasion owing to proximate ties with Soviets but to prevent ostracisation from Arabs, India immediately granted full diplomatic status to the PLO and allowed it a mission in New Delhi. When Israel objected to Indian criticism of Israeli attack on Iraq in 1981 and Lebanon in 1982, the Israeli counsel Yossef Hassin, who had criticised India, was expelled. This again took Indo-Israel relations to their lowest point. However, in the second half of the 1980s, India witnessed a change in political leadership as Rajiv Gandhi was elected as the Prime Minister of India on 24 December 1984. Rajiv Gandhi, educated at Cambridge University, signalled a fresh Indian approach towards Israel and though unable to reverse the traditional Indian pro-Arab foreign policy completely, initiated a number of moves in favour of Israel. He also held a meeting with Shimon Peres, his Israeli counterpart, at a UN session in 1985.

The PLO was based in Lebanon. When Israel attacked Lebanon, the PLO's headquarters moved to Tunisia. In 1985, Israel bombarded the PLO offices in Tunisia. India condemned the Israeli attacks. In October 1985, the UNGA session began. The Arabs sponsored a resolution for seeking the expulsion of Israel from UN. India abstained at the vote. Later, India allowed an Israeli vice counsel back in Mumbai. Rajiv, in 1987, allowed the Israeli Tennis team to play in India at the Davis cup. This event became a diplomatic move much appreciated by Israelis who, since 1960s, had not been granted visas by India to attend sports events. Later the government allowed the Israeli consulate to have jurisdiction over Kerala. However, events like the Palestinian Intifada and domestic problems in late 1980s did not allow Rajiv Gandhi to manoeuvre the foreign policy completely in favour of Israel.

After the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi, the Congress staged a comeback, with Narasimha Rao as Prime Minister. Rao formed the government in a coalition and was not constrained by the Muslim vote bank politics of the Indian National Congress. In 1990-91, Rao steered the Indian foreign policy based on regional and domestic developments. In 1990-91, there were internal divisions in the Arab world related to the Gulf War. In the Kuwait crisis, PLO supported Iraq while Arabs supported Kuwait. Saddam Hussein too sided with PLO to position himself as a leader of the Palestinian cause. The support of PLO to Iraq led to isolation of PLO in the Arab world. Domestically in India, the economy needed a push and USA was the only country that could give India the needed financial muscle. India understood that the US financial assistance is tied to India opening up its relationship with Israel. The Madrid Conference and Oslo Accords at the end of Cold War created a ripe situation for India to bolster its ties with Israel. After the PLO brokered negotiations with Israel at the Madrid conference, conjecturing the possibility of PLO-Israel rapprochement, Rao invited Yasser Arafat, the head of PLO, to India. Since 1987, Pakistan had been using the US trained Afghan Mujahedeens to create unrest in Kashmir. India began to suppress this externally sponsored insurgency in Kashmir, Pakistan successfully used the OIC forum to internationalize the Kashmir conflict by highlighting the human rights violation by India in Kashmir. OIC even decided to send a fact finding mission to Kashmir which was strongly protested by India. India asserted that Kashmir was an internal conflict of India and OIC had no jurisdiction on an internal issue related to India. India felt that its pro-Arab policy during the entire Cold War did not serve any strategic support to India for Kashmir. On 23rd January 1992, in a cabinet meeting, discussions on diplomatic relations with Israel were undertaken. In July 1992, India extended the consul relations to full diplomatic relations and Ephraim Duek presented his credentials to Indian President as the first Israeli Ambassador to India. India asserted that there was an economic logic to India's improved ties with Israel. India wanted to use the scientific and technical expertise of Israel for its domestic development. The change happened in 1992 because Narsimha Rao was convinced that a rehaul of our West Asian engagement was long due. The domestic political repercussions no longer guided our policy now. The realisation that India can gain from security relations with Israel by engaging strategically, also acted as a factor.

Core reasons that compelled India to make a shift in its Israel policy are:

1. The stand of OIC on Kashmir issue.
2. Internal divisions within the Arab world on the ongoing Gulf War.
3. Jordan (Madrid Conference-1991) and Egypt (Camp David Accord-1978) had already signed a peace treaty with Israel.
4. PLO and Israel initiated peace talks in 1993 in Oslo leading to the tectonic Oslo Accords.
5. Indian economy needed a push from USA which made financial assistance as a precondition to rapprochement with Israel.
6. India needed a defence partner (which USA eventually became) after the disintegration of the Cold War and demise of the USSR.
7. China too gave diplomatic recognition to Israel at the end of the Cold War prior to West Asia peace talks, thereby making a shift in its own policy of Cold War.

PERIOD 5: 1992 TO PRESENT: FROM PRUDENT RAPPROCHEMENT TO THE NEW STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP AND DE-HYPHENATION—THE CONSOLIDATION OF INDIA'S NEW ISRAEL POLICY

Rao opened up diplomatic relations with Israel but preferred to have a low-level engagement, which analysts attribute to the Congress government's desire to not compromise Muslim votes. He allowed only two cabinet ministers of his government to travel to Israel. The government resorted to a cautious approach of allowing the private actors and bureaucracy to be used to clearly identify areas where both would cooperate. India also clarified there was no change in Palestine policy and India would continue to support Arabs in the Palestine issue. Indian government instructed J N Dixit to make a case to Ambassadors of Arab states about India's Palestine policy. Dixit asserted to the individual diplomats that India expected reciprocity from Arab states in cases of issues pertaining to Pakistan. Post 1991, India decided to embark upon a journey to focus on self reliance in military technology. In this context, Israel became a core partner for India as it had vast experience in the Military Industrial Complex it had established in collaboration with the West. Israel had technology which they had developed indigenously and therefore was not bound by End User Licensing Agreements (EULA). Israel too expressed willingness to work with India through joint ventures. Though the relationship between the two states did pick up, but, remained short of a genuine strategic partnership.



R&AW and MOSSAD—The Secret Link

The link between the two intelligence agencies goes back to 1968 when R&AW was created. India has cooperated with Mossad to get vital intelligence about radical Islamic groups. The Field Officers of R&AW (equivalent to agents of other intelligence agencies) are trained by Mossad today. The two agencies have collaborations in assassination squads and counter terrorism operation at a covert level. In 1976-77, Moshe Dayan and Mossad even trained Indian Field Officers of R&AW to carry out air strikes to destroy the Pakistani Kahuta plant where Indian R&AW had found out secret nuclear enrichment done by Pakistan to develop a nuclear bomb. Till today, R&AW and Mossad continue to enjoy a deep covert relationship in different parts of the world.

After 1991, as India adopted the policy of diversification in defence industry, it began to forge a new alliance with Israel. Israel not only had a large military-industrial complex but through arms support in 1962, 1965 and 1971, had proven its mettle. Moreover, the disintegration of the Soviet Union and Indian defence industry's reliance on Soviet equipment became a factor since Israelis had developed special skills in upgrading Soviet era equipments. Thus, both defence and economic ties between the nations improved. Even though a strong case was made for defence deals with Israel, the Indian government decided not to publicly talk about the same. In 1998, when the BJP came to power, there were high level visits from India by L K Advani (Home Minister) and Jaswant Singh (Foreign Minister) to Israel. In 2003, Israeli PM Ariel Sharon visited India. The BJP

government added the needed strategic depth in the relations and opened up a chapter of defence diplomacy thereby envisaging a military and ideological alliance to contain terrorism. In 2003, India purchased 14 Million dollars' worth light ammunition, electronic warfare equipments and UAVs from Israel. Post Kargil war, both sides began cooperation in border control and counter-terrorism exercises. Israelis gave India night vision technologies and laser guided missiles and UAVs for high altitude surveillance and imagery, along with Barak-I missiles. The two sides signed MoU in agriculture, trade, high tech agriculture demonstration, health care, industrial research and development. They have also been negotiating an FTA for a long time. There is a Joint Working Group on Terrorism and Israel has supplied India with Phalcon AWACS system as well. At the defence level, Israel has also provided India with searcher UAVs, Heron-I drones, M-46 field guns, Phalcon AWACS, Spyder anti-aircraft missiles, radars and so on. Israel too is keen on engaging with India as Israel asserts that Jews in India have not been victims of anti-Semitism (unlike in Europe). In 2017, during the visit of the Indian PM to Israel, the two decided to take the relationship to a strategic level.

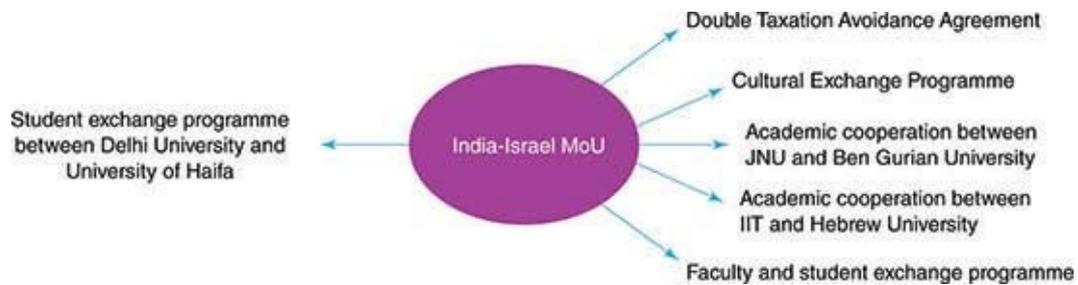


India and the Davis Report, 2015

In 2014, during an assault on Gaza, Israeli firing killed more than 2000 Palestinians, following which the UNHRC tasked Mary McGowan Davis with the investigations on Israeli war crimes. The report found out that highest levels of officials in the Israeli government were involved. The report was submitted to the ICC. The ICC, in August 2014, refused action as Palestine was not a member of the ICC. In April 2015, Palestine became a member of the ICC. The issue was taken up again and India abstained from voting along with Kenya, Ethiopia, Paraguay and Macedonia. India abstained as it is not a party to the Rome statute, it asserted that it follows the same policy of not voting for a resolution which is country-specific. However, though the Indian stand could be right in its own way, it is important to note that China is not a party to the ICC either and still chose to vote in favour of censuring Israel.

ANALYSIS OF VISIT OF THE INDIAN PRESIDENT TO ISRAEL AND PALESTINE

The Indian President visited Israel in October 2015 in the first ever Head of State level visit to Israel. The President was honoured by Al-Quds University and was hailed as the 'Knight of Peace'. He decided to strengthen cooperation in agriculture, defence and technology sectors. There were MoUs in Avoidance of double taxation, culture, academic and student exchange. The Hebrew University conferred the President an honorary doctorate. The President garnered support for Make in India. Both sided agreed to strengthen cooperation in security and counter-terrorism. During the visit, Israel backed India's entry to the UN Security Council as a permanent member. He was also given the rare honour of addressing the Knesset.



The Indian President also visited Palestine. During the visit, the President reiterated the Indian support to the Palestine cause. Indian President made it clear that there was no change in India's Palestine Policy.



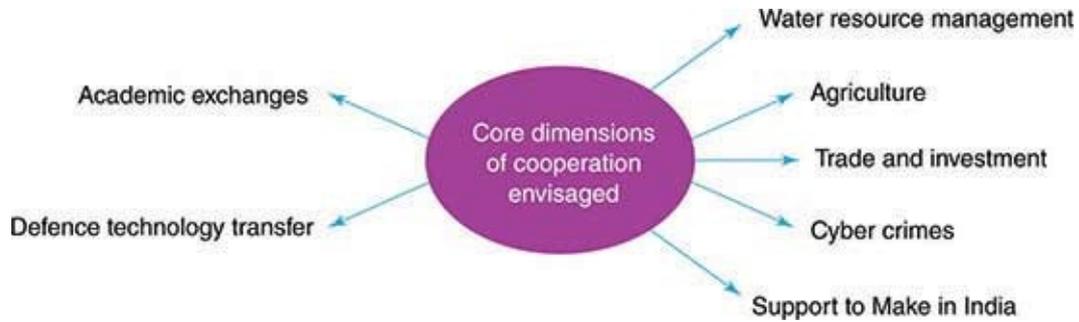
During the visit to Palestine, the President of India asserted that India would continue to follow the three core dimensions of its Palestine policy. He asserted that there would be a new road map established to engage with Palestine. The future framework of Indian engagement with Palestine was also announced by the President.



The President also inaugurated the India–Palestine centre for Excellence in ICT with a satellite centre in Ramallah. The President also hoped for the successful completion of Techno-Park in Ramallah. The President announced setting up of an ICT chair in Al-Quds University. The President also announced additional 100 ITECscholarships for the Palestinians. He further inaugurated the Jawaharlal Nehru secondary school at Abu Dees.

VISIT OF THE PRESIDENT OF ISRAEL TO INDIA

The President of Israel, Reuven Rivlin, visited India from 14th to 21st November in 2016. The visit laid down the foundation for the celebration of 25 years of diplomatic relations, to be completed in 2017. During the visit, the Israeli President committed to improve relationship in agriculture, defence, trade, academics and youth exchanges. The two sides identified micro-irrigation in drought prone areas and water management as new area of future cooperation on priority. Israel supported India's Make in India, Digital India, Skill India and Smart Cities projects and the Israeli President assured that Israeli companies will assist India in its flagship programmes. The two sides also decided to strengthen their cooperation to fight terrorism and extremism. A decision was taken to broaden defence cooperation by adding dimensions of defence production and manufacturing in the bilateral relationships. The Israeli President also visited Chandigarh and inaugurated Afro-Tech 2016 while he also visited the Indo–Israel Agriculture Project Centre in Karnal. The most important dimension of the visit was the focus on agricultural cooperation.



Analysis of the Indian PM Visit to Israel, 2017

Indian PM, Narendra Modi, visited Israel (becoming the first Indian PM to do so) and decided to shed off Indian policy of keeping relations with Israel low profile. During the visit, the two sides decided to take the relationship to a strategic partnership level. The important dimension that India conveyed through the visit was that it has de-hyphenated Israel and Palestine in the Indian foreign policy without abandoning the Indian support to the Palestinian cause. The de-hyphenation was clearly visible as the Indian PM skipped a visit to Palestine. The two sides signed strategic pacts worth 4.3 billion Dollars and decided to setup a 40 million Dollar India Israel Innovation Fund to augment bilateral research and development in different fields. Cyber defence has been identified as a priority area of joint research. A key area of cooperation is agriculture and water management. India is a water stressed nation with annual per capita availability of water being less than 1500 cubic meters. Israel is also a water scarce nation with per capita availability of water less than 200 cubic meters, yet, is an agriculture exporter to the European Union. In future, the two sides decided to explore the possibility of a future nuclear deal. The two sides have decided to sign the following agreements:

1. Setup India-Israel Research and Development and Technology Innovation Fund.
2. Plan of cooperation regarding atomic clocks.
3. MoU on Geo Synchronous Earth Orbit and Low Earth Orbit optical link.
4. India-Israel Development Cooperation- 3 Year work programme in agriculture from 2018 to 2020.
5. MoU on electric propulsion for small satellites.
6. Cooperation in utility reforms.