



Israel - India Relations; Strategic Challenges for Iran and Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

Asia is the most inhabited and diversified region in the world. The geo-political and geo-strategic significance of the region is already affirmed in the global order. The continent is comprising on numerous tenuous states involved in inter-state clangs and clanks, therefore, it forms the most perilous security complex in the world. Asia maintains high level of significance in terms of political, economic, geographic, strategic, cultural, industrial and military point of view in international community. Notwithstanding, regional development within the Asian states severely influences intercontinental politics. Recent rapprochement of Indian and Israeli governments to enhance cooperation in contemporary fields, especially military hardware is horrendous for both Iran and Pakistan. All four states are equipped with state of the art conventional and non-conventional weapons. India and Pakistan are already declared nuclear powers, whereas Iran and Israel are non-declared nuclear states, however, it is certain that all states have matchless missile technology and military gadgets. Iran; Israel and India; Pakistan rivalry is not a new phenomenon. This article will investigate challenges and repercussions of emerging India and Israel ties towards Iran and Pakistan in a contemporary scenario and changing regional power dynamics.

KEYWORDS: Asian politics, Strategic challenges, India-Israel relations, Iran, Pakistan

INTRODUCTION

Israel's 9th Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu paid a five days official visit to the Republic of India on January 15, 2018, underlining the growing ties between two major democracies, one in South Asia and one in the Middle East [1]. Netanyahu is the second Israeli leader to visit India after Ariel Sharon in 2003, where he received warm welcome by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi [2]. "Indian Prime Minister (Narendra) Modi is a close friend of Israel and of mine and I appreciate the fact that he will accompany me on extensive parts of my visit," Netanyahu said just before leaving for New Delhi [3]. The Israeli Prime Minister was accompanied with a large business delegation to enhance and promote bilateral cooperation in the fields of tourism, technology, agriculture and innovation. Prime Minister Netanyahu said, "On this visit I intend to strengthen bilateral relations even more. This visit is an opportunity to enhance cooperation with a global economic, security, technology and tourism power. Indian Prime Minister Modi is a close friend of Israel and of mine and I appreciate the fact that he will accompany me on extensive parts of my visit" [4]. In response to Israeli PM remarks, "Your visit to India is historic and special. It will further cement the close friendship between our nations," Modi said on Twitter [5]. "We will strengthen the existing pillars of cooperation in areas that touch the lives of our peoples. These are agriculture, science and technology, and security" twitted by Indian PM [6].

Early, in July 4, 2017, Narendra Modi became first Indian Prime Minister to visit Israel. "Prime Minister, we've been waiting for you a long time. We've been waiting almost 70 years in fact because yours is truly a historic visit. It's the first time an Indian Prime Minister is visiting Israel. We receive you with open arms. We love India. We admire your culture, we admire your history, your democracy, your commitment to progress. We view you as kindred spirits in our common quest to provide a better future for our peoples and for our world" [7]. This significant visit, the first of an Indian Prime Minister to Israel, takes place on the backdrop of marking 25 years of diplomatic relations between India and Israel, and will further upgrade the ever-growing partnership between the two countries [8]. In a joint statement PM Modi said, "My visit celebrates the strength of centuries-old links between our societies. Based on these bonds our partnership has maintained a strong and sustained upswing since the establishment of full diplomatic

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relations 25 years ago. The people of Israel have built a nation on democratic principles. They have nurtured it with hard work and the spirit of innovation. You have marched on regardless of adversity and converted challenges into opportunity” [9].

METHODOLOGY

Keeping in view the type and nature of study, both qualitative and analytical techniques has been utilized. Moreover, authentic books, monographs, journals, newspapers and online resources are used to produce a quality paper for the readers.

ISRAEL – INDIA RELATIONS; A BRIEF OVERVIEW

“It took India more than four decades to establish full diplomatic relations with the Jewish state. At the bilateral level neither India nor Israel are vital to one another and they assume importance only in a larger geo-political arena. While Israel was quick to take cognizance of this, realism was a belated phenomenon in Indian foreign policy” [10]. “India and Israel established full diplomatic relations in 1992 and since then the bilateral relationship between the two countries has blossomed at the economic, military, agricultural and political levels. Both countries see themselves as isolated democracies threatened by neighbors that train, finance and encourage terrorism, therefore both countries also view their cooperative relationship as a strategic imperative” [11]. The establishment of formal diplomatic relations between India and Israel, marked the successful completion of a political process that began in the early 1920s when Indian nationalist leaders were drawn into the Arab-Jewish conflict [12]. Historically, Gandhi was a sympathetic observer of the affairs of Eastern European Jewish immigrants in South Africa, seeing them as a group of people who, like Indians, were being victimized for no fault of their own, there were others, coming from a more privileged background no doubt, who became his closest friends and on whom he depended for his social and political work both in Johannesburg and London [13].

With security point of view, India and Israel both claims imminent threat from ethno-religious minorities, fueled by their neighbors. To address the issue, both states has made several military cooperation agreements to enhance regional security and stability. The first ever weapons deal between India and Israel was about purchase of Barak-1, vertically-launched surface-to-air missiles (SAM) to intercept anti-ship cruise missiles and to counter Pakistan’s P3-C Orion maritime strike aircraft and Harpoon sea-skimming anti-ship missiles [14]. New Delhi's turn to Jerusalem for combat soldier expertise is due, in part, to disappointing results in border clashes with Pakistani forces and to last year's suicide attack by Muslim terrorist infiltrators on Indian Parliament members [15]. Presumably to equip these soldiers, India recently concluded a \$30 million agreement with Israel Military Industries (IMI) for 3,400 Tavor assault rifles, 200 Galil sniper rifles, as well as night vision and laser range finding and targeting equipment [16]. In 2005, Israel Aircraft Industries announced it was selling India 50 aerial drones (Heron) for \$220 million [17]. Israel Aerospace Industries Ltd signed a \$2.5 billion deal with India to develop an anti-aircraft system and missiles for the country, in the biggest defense contract in the history of Israel [18]. New Delhi having done military business worth around \$9 billion with Tel Aviv since the 1999 Kargil conflict [19]. Indian Army ordered thousands of Spike anti-tank missiles and peripheral equipment from Rafael Advanced Defense Systems Ltd worth \$1 billion in March, 2011 [20]. In September, 2015, the Indian government approved the air force’s request to acquire 10 Heron TP drones from Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI) that can be fitted with weapons to engage targets on the ground, an air force official with knowledge of the matter said [21]. The Indian Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) has reportedly approved the purchase of two more Phalcon Airborne Early Warning and Control Systems (AWACS) in defense sales, totaling approximately \$3bn, from Israel [22]. India Air Force landed in Israel to participate in the biennial Blue Flag exercise, which will take place from November 2 to 16 2017, at the Ovda Airbase in southern Israel [23]. Presently, India is the largest buyer of Israeli military equipment, while Israel is India’s largest customer after Russia [24].

ANTAGONISM BETWEEN IRAN AND ISRAEL

The relationship between Israel and Iran has since the very inception of the Jewish state in 1948 been a complex function of Iran’s geo-strategic imperatives as a non-Arab, non-Sunni state in an overwhelmingly Arab and Sunni environment, and its need to find an appropriate relationship with its Arab/Sunni neighbors in order to materialize Iranian regional leadership aspirations [25]. Iran was among few countries which opposed creation of Israel and even membership to UN, nevertheless it was second Muslim country after Turkey to recognize Israel, until 1953 coup of pro-west Shah Phalvi [26]. The two countries enjoyed good relations for 30 years, but since the Islamic Revolution of

1979, Israel and Iran have been a study in enmity, despite not sharing a border or having any territorial disputes [27]. Unlike Israel's longstanding disputes with several of its Arab neighbors, Iran and Israel had a close relationship before the Iranian Revolution [28]. Israel has claims that Iran is supporting anti-Israeli proxies like Hezbollah and Islamic Jihad within the Middle East region. However, Iran mentioned several times that Israel is the mother of all evils with in the region and supporting Jundallah and People's Mujahideen of Iran.

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in December 2000 declared Israel as "cancerous tumor" in the Middle East [29]. "The Islamic Republic has never threatened and will never threaten any country" said by Iranian supreme leader, however, Ahmadinejad addressed that "the occupying Zionist regime of Jerusalem should cease to exist in the page of time" - has been mistranslated and distorted into the notorious phrase, "Israel should be wiped off the map" by the western media [30]. The series of assassinations of Iranian nuclear scientists since 2010 has long been believed to be the work of the Israeli intelligence agency, the Mossad, but most of the speculation over the issue suggested that the Israelis sub-contracted the dirty work to Iranian rebel groups like the Mujahedin-e-Khalq (MEK) or Jundallah [31]. The relations between both states became more curtail in 2018. In February, 2018, Israel accused Iran of sending an armed drone into its territory, after which an Israeli plane was shot down while bombing positions in Syria, the first time the country had lost an aircraft in combat in 35 years [32]. Iranian forces in Syria launched around 20 rockets into the Golan Heights, according to Israel's military. Jerusalem blamed Iran's Quds Force, this is an extremely dangerous situation [33].

RIVALRY BETWEEN INDIA AND PAKISTAN

India-Pakistan relations remained unstable since the dissolution of British Indian empire. There are several historic, political, demographic and military issues behind this phenomenon. Communal riots occurred after portion of sub-continent took thousands of lives of both Hindus and Muslims migrants during independence. Another root cause is the unlawful annexation of Junagadh and Kashmir soon after independence by India. Both countries fought several wars including 1947, 1965 and 1971 war and Kargil operation. India-Pakistan border is the most volatile border in the world. Kashmir issue is as old as the both countries are; and still needs to be resolved on priority. During visit to India in March 2000, US President Mr. Clinton called Kashmir the "most dangerous place on Earth" [34]. India constantly propagating and accusing Pakistan being a supporter of Jihadi movements and radical groups. "We will, of course, reiterate to the Obama administration that, even after 26/11, Pakistan is not doing enough to crack down on terrorism emanating from its soil against India," said an official [35]. On the other hand, According to Marwa, 1979 [36], "India's military intervention in East Pakistan was an instance of the clear use of force for the achievement of limited political and security objectives. Indian policymakers' responses to the events in Pakistan were spread over a specific period of time and their decisions can be viewed in a series of distinct phases. The totality of actions involved diplomatic maneuvering in global, regional, and subcontinental geopolitical contexts. There were, in Indian perceptions, easily identified internal and external dimensions to the situation within East".

"You cannot get on the negotiating table what you could not take in the battlefield," said a senior diplomatic source, quoting a former Soviet foreign minister, when asked if the expected settlement could call for 'redistribution' of the disputed territory [37]. Numerous steps have been taken by Pakistan since last two decades to normalize tension between the two states, including cease fire on line of control (LOC). Confidence building measures (CBMs) introduced by President Musharraf were an honest effort to promote relations between both countries. The PML-N government sprung a surprise at the recent trade talks with India by offering New Delhi the most-favored nation (MFN) status with a condition. Pakistan sought access for 250-300 of its items at lowered duties [38]. Pakistan put all out efforts to stabilize relations, however, India is always avoiding to settle disputes, in reply they are accusing Pakistan for terrorist activities supporter.

CONCLUSION

The emerging military ties between the India and Israel are a real threat to the security and stability of the entire region. Iran and Pakistan have a constant focus on the blooming military cooperation between the two states. India is maintaining balanced relations with Iran and have inked nine agreements, including leasing part of the Iranian port of Chabahar to an Indian company, after "substantive" bilateral talks between the Indian prime minister and the Iranian president in New Delhi [39]. However, at the same time Prime Minister Modi visited Israel, the arch enemy of Iran, and supported their cause, which reflects complex and multifaceted Indian foreign policy. Every state has the right to safe guard her national interest, meanwhile Iran has to pay especial attention to growing Indian-Israeli nixes.

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Developing proximity between India and Israel poses a serious threat to the integrity, safety and stability of a sovereign Iran.

Pakistan and Iran are sharing societal, religious, language and cultural commonalities. The relations between two states remained exemplary since inception of Pakistan. Iran was the first country recognized Pakistan as an independent state. Iran also provided logistic support to Pakistan during Indo-Pak war of 1965. Iran supports Pakistan cause on the issue of Kashmir and always voted in favor of Pakistan on international forums. Pakistan and Pakistani nations have especial feelings for their neighbor. Pakistan supported Iran cause on the issue of Palestine. Pakistan is also a leading nation who did not recognize Israel as an independent state. High ranking official meetings are conducted on periodical basis to strengthen bilateral ties. Mutual cooperation in different fields of science and technology can be envisaged between the two states. By growing nexus of Israel and India in defense technology, both countries must face strategic challenges, like; first, unwanted arms race in the region, second, increase in military expenditure, third, constant threat to regional security and stability, fourth, economic development to a sustainable level, fifth, improvement of military hardware.

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