ABSTRACT

The upgradation of Indo-Israel ties to the Ambassadorial level marks a new turning point in the history of post-independence Indian foreign relations. It signifies the end of the Cold War perspective which dominated India’s foreign policy formulation till now. The decision also marks an important change in India’s approach towards the Palestine question. Though India recognized the State of Israel in September 1950 and a Consulate of Israel was opened in Bombay in 19051. But India desisted from establishing full diplomatic relations with Israel for a long time due to various reasons.

The most important reason was the blatant disregard which Israel displayed for all civilized code of conduct in international affairs. It not only occupied land which did not belong to it but also refused to negotiate a settlement. India, which has always championed the cause of anti-racism and anti-colonialism, would not have established full diplomatic relations with Israel without compromising on these principles. Likewise, India’s policy of Non-alignment also did not match with Israel’s defacto membership of Western block led by the United States. In the cold war framework, Israel acted as a frontline state of Western block in West Asia. A close relationship with Israel should have, thus, seriously undermined the assiduously cultivated image of India as champion of third world’s interests.

All these factors taken together created a situation in which both ideologically and pragmatically it became imperative for India to be seen at the Arab’s side in their struggle against Zionist colonialism and it’s outcome that was
establishment of Israel.

In recent time, however, several new events have taken place which has profoundly altered this state of affairs. The most important of these new events was the Gulf War. This war was seriously undermined the unity of Arab world with many Arab states siding with the United States led forces against Iraq. Almost coinciding with this development was the phenomenon of disintegration of Soviet Union and consequent end of the “Cold War”. It had a salutary impact on the peaceful solution of many international problems. The Arab- Israel peace talks held in Madrid, Washington and Moscow are a case in point. This historic development was directly related to the end of Cold War which lessened the strategic importance of Israel for America.

There was never a let-up in the Israeli pressure on India to establish relation between the two countries. The Israelis not being able to evoke a firm response from Nehru on the issue of establishing diplomatic relations were extremely critical of his attitude. Even the permission for an Israeli Consul-general at Bombay was in all probability given essentially to facilitate the migration of Indian Jews to go to Israel. The Indian leadership even after the death of Nehru (1964) continued to support the Palestinian cause not only at the United Nations but also at non-alignment conferences and other world forums.

**Objectives of the Study**

1. To give a historical background of the Zionist colonization of the Palestine.
2. To highlight how the Palestine Question remained as a vital factor in the relations between India and Israel.
3. To analyse and examine these developments both at the internal as well as external level, which compelled both the states to forge diplomatic relationship.

4. To highlight the major areas of cooperation in diverse fields between India and Israel.

The thesis is entitled “India’s Relation with Israel from 1977 to 2000”. The year 1977 heralded a new era in Indian politics. For the first time, new Non-Congress Government was formed in New Delhi headed by the Janta Party Leader, Morarji Desai. The then Foreign Minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee tried to forge closer ties with Israel and got Moshe Dayan, the Israeli Foreign Minister, to come secretly to India. The plan was however, scuttled by Morarji Desai, the Prime Minister in 1977. Desai was true Gandhian and was of the firm view that India could have no relationship with Israel at the expense of Palestinians.

India’s refusal to move any nearer to the Zionist State of Israel was criticized by Israelis and pro-Zionist Americans. It was denounced as an act of hypocrisy and cynicism, as a betrayal of non-alignment and of India’s claim to consider issue on its merits. But in adopting an aloof attitude towards Israel, this is precisely what India did at that time. She had considered the issue and had concluded that there could be no cooperation with Israel as a matter of principle.

The 1990s witnessed tremendous changes in regional and international politics. This decade will go down in history as one of the most important and momentous years of this century. The pace of changes had been fast and effective
covering various spheres of life. There were political and economic changes at global level which were accentuated by massive advancement in information technology. The World was becoming a global village in which geographical distance had been conquered. With this development, the world was also moving towards capitalist economy and economic factors had become more prominent than ever before.

However, in this fast changing world, India could not keep herself aloof from the rest of the world. The Indian Government felt that India would benefit more and could serve her national interest best if her economy is integrated with the global economy. This policy of liberalization had made India to join the global economy. India started forming closer relations with new economic centers like Germany, Japan, and USA etc, thus, liberalization of economy gave India more room for cooperation with industrialized nations even with Israel.

In December 1991, India voted in favour of Resolution 46/86 at the UN General Assembly which rescinded its November 1975 Resolution 3379 equating Zionism with racism. Subsequently, Narasimha Rao in 1992 denounced the fine traditions and spirit of non-Alignment which guided India’s foreign policy and established full ties with Israel. According to some analysts, the step on the part of India to vote in favour of the December 1991 UN resolution was the first indication of change in India’s policy towards Israel.

The establishment of diplomatic relations diluted India’s commitment to the high ideals of non-alignment, which had been the guiding force of our foreign
policy. Israel represented all that was anathema to Non-Alignment Movement (NAM), and a betrayal of NAM’s struggle against imperialism, neo-colonialism, racism and rights of small countries to determine and shape their own destiny. By voting along the US line for repealing of Resolution 3379, India for the first time moved away from a collective NAM position. In any case the concrete advantages gained from the USA were not so lucrative as to justify compromising the basic elements of India’s foreign policy.

After the establishment of diplomatic relations, both India and Israel came closer to each other. The Indo-Israeli cooperation stepped up to mark the new found friendship, this was specially so in political arena. It appeared that the then Indian politicians were indeed suffering from a gilt conscience and wanted to compensate Israel for years of non-relationship. There was almost a scramble among Union Ministers and State Chief Ministers to pay visits to Israel. In a period of one year from June 1993 – July 1994 many political leaders visited Israel. In addition as many as 18 Indian delegations visited Israel within a period of two years after establishing the diplomatic relations.

The pronouncements of the Israeli Foreign Minister, Shimon Peres in May 1993 in Delhi stressed the commonality of approach of the two countries on several issues. A number of agreements were signed between India and Israel during his visit, including those to promote scientific and cultural exchange, transfer of technology, promotion of tourism and business, joint industrial ventures etc.

The main sectors of cooperation between these two states are agriculture,
trade, science and technology, defense and security. The Israelis are offering India a collaborative role in more advanced “water tower” solar technology, which is even more effective. Agriculture is considered one of the important areas of cooperation between the two states. Farmers are being sent to Israel to know the Israeli techniques regarding the agriculture production and so on. Indo-Israeli Research Development Farmers were inaugurated in the Indian Agriculture Research Institute, at Pusa in New Delhi.

Another important area of cooperation between the two states is trade and commerce. Though there were limited points of contacts between India and Israel prior to diplomatic relations. But after developing ties, trade relations between these countries have grown. The two governments have assisted in creating a friendly environment for the development of business. Thus, the impact of the establishment of diplomatic relations had been most immediately noticeable in Economic Affairs.

Diplomatic relations between India and Israel and the normalization of bilateral ties also enabled the two countries to develop their military cooperation as a joint strategic interest. The Israel defense industries cannot depend on Israeli market alone and about quarters of its production has to be exported. Therefore, Israel’s military relationship with India presents an attractive and challenging opportunity for Israel and provides a market for its defense industry. Under the pretext of helping India to combat terrorism, the underlying game plan is to sell arms to India while keeping tension alive on the other side of the border. Israel does prolific business with friends and foes alike as far as the selling of arms are
concerned.

No greater evidence for India’s tie-up with Israel can be offered than the continuing deals with Israel. The Indian daily newspaper “The Times of India” reported that since 2000 India’s purchases of weaponry and military gadgets from Israel have exceeded 7 billion dollars, making Israel the second largest arms supplier to India (after Russia). India is becoming the major financial backer of Israel besides the USA. When tomorrow you will read that an Israeli bomb or rocket has killed Arab women or children, do stop to think that part of the money for the killing weaponry has come out of your pocket as a tax-payer. When you, then, hear an Indian statement saying how true we are to Jawaharlal Nehru’s legacy, you can realize how far we have in reality fallen.

However, the growing strategic ties between India and Israel and their cooperation in nuclear field have created much serious concerns in the Arab world. With the Indo-Israeli strategic collaboration gaining momentum in recent years, Arab leaders are becoming more vocal and critical of it. Arab countries are worried about the growing defense cooperation between India and Israel and some countries feel that these military collaborations could have adverse impact on their region and can jeopardize peace and security.

India was once called the leader and a major force in Non-aligned Movement and a bulwark against imperialism. Much has changed since then. Imperialism is perhaps stronger than ever, but world is muddier and more confused and Indian government under BJP, has clearly abandoned any effort to
project itself as anti-imperialist in any way. It has dismantled the entire edifice of
the independent foreign policy based on Non-Alignment by joining with US and
its major ally-Israel in so-called “war on terrorism”. BJP leadership should have
to realize that the US has ‘no permanent friends’ only permanent interests.