CHAPTER - 4

TILT IN INDIA’S ISRAEL POLICY: NORMALIZATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF RELATIONS

In the second half of the eighties, India witnessed a change in political leadership. Rajiv Gandhi was elected as the Prime Minister of India on 24 December 1984 – Rajiv Gandhi, educated at Cambridge University, signaled a fresh Indian approach towards Israel and though unable to reserve the traditional Indian pro-Arab foreign policy completely, initiated a number of moves in favour of Israel.

On the other side, in Israel the National Unity Government was formed on 13 September 1984 and according to the coalition Shimon Peres became Prime Minister for two years. He was instrumental in bringing about the withdrawal of the Israeli forces from Lebanon by June 1985. He made a major effort to improve Israel’s foreign relations such as establishing diplomatic relations with Spain, Poland and some African countries and tried to improve relations with India. In the winter of 1985, during the fourth annual session of the United Nations, he met Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in New York and following the meeting, a new Vice Consul was allowed by the Government of India to take up his position in Israeli consulate in Bombay.

Earlier cardinal principles of Indian foreign policy had been maintained by Indira Gandhi and Janta Party. Rajiv Gandhi, though keeping the old policy, began to drift slowly away from USSR. This was because of the Soviet’s Afghan policy. The West Asian policy under Rajiv Gandhi remained more or
less the same as before. He maintained the broad framework of supporting the “liberation Movements” in the region.¹

The relation between Israel and India was not confined to open official meetings directly or through a third party, but also extended to secret meetings and consultations. After the assassination of Indira Gandhi, the Indian external intelligence agency – The Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) seemed to have invited an Israeli Security specialist to advice on the Prime Minister Security System.² It was also reported that Indian and Israeli diplomats met secretly in Paris to discuss Tel Aviv’s proposal for a joint action to destroy a controversial Uranium plant at Kahuta in Pakistan. Though Rajiv Gandhi was not happy with the Israeli involvement in Sri Lanka, he could see changes in the international political environment.

Rajiv Gandhi also took some pro-Jewish decision like lifting of restriction on Israeli sportsmen coming to India to participate in the Davis Cup and Indian team was even willing to play with Israeli team,³ giving the rationale that India played against Israel in Table Tennis in the years 1981 and 1983 in the former Yugoslavia and Japan respectively.⁴ India did not have any diplomatic linkages with Israel at that time. Yet Rajiv Gandhi did not hesitate to collaborate with Israel at certain levels. This dispensation witnessed that certain steps had been positively taken by the Prime Minister to create a room

¹ Tripathi, Deepak, ‘India’s Foreign Policy : The Rajiv Factor,’ World Today 44 (7) July 1988, p.112
³ The Hindu, (Madras) 21 may 1987.
⁴ The Hindustan Times, (New Delhi), 21 may 1987
of common interest where they could play together certain role for the mutual benefits of both.

4.1 Intifada and Indian Response

At the end of 1987, a popular uprising of the Palestinians in the Occupied Territories (Intifada) originated from the Gaza Strip, but very soon after it spread into other areas. The various methods used by the Government of Israel to crush the movement, proved to be counter productive because Israel came under severe criticism for committing violence and violation of human rights provided under the provisions of the Geneva Convention 1949. The UN political Ad Hoc Committee for Palestinian Refugees and the then Committee for the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian people appointed by the General Assembly from time to time provided reports about the violence and suppression of the natives of the occupied areas.\(^5\)

Intifada was a spontaneous reaction against the continued suppression and gross exploitation of the Palestinians in the Occupied Territories. It proved to be a major milestone in the liberation struggle of Palestinian people. It had grown into a mass movement – a civil resistance movement which represented disobedience to the Occupying Authority, its rules and regulations. And, it also posed a direct challenge to Israel at the national and international level which resulted in an unprecedented wave of sympathy for the tragic plight of the people of Palestine in the Occupied Territories.

Intifada actually had its self-preparedness to suffer or die like the Algerians for eight years devoid of barriers of fear of being killed or maimed but not to surrender; with the result the Palestinians crippled the Israelis psychologically as Israel contained them militarily. Ultimately, Israel after 40 years of iron and fists’ rule has faced a “moment of truth”, in the replica of Intifada. Earlier, Israel continued to react as an ‘Imperial Power’ and resorted to browbeating the incoming challenges and consequence as the imperial powers had faced in the form of deterrence of the common masses. Now they had to make peace which definitely meant liberation of the Palestinians’ homeland and end of the occupation in the areas of continued occupation and suppression.

It sent a strong signal to the Israeli government that the fruits of aggression were being frittered away and the situation had gone out of their control. Once it started, it started spontaneously. The forces working behind it for the last 40 years had already prepared the ground to attain the final goal. Moreover, political forces at work had undoubtedly given intifada, an organizational strength, political recognition and capacity to enkindle Palestine spirit of liberation struggle. But Israeli’s behavior, her internal and external policies for the past four decades gave intifada its legitimacy and made its outbreak inevitable.\(^6\)

With the commencement of intifada the Palestinians formed a unified command which consisted of representatives of pro-Fatah, the Popular Front

\(^6\) Ibid., P. 134
for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and the Communist Parties, and were later on joined by fervent groups of the Gaza Palestinians. They worked clandestinely, distributing leaflets, carrying directions and messages, and put forth their demands, this leaflet manifesto became a powerful form of political expression, directing the people when go for work and when to resume strike, break curfews, and organize demonstrations and hosts of other activities. It activated directions to the neighborhood committees for education welfare, health and agriculture and to remain in close contact with other fellow citizens out of the West Bank and Gaza. The leadership and the Intifada both received massive support in and outside the West Bank and Gaza strip. Intifada rejuvenated the Palestinian’s national movement and foiled Israel’s attempts at crushing it.

The Government of India in its press statement, while expressing sorrow for suppression and inhuman crimes against unarmed civilian people maintained:  

> The Government of India is deeply concerned and grieved at the loss of innocent lives and injuries caused to several others resulting from the current Israeli repressive action against the unarmed Palestinian inhabitants of the Occupied Territories of the west Bank and Gaza Strip. The Government of India condemned these senseless acts of violence and strongly urges that they should be halted forthwith.

The Indian Government was in touch with PLO and some other Arab capitals like Amman and Cairo regarding the future developments in the Occupied Territories. Besides, the PLO was providing informations regarding the current happenings in the West Bank and Gaza to the Ministry of External Affairs. 

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7 Foreign Affairs Record, Vol. XXXIII, October 1987, p. 389
Affairs. In this regard, the PLO’s Ambassador had been called by the then Minister of State for External affairs, Eduardo Faleiro, to discuss these developments and the PLO’s attitude towards these incidents and recurrences.

India continued to express its anguish of these awful happenings in the Occupied Territories and made abundantly clear to the government of Israel that there could be no military solution to this problem and excessive use of force would be quite self-defeating and counter-productive in the long run. The Palestinians had also realized that there was no way for getting the Israeli troops out for vacation of occupation except through continued stress blended with negotiations. While the Israeli government did not honour or make any such commitment, it flagrantly went on violating human values and rights. It frustrated the few peace initiatives that were taken. But for its expansionist policies it could lead to widespread insurgency in the whole area. The Palestinian people were in a state of agonized surprise not knowing what the future held for them. The poignant situation gave serious turns to the developments in the regional politics of West Asia. India had been worried for the stability and peace in the war torn-area. On 6 February 1988, the PLO Ambassador, Khalid El Sheikh, called on the Indian Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi and briefed him about the plight of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Territories. He lucidly explained the heroic resistance of unarmed people in the face of brutal acts of repression being inflicted by the Israeli authorities.
Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi condemned the Israeli atrocities inflicted on innocent and unarmed population of the Occupied Territories over whom it did not possess any locus standi or legality to rule over them. He reiterated unequivocal support of the government and the people of India to Palestinians. In order to free the Palestinians from Israeli bondage, the Government of India thought it important to make concerted actions and efforts through the forums of Non-Alignment, the United Nations and other organisations like SAARC, ASEAN and ECC to bring pressure upon the Israeli government to settle the Palestinian issue. As President of the party he informed the PLO Ambassador that the Congress would take the lead in campaigning for the Palestinian cause and collect relief assistance for innocent victims, as a token of popular support and solidarity with the popular movement of the Palestinian people.\(^8\)

The much desired goal of self determination expressed in the Intifada could not be other than the Palestinian nationalism. India supported this self-determination goal and nationalistic aspirations, which had remained unchanged since the decades of confiscation of their homeland. The Minister of Foreign Affairs, expressing Indian solidarity with the people of Palestine fighting against the Israeli occupation in their motherland, stated:\(^9\)

> The message of intifada to the world is unambiguous. Twenty years of occupation have utterly failed to suppress the fierce nationalism of the Palestinian people. It should also have been made it clear to the world including Israel that territories illegally occupied cannot be retained forever.


\(^9\) Ibid., pp. 389 – 391
Various peace initiatives were worked out to provide a breakthrough and resolve the Palestine problem. After 1987, Israel was isolated in the international community. An imbibing influence pressurized by the peace lobby among the Jews offering opportunities to reverse the rejectionist policies pursued by the government of Israel was emerging. The PLO’s initiatives for peace could in fact be traced to the meeting between Yasser Arafat and four Israeli semi-officials in September 1987. In a statement to the Arab League the representative in June 1988, hinted about the possibility of co-existence of two states as a solution to the Palestinian imbroglio.10

The first major step towards peace was the Strasbourg meeting on 13 September 1988. Chairman Yasser Arafat met a socialist group of European Parliament, discussed with them the Palestinian situation with all its pros and cons and things moved step-by-step shifts into his policy towards Israel. These moves ultimately resulted in major shifts in its policies and "strategies which gave birth to the July 1988 declarations. In November 1988, the Palestinian Parliament-in-exile, the Palestine National Council adopted a series of unpredictable and historic resolutions in Algeria. For the first time and in a formal manner the Palestinians indicated their acceptance of the principle of partition of their homeland Palestine. At the same time they accepted on the basis of the principle of mutual recognition, Israel's right to exist of what they thought their own patrimony and renounced the use of violence and declared the establishment of their State-in-exile to be eventually concretized in the

10 Middle East International, No. 353, June 23, 1969, p. 6
West Bank and Gaza Strip with East Jerusalem as its capital. Thus, they founded the most important event of the Palestinian movement which was the logical result of their long and protracted struggle for their homeland and national entity. Substantially, they were signaling their willingness to settle for less than what was promised to them in the UN partition plan of 1947 for the mandated Palestine. They were also willing to settle for far less than was needed to accommodate the aspirations of the displaced Palestinian refugees whose number outside the historic Palestine approximated 2.5 million people.

This kind of approach had its larger effects and implications in their national and international world and paved the way for a formal dialogue between the PLO and the United States. At the national level in Israel itself the Jafee Centre for Strategic Studies, which is an independent Israeli think tank issued a 235-page report in March 1989 recommending direct negotiations with the PLO providing a possibility for the creation of Palestine, subject to certain conditions. The fact that the studies were sponsored by the American Jewish Congress and Anti-Defamation League of B’nai B’rith – two mainstreams of the Zionist organizations located in America – lent added importance to its recommendations.

All this did not mean that there were no Palestinian groups which continued to aspire for the realization of a state in all of the historic Palestine. The “Rejectionist Groups” on the right resorted to religion to justify their platform, while those on the extreme left called for a secular state in the whole of the proportioned Palestine. On the other hand, the Palestinian maximalist
position reflected a similar Israeli position maintaining its claims in the religious fundamentalist and non-secular rights which denied the Palestinians any national rights and whose resonance with the Likud-led government had been gaining strength. But the rejectionist Palestinian position differed in one important respect from its Israeli counterpart, in that it was located in the margins of the Palestinian political spectrum, while Israeli rejectionism was incorporated in the government policies in substance, if not in form. The expansionist aims of the Israeli right continued to be sanctioned by the official policy through unabated land confiscations, denial of access to water resources and continued repression of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Areas.

India was not indifferent towards the PLO's efforts for peaceful settlement. The PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat had been conferred with Jawaharlal Nehru Award for International Understanding. In honouring Arafat, India had recognized his unstinted struggle for the Palestinian people against imperialism and his championing of secular ideals. Announcing this on September 1989 the Ministry of External Affairs said:

India has always been sympathetic to the cause of Palestinian people and has been steadfast in its support to Yasser Arafat and the People of Palestine. In honouring Yasser Arafat in the name of Jawaharlal Nehru, we underline our commitment to support the right of every people to freedom, justice and peace.

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11 Jawahar Lal Nehru Award carries a citation and cash prize of rupees 15 Lakhs. An Independent Jury Consisting of Seven Eminent Indians, the Awardees Every Year.
12 Patriot, Delhi, 2nd September 1989
4.2 Madrid Peace Conference of 1991

The crucial and important decision of PLO leadership had been taken in October 1991 by accepting the invitation for Madrid Conference (Spain). With fits and starts, they ultimately agreed to be part of the Jordanian delegation but the PLO delegation being selected from citizenry of Gaza and West Bank. Faisal Al Husseini, head of the Palestinian negotiating team, received the official acceptance on 22 October. At the outset he clearly stated that the delegates could come only from the West Bank and the Gaza Strip to the exclusion of Jerusalem city but at the same time, the dispersed Palestinians could not be forfeited of their birthrights. So, they never acknowledged it as a binding condition but only as a de facto arrangement that Palestinian leadership chose to accept provisionally to facilitate the start of negotiations, which it could break whenever national interests so demanded. Consequently, the unity and autonomous decision-making of the Palestinian people was implicitly acknowledged by the US Secretary of State when he officially received members of the "Steering Committee" made up of Palestinians from Jordan and outside at Madrid on 31 October 1991.

The first round of talks at Madrid on 3 November 1991 was an epoch-making and momentous event, in that, for the first time since the partition of the Mandated Palestine, the two people–the Palestinian Arabs and the Israelis faced each other across the Conference table to sort out their clashing claims.

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13 See the editorial, “The Real Significance of Madrid”, Middle East International, London, No. 42, 8 November 1951, p. 2
14 Finally Face to Face, Time International, Vol. 138, No. 19, 11 November 1951, pp. 10-16
Once the round of bilateral talks was resumed between the Jordan-Palestinian delegation and the Israeli delegation, it was agreed that the Security Council's Resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1974) would form basis of the ongoing negotiations. As was expected, saner sense would prevail during the trilateral discussions. The Israeli delegation agreed to hold negotiations conducted on a two track basis i.e. Palestinian-Israeli track and Jordan–Israel track. This at the hindsight was thought to be an achievement as the trilateral talks could result and gave a boost to the Palestinian morale.

After the first round of talks, the venue was shifted to Washington D.C. to hold the rest of Madrid negotiations, ostensibly to facilitate American mediation for the rest of the period. A long spell of dreary negotiations continued in Washington and nothing tangible was sought, when Israeli government suddenly announced delegation. Both sides presented their own proposals for interim self-government in Palestine, according to their views and objectives. The final picture that emerged regarding the powers of the Palestinian self-government as contained in the Israeli document dated 10 December 1992, entitled, Informal Compilation of Israeli Ideas on the Concept of the Interim Self-Government Arrangement presented on 14 December, provided the following basis:  

1. First, the Document stated that the name of the "Palestine Administrative Council" (PAC) could be modified, once the concept was agreed upon and

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15 See Appendix No. IV.
the number of its members would be determined in accordance with its executive-administrative functions.

2. The Document explained the PAC's powers. It provided that PAC "will not apply to the Israeli security forces and authorities nor to Israelis in the territories or other Israeli-related aspects." Palestinian courts would likewise have jurisdiction only over Palestinians; "within Israeli municipalities", it would be "the Israeli municipal court, with jurisdiction in basically local matters" that would operate. In criminal matters, "arrangements regarding disputes concerning both Israelis and Palestinians are to be agreed upon (e. g., arbitration mechanism) and so on.

3. Not only would Palestinian powers be restricted to themselves, but those powers themselves would be limited by the requirement to coordinate and cooperate with Israel and by the latter's "residual powers", concerning those areas, "whether specified and foreign relations". On security, the text provided that it would be an "overall Israeli responsibility" and asserted that Israeli military courts would have jurisdiction over the Palestinians and also on the Israelis in the territories in security matters only. But the document added that the Palestinians would continue to have "access to Israel's High Court of justice", implying that its jurisdiction would cover the occupied Palestinian territories as a whole and their inhabitants.

4. Regarding the Palestinian Interim Self-government Arrangements (PISGA), and operation of the PAC, the Israeli document added nothing new but responded to the Palestinians' insistence on the PISGA power to legislate.
While the prevailing laws would "remain in force during the interim arrangement period", a "review" of those laws could take place in the course of negotiations with the participation of Jordan. Nevertheless, if a "special legislative need" arose during the interim period, an "agreed upon constitution" may be established.

Up to the eighth round, no common agenda could be achieved, one of the main obstacles being precisely the first item dealing with the terms of reference. The Israeli government did not honour the peace talks. On an ill-fated 16 December, the Israeli government deported over 400 Palestinians which compelled the latter to suspend its participation in the negotiations, so the final session did not take place.

Apart from being a grave violation of the Geneva Convention and a reminder of the entire Palestinian tragedy, the deportations were immediately viewed by the Palestinians as a blow to the very essence of the negotiations. From Israel's viewpoint, the Palestinian delegation invited to the Madrid peace process represented only the Palestinians of the Occupied Territories. Ever since 1967, the Palestinians had been governed by a legal status that considered them "foreign" residents in their own land–stateless in Gaza and Jordanian citizens in the West Bank. This itself suggested the possibility of their being uprooted, subjected to the same fate as the 1948 and 1967 refugees' dwelling in refugee camps. In keeping with their "foreign" status, an Israeli bureaucratic policy had been implemented which, through a subtle system of validating and invalidating their residence and travel documents, had encouraged their
departure from the Occupied Territories, discouraged their return and made family reunion difficult. The Palestinian fears resulting from their status were not allayed by the Israeli extreme rightist’s campaign in favour of their mass "transfer" but from "the land of Palestine".17

4.3 Indo-Israeli Relations in the Post Cold War Era

The end of the cold war had ramification on international political environment. It brought a different world order and its effects have spread far and wide. The disintegration of the former Soviet Union and her socialist bloc led to the demise of Warsa Pact, United States of America remained as the only superpower.18

The changes brought about by Gorbachev, made the former Soviet Union come closer to USA, especially in the former’s policy towards West Asia and Israel in particular. Former Soviet Union’s permission to Soviet Jews to migrate to Israel in large number was seen by the West as an indication of redressing her policy towards Israel. Syria had also shown a sign of drifting away from former Soviet Union.19 The USA policy of having a free hand in conducting war against Iraq by hijacking the United Nations should also be looked from the end of Cold War political angle. In West Asia, the regional power in the post-cold war era was concentrated namely at two extremes: Iran in the Persian Gulf and Israel. The Gulf States mainly rely on USA as their

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principal source of security and the other Arab states suffered from the collapse of the former USSR, it made Israel the unmatched military power in the region. This gave Israel, to a great extent, a freer hand in conducting her foreign affairs.

There were changes in regional political environment also. European community can assert itself as a challenge to US economic power. In the Far East, China and Japan become more important and the former will emerge as a geopolitical power contender in the pacific region. In South Asia, India has become comparatively stronger than Pakistan because USA cut her military aid to the latter due to the diminishing utility of Pakistan to USA. That in turn, helped to boost Indo-US relations. Since independence, Pakistan tried to gain parity with India and refused to accept the latter’s hegemony in South Asia. Now, in the changing regional environment, Pakistan becomes comparatively weaker than before. The emergence of central Asian states after the breakup of Soviet Union also effects regional equation. In West Asia, the Gulf war brought several regional powers close to the West. Also regional powers like Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states. Syria and Egypt came closer than even before.

These changes taking place in the international and regional politics created congenial atmosphere for promoting peace in West Asia. The result was the Madrid Peace Conference; meetings have been held which have helped to promote chances of durable peace in the region. The Gulf war and its results made it easier for U.S.A. to take the initiative in the West Asian peace process. The Madrid conference succeeded in holding one-day bilateral talks between
the Joint Jordan-Palestinian delegation and Israeli delegation. They agreed that future peace talks would take a place on the basis of UN Security Council Resolution 242 and 338.\textsuperscript{20}

Peace talks were held at various places involving several parties. Various options were offered to the Palestinians for a federation or confederation. Interim arrangements were proposed by the Palestinians as well as by the Israelis to made peace and reality in the region. Rabin’s victory in the Knesset election brightened the peace process prospect since he is committed to a reasonable settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflicts. Rabin believed in concession to Palestinians to bring peace closer, unlike his predecessor, Yitzhak Shamir.

While the peace process was set in motion, there were violent incidents which could derail it. The killing of five Israeli soldiers and border policemen by the HAMAS led to Israeli expulsion of more than four hundred Palestinians in relation. This was condemned by International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and UN General Assembly.\textsuperscript{21} This was a serious threat to the then ongoing peace process and the chance of bringing durable peace in the region.

India responded to the changing international political environment. While keeping the Nehruvian policy certain aspects of foreign policy were moulded according to the changes. India’s responses to the changes in inter and

the intra-Arab politics and their relations with Israel are seen in her policy in the post cold war era.

The shift in India’s policy towards Palestine surfaced in 1988 when Indian delegation to the United Nations General Assembly session on Palestine issue refrained carefully from condemning Israel. Earlier, condemning Israel and holding her responsible for escalating tension in West Asia had been the conventional part of Indian speech in the UN. Not only that, India also recognized Israel’s right to exit “in peace and security within internationally recognized boundaries”.22 It was observed by some that India was initiating a new approach to the problem which could prove to be a prelude to Indo-Israel relations. The Israeli government was quick enough to respond to the episode. Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir said that Israel was very much interested in India. He added that when Egypt and Turkey can have diplomatic ties with Israel, there are no reasons that India cannot have them.23 So with the change of Arab attitude towards Israel the Minister of state for External affairs was asked why India did not take steps to develop relation with Israel. He commented that it was high time that India could see the change and adjust accordingly.24

However, the shift in India’s foreign policy towards West Asia was evident clearly when India voted along with the rest of the Security Council members of the United Nations on the question of terrorism in Libya25 and the

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23 The Times of India, New Delhi, October 10, 1991.
revocation of the earlier UN General Assembly Resolution 3379 of 1975 which equated Zionism with racism. The voting for the revocation of United Nations resolution for the cancellation of Zionism’s equation with racism has been criticized as succumbing to US pressures. The Government gave the *raison d’etre* of the new realities in West Asia saying that in the context of the ongoing peace process, where Israelis met the Arab face to face, this voting was a sign of so called pragmatism in India’s foreign policy. While taking a pro-Israel stand in UN eyebrows have been raised on India’s policy towards the PLO. Despite the volte face of India’s Israeli policy, Prime Minister P.V. Narsimha Rao reaffirmed India’s consistent support for the Palestinians and their right to self-determination and expressed sympathy towards the martyrs of Sabra and Chatila.

Further, India witnessed a fair amount of uncertainties in her foreign policies at the beginning of the nineties. Governments had been formed and had fallen within very short intervals. There was confusion whether Indian foreign policy was moving towards the West or had remained as steadfast as before. This period also witnessed a grave economic crisis which had its ramification on foreign policy as well. This was also the period in which governments during short span changed from Congress (I) to Janta Dal, to Janta (S) and back to Congress (I).

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26 For Details See Appendix No. V, VI.
28 Jayaram, P.S., op cit, p. 31.
As stated in the preceding chapters, foreign policy under Rajiv Gandhi was highly personalized and lacked institutional framework. When V.P. Singh led party, the Janta Dal came to power. Prime Minister V.P Singh who was in power from December 2, 1989 to November 7, 1990, a party that had some historical political connections with the Israeli Labour Party, likewise the Foreign Minister of his Coalition government was A.B Vajpayee, the leader of the right-wing Bharty Janta Party, traditionally a pro-Israeli party. A high level expectation was therefore generated in Israel during V P Singh’s tenure as a Prime Minister of India and it was hoped that a possible change in India’s foreign policy towards Israel could ensue.

V P Singh, who was the leader of the new Janata Dal Party that had its roots in the Indian National Congress Party (INCP) and Congress School of Political Thought. He served under Indira Gandhi as Commerce Minister (1985-87) and was Defense Minister for one year in Rajiv Gandhi’s Cabinet in 1987.29

Prime Minister Singh was busy leading a coalition government with different political perceptions of the parties and individuals, who had joined his government in order to forestall the return of Rajiv Gandhi to power. He was reluctant to deal with foreign policy in general and with any possible change of the Indian policy towards Israel in particular, thereby continuing India’s traditional pro-Arab Policy.

There was a change in working of the External Affairs Ministry. According to one scholar, it was for the first time in independent India the Ministry was given more autonomy in decision making.\(^{30}\) The ministry was given more responsibility and more freedom in making decisions which were evident during the early years of Gulf war. The external affairs minister went on tour to different countries to initiate peace talks between the concerned parties. V.P. Singh government was followed by the Chandra Shekhar regime. The party depended upon the support of the Congress party. Therefore, it was too weak to make significant changes in foreign policy. Decision had to be taken in tune with the views of the Congress party, though it was not in power. Since the Ministry government of Chandra Shekhar was at the mercy of the Congress.

Chandra Shekhar did not institute any active changes in foreign policy in general and towards Israel in particular, with the exception of his condemnation of Iraq regarding Kuwait and his public expression that there was no connection whatsoever, between the Palestine problem. The Minister of state in the ministries of commerce and Law, Subramaniam Swamy, tried to convince Shekhar of the need to establish diplomatic relations with Israel or to transfer the Israeli Consulate from Bombay to New Delhi at least, but to no avail. It is noteworthy that Swamy met openly with the Israeli Minister of Trade and commerce Moshe Nissim, during an international conference in Brussels.\(^{31}\) Swamy an experienced Indian politician and an old friend of Israel in India,

\(^{30}\) Ibid, p. 200
\(^{31}\) Yagar, Moshe, Ministry of Foreign Affairs; The First Fifty Years, (Part 1), (Jerusalem, 2002)
went ahead with the meeting despite objections from the Ministry of External Affairs of India, but because of objections to the meeting, it was declared an unofficial meeting. Swamy also suggested that the Indian government should transfer the Israeli Consulate to New Delhi, but Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar was reluctant to deal with the Israeli issue. Shekhar’s public remark that there was no connection between the Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait and the solution of the Palestine problem was criticized severely by politicians from all spectrums of Indian political parties in general and the INCP in particular as well as Arab Diplomats in New Delhi.32

The Janta (S) party, led by Chandra Shekhar remained in power only for a little more than six month’s from 10 November 1990 to May 1991. In spite of the short period, its role was not without significance. The government seemed to be confused about which side it should support during the war. At one point of time, India wanted to stand by Iraq, her good friend. But on the other hand it wanted to portray itself as a peace loving nation and opposed all sorts of aggression. In this kind of circumstances, the government, as well as major political parties, “maintained a conspicuous and clearly opportunistic silence”.33

Views of all political parties were not all together the same. While the Congress and Janata Dal made critical assessment of the role of the UN, the BJP expressed its concern over the missile attacks on Israel by Iraq and urged

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32 Kapoor Harsh, OP, Cit., p. 201
India “to continue to lend support” to the Security Council Resolution 678 until it was fully implemented, as India was a party to it.\footnote{Ibid., p. 373.}

Confusion and controversy about Indian foreign policy arose regarding the refueling of the American war planes in India. The government was strongly criticized on the issue by a section of the press and the public was also opposed to government’s decision. They blamed the government for going against the principle which India stood for non-alignment. But the government’s decision of allowing refueling American war planes may be viewed in the context of the grim economic condition of India at that time, and the need for American help in getting the International Monetary Fund (IMF) loans and oil facility.\footnote{Jayaramu, P.S., \textit{India and the Gulf Crisis: Pro-Iraq or Pro-India}, in Pasha, A.K. (ed.) \textit{The Gulf in Turmoil: A Global Response}, (New Delhi, 1992) p. 157.} Besides, it is also necessary to take into consideration that for the past several years, there has been a sign of up swing phase in Indo-US relations. These gestures were also viewed by the Israelis as a positive step towards future normalization of relations with India.

The change of governments during this short span of time also had certain impact on Indo-Israeli relations. The Janata Dal government of V.P. Singh was attached to Indian tradition of keeping aloof from power rivalry. But the minority government led by Chandra Shekhar had shown sign of drifting more towards the United States: permanent ally of Israel. In the domestic front, the Indian government had not strength to revive her economy which was in a very bad shape. This economic compulsion made India look for external help and compelled her to have a second look at her foreign policy towards the West.
and also towards the state of Israel. The importance of the later was felt because of the strong Jewish financial lobby in USA which is always sympathetic to Israel. Hence the instability of governments in India and her economic crisis at the beginning of the nineties directly or indirectly influenced her foreign policy which proved favourable for the Zionist state.

The 1990s witnessed tremendous changes in regional and international politics. This decade will go down in history as one 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. Every part of the world was integrated. Geographical distance had been conquered and the world was shrinking. This was in response to the development in scientific and technological creativity. Micro-electronic revolution had been moving at a great speed. It was often referred to as the “Fourth Industrial Revolution”. With these developments, the world was also moving towards capitalist economy and economic factors had become more prominent than ever before.

The Congress party, under P.V. Narishma Rao, returned to power after the tenth general election in 1991. Rao had been in the field of foreign affairs for quite a good number of years in the past. His vast experiences in the field

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made him follow a very prudent move.\textsuperscript{38} He could feel the wind of change blowing all over the world, and the USA becoming the dominant power in the world so India adopted certain policies that were in tune with the US interest. For instances, India voted in UN along with the US on Libya and on the question of Zionism. This was to a certain extent, due to the USA’s pressure. The pro-USA stands of India in these matters later on directly or indirectly, helped in developing closer political and diplomatic ties with Israel.

In the fast changing world, India could not keep herself aloof from the rest of the world. India has moved towards forming closer relations with new economic centers like United Germany, Japan, and USA etc. In view of these realities, the government felt that India would benefit more and could serve her national interest best if her economy is integrated with the global economy.\textsuperscript{39}

Moreover, India needed high and sophisticated technology and foreign investments to become a regional power politically and economically. So it was perceived, without opening up her economy or in other words, without liberalization India would not be able to achieve her objectives.\textsuperscript{40} This policy of liberalization had made India join the global economy. Liberalization of economy gave India more room for cooperation with industrialized nations even with Israel.

\textsuperscript{40} Ibid. p. 319
4.4 India’s Diplomatic Relations with Israel

The official level meeting between the Israeli representative, Joseph Haddas and Indian Deputy Chief of Mission, Lalit Man Singh at the Indian Embassy in Washington D.C created a sensation in the country. During the third week of November 1992, Joseph Liebler, a prominent Jewish leader, met the Indian Prime Minister P.V. Narsimha Rao, in New Delhi for half an hour. The discussion centered round the possibility of establishing diplomatic ties between the two countries. The Prime Ministers response according to Leibler was more positive and pragmatic than his predecessors.41

India after voting along with the United States in UN on certain vital issue like revocation of UN Security Council Resolution 3379 of 1975 that equated Zionism with racism, had sent a positive signal to Israel. The upgradation of Indo-Israel relationship to the ambassadorial level was announced on January 29, 1992. India had recognized the state of Israel in September 1950, but it had desisted from establishing full diplomatic relations with Israel so long due to various reasons.42 The most important reason was the blatant disregard which Israel displayed for all civilized code of conduct in international affairs, it not only in the 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 could not have established diplomatic relations with Israel without compromising on these principles.

41 Pradhan, Bansidhar, Establishing ties with Israel: Prudence or Pressure, New Delhi, January 19, 1992
42 Civil Services Chronicle, New Delhi, March 1993
Secondly, India’s Policy of non-alignment also did not match with Israel’s defacto membership of Western bloc, led by the US. During cold war Israel acted as a frontline state of western bloc in West Asia, it helped in US global plan of containment of the Soviet Union. A close relationship with Israel would have thus, seriously undermined the assiduously cultivated image of India as a champion of Third World’s interest. All these factors taken together created a situation in which both ideologically and pragmatically it became imperative for India to be seen on the Arab side in their war of attrition against Israel.

It is essential to emphasize that a section, favouring normal and friendly relationship with Israel had always been there within the foreign policy establishment and the opinion-making institutions like the media and Universities. At times, it even permeated into the political circles. This was mostly due to the persistent lobbying of the Zionists in India.

With the changing international Scenario leading to the emergence of the new world (dis) order. The small section broadened its support base and gained enough, rather decisive, influence and credence within the decision making set up. Emphasis on pragmatism constituted the fundamental basis of its Pro-Israel pronouncements. Not surprisingly, this was the main plank on which the Jewish lobby had been operating in India. The fact remained that the so-called emphasis on pragmatism could not be seen in isolation. In international politics the terms like ideology and pragmatism cannot be counter-posed. Adherence to any particular Ideology cannot be devoid of
pragmatics considerations. Similarly, any talk of pragmatism cannot be made in vacuum, free of Ideological connotations. In the present space, for instance, the pragmatic considerations were to adjust to the fast-changing needs of a US-dominated world. Economic liberalization, structural reforms etc are all essential characteristics of a capitalist path of development. The Ideology which the US follows, champions and imposes on the developing world in line of abandoning the socialist path of development, what better illustration could there have been for India to prove its adherence to the US line than the immediate and unconditional creation of pressure groups within a country’s decision-making structure is concerned. The establishment of the State of Israel, on Palestinian land was largely due to the Zionists success in this field, hence India, because of its geo-strategic importance in the World Politics, never escaped the attention of the Zionists. So much so that even during the time of Indira Gandhi, who was known for her active Pro-PLO and anti-Zionist policy. The Zionists did not relent on their persistent efforts to effect a change of mind on the part of India in this regard. They did it when Rajeev Gandhi came to power. In both times it was the same person. Greville Janner, who, happened to be the president of the Commonwealth Jewish Council.\textsuperscript{43} Interestingly Janner was a member of the British Parliament and belonged to Labour Party. He was a Zionist in belief and orientation. Notwithstanding, their constant attempts, the Zionist lobby failed to achieve any breakthrough due to two interrelated factors. The then international power balance and

\textsuperscript{43} Patriot, August 15, 1987
India’s Foreign Policy Orientation which maintained a synthesis between Ideology (of anti-imperialism, anti-colonialism, anti-racism etc) and the high ideals of the freedom struggle. This never meant that the pursuance of national interest was given a go-by under the euphoria of Ideology. But national interest was never computed by the calculus of loss and profit alone. After all, India stood as a symbol and source of inspiration for most of the Third World Countries. However, the Protagonists of this line marshaled very sophisticated arguments to create an impression that the US had nothing to do with India’s Policy change towards Israel.  

There are some main arguments put forward by the Israeliite School, first, by establishing the diplomatic relations with Israel, India would be in a better position to involve herself in the West Asia Peace process and thereby influence the Israeli Policy in favour of the Palestinians. Those who believed this were probably living in a make-believe world, far away from the dynamics of Israeli–Palestinian Conflict and negotiations. It has already been stated how Arafat disputed this logic by stating that there were other ways and means by which India could have been involved in the peace process. What was more important was the degree of influence India could have exercised on Israel by becoming part of the peace process. By attending the talks, the Indian Prime Minister or Foreign Minister could at best, have delivered and addressed the theme which was known to everybody, including Israel, the crucial question was: would the Israeli have heeded to it? The Israeli position vis-à-vis the

peace talks was governed by the domestic compulsion/pressures that the then Shamir government was confronted with and not by our sermons. For instance, the shift from the procedural wranglings to matters of substance and the report that the Israeli negotiations in Washington had offered a plan for Palestinian self-rule in the Occupied Territories brought the wrath of two right-wing parties, this ultimately brought down the Shamir Government for a while. And later the government survived a no-confidence motion in the Kenesset due to the renewed support of one the Izomet party.

Here it may not be an exaggeration to say that even the president of the US which has been a constant source of support Diplomatic, Political, Military and Economic to the continued existence of Israel from the beginning at times found it difficult to influence the Israeli Government beyond a point. This was for a country from which Israel receives billions of dollars in foreign aid annually. In view of this it sounded ridiculous to expect that India could influence Israel’s Policy even nominally.

Second, it was argued that in concrete terms there were distinct advantage for India in establishing contacts with Israel in specific areas like military modernization, agricultural innovation and investments of global Jewish establishment. India could also benefit in combating militancy in Punjab and Jammu & Kashmir from the Israeli experience and expertise in this regard.

Both the arguments were nothing new and had been surfacing off and on. There had been a section, which from time to time argued that India’s non-
relationship with Israel put her at an advantageous position preventing New Delhi from playing a positive and purposeful role in bringing the two adversaries closer to a settlement. To what extant India has been playing a role in this regard ever since it’s full diplomatic relations with Israel is there for everyone to see. As for the concrete benefits, it may be noted that as far back in the 1960s, the government of Rajasthan has shown interest in Israel’s aridzone forming techniques. On the question of countering militancy, the problems in Jammu & Kashmir and Punjab had cropped up in 1980s, a period when India took many decision in support of the PLO. Why did India not establish diplomatic relations with Israel and benefit from the expertise in combating militancy when the problem was at its peak?45

The establishment of diplomatic relations then certainly questioned and diluted India’s commitment to the high deals of non-alignment, which had been the guiding force of Indian Foreign Policy during all the decades after independence. Israel, represented all that was anathema to the NAM. NAM’s struggle against imperialism, neo-colonialism, racism and rights of small countries to determine and shape their own future needs no repetition. Of Course, there were some who argued that with the demise of Socialism in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, imperialism was dead and similarly with the collapse of cold war, NAM became redundant, such a view smaked of one’s ideological ignorance and lack of knowledge about the dynamics of International Politics. The Significance of NAM extend beyond a general

45 Ibid., pp. 75.76
resistance to bloc division, it signifies a refusal to the mere political and economic appendage of the economic power. It is the struggle for the protection of the developing countries for external domination and exploitation. Moreover bloc politics is fast getting replaced by hegemonistic politics. Hence, the relevance of NAM is more than ever before in view of the emerging unipolar world and the inherent danger of domination over small and economically weak countries.

At such a critical juncture, the establishment of ties with Israel meant that India was distancing itself from the NAM instead of giving direction to the movement in shaping the emerging international order. For instance, by voting along with the US line for the repealing of Resolution 3379, India for the first time moved away from a collective NAM position, in any case the concrete advantages that people talked about were not so lucrative as to compromise with the basic elements of India’s Foreign Policy.

Third, it was argued that the emergence of an Islamic bloc in world politics made it essential that India change its Pro-PLO stance and more closer to Israel.

The talk of the emergence of an aggressive Islamic bloc is basically an American Projected new horror in the Post-Cold War International Politics.\(^{46}\) While establishing ties with Israel, the Pakistani factor was also utilized to justify the untimely/hasty decision. It was argued that in the event of the emergence of Islamic bloc, Pakistan would fully exploit it against India. Hence,

\(^{46}\) Ibid., p. 77
there was a need to counter this by forging an anti-Islamic alliance, which was and still is in conformity with the US Israeli designs. But one fails to understand how it serves India’s Foreign Policy goals and national interest. India’s Pro-Israel Policy meant a dilution of her commitment and support to the Palestinian Cause. By establishing the diplomatic relations with Israel, India did not became anti-PLO but certainly she developed apathy towards it, the contacts between India and PLO since then have been almost insignificant. The only high level official contact between the two sides was the Rao-Arafat meet in Tunis on 20th November 1992. This too was mere courtesy call, which the Indian Prime Minister paid to the PLO leader during a stopover in Tunis on his way to Dakar for the G-15 summit. The meeting lasted for about twenty minutes. There was no specific agenda even though Arafat was reported to have briefed Rao about the peace talks in general.  

The most significant announcement from the PLO chairman Yasir Arafat came during a press conference on the second day of his stay in New Delhi “exchange of Ambassadors and recognition of Israel are acts of sovereignty in which I can not interfere” declared Arafat. “I respect any choice of the Indian government”, he further added hoping that such a change would not affect Indo-Palestinian relationship, which was “So Strong”.  

Arafat’s above mentioned statement was extensively reported in and interpreted by the media as clear-cut go-head signals from the PLO to India establishes ties with Israel. In reality, this was not so and reflected only a

47 National Herald, November 21, 1992
48 Times of India, January 22, 1992
49 Ibid.,
fragmented analysis of the whole thing. A careful reading of Arafat’s statement subsequently in the same press conference, made it evident that the PLO leader’s “Clear Message” was not so clear. It was a conditional signal. Arafat explicitly emphasized that India’s full diplomatic relations with Israel was not a pre-condition for its association with the peace process.\textsuperscript{50}

In other words, diplomatic relations with Israel were not only the way by which India could be involved in the West Asia peace processes. To substantiate his point Arafat remarked that Jordan, along with many other Arab countries, represented at the peace conference, were without diplomatic relations with Israel. In other context Arafat stated that he would prefer if India established diplomatic ties with Israel “Slowly” to enable the PLO to attain its objective at peace talks.

Thus, an objective interpretation and correct understanding of Arafat’s message required that India should have followed a cautious and go-slow policy in establishing full diplomatic ties with Israel. It should have waited till the ground realities in the West Asian Theater changed substantially so as to remove the very basis of its decade’s old anti-Israeli policy. One failed to understand why Indian policy makers were in such a hurry? After all India had extended formal recognition to the state of Israel long ago, notwithstanding its earlier opposition. From the very beginning, India insisted on a negotiated settlement of the Arab-Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It neither encouraged nor supported the PLO position of dismantling the state of Israel. That was enough

\textsuperscript{50} The Hindu, January 22, 1992
to convey that India accepted the fait accompli in West Asia. So what great difference did it make by establishing diplomatic ties with Tel Aviv? Israel’s mere attendance of Madrid Peace Conference is no way reflected substantial policy change on its part towards the Occupied Territories and the Palestinian living under military occupation in gross violation of established international law. Further, India did not have a guilt conscience like the Western Power who had shut their doors to the Jews during the Holocaust……to compel us to look for ways to compensate the state of Israel. The architects of independent India’s foreign policy were very clear about the purposes and justification behind an anti-Israeli posture.

As against this, 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 guilt conscience and wanted to compensate Israel for years of non-relationship. There was almost a scramble among Union Minister and State Chief Ministers to pay visits to Israel. In a period of one year from June 1993-July 1994 as many as nine 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. 51

There was a great Jubilation in certain quarters over the visit of high level delegation headed by deputy P.M and Foreign Minister Shimon Peres in May 17-18, 1993. The entourage of Peres included top Israeli Government

51 The Pioneer, August 1, 1994
officials and a large number of Israeli businessmen mostly defense industry tycoons. In Delhi, he was given a warm welcome by a small Jewish Community. At the same time there was a protest demonstration by an equally small group of Indian Supporters of the Palestinian cause at the Israeli Embassy. The pronouncements of the Israeli Foreign Minister in Delhi stressed the commonality of approach of the two countries on several issues. He took a stance of positive support to Indian position on every sensitive issue of the immediate strategic importance for India, especially on Kashmir and Indo-Pak relations. A number of agreements were signed between India Israel during his visit, including those to promote scientific and cultural exchange, transfer of technology, promotion of tourism and business, joint industrial ventures etc.\textsuperscript{52}

Encouraged by India’s liberalization policies, Israel was keen interested in India and also promoting bilateral trade. Besides, Israel, which like India had not signed on the treaty of Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons Treaty (NPT), was also willing to share with India its experiences in dealing with terrorism. It was argued that as India’s sources of defense supplies were got disrupted after the decline of Soviet Empire, Israel could supply some of the items urgently needed by the Defense Ministry. India’s first Ambassador to Israel presented his credentials on October 28, 1992. Following the Peres visit, both India and Israel decided to set up a joint fund for research and development in civilian area with each side contributing $1.5 million annually. A Joint Committee was to decide the specific areas of research and

\textsuperscript{52} Nation and the World, New Delhi, June 1993, pp. 32-33
development.\textsuperscript{53} Shimon Peres unequivocally supported India’s unity and territorial integrity while talking a stand on the Kashmir issues, he assured India that Tel-Aviv supports the Shimla accord as the Basis for resolving the issues bilaterally. He also stated that his country would support the judgment of the US if it declared Pakistan a terrorist state. While expressing grave concern about the Twin threats of terrorism and fundamentalism, the Israeli Foreign Minister offered his countries help in combating the menace.\textsuperscript{54} In an interview with Fahemm Al Hamid of the Arab News, P.M. Narsimha Rao stated:\textsuperscript{55}

Our relationship with Israel is based on mutually beneficial cooperation in areas, like agriculture, Tourism and trade. It has no strategic or security dimension and there is no question of its being directed against any third country. Our decision to establish diplomatic relations with Israel and moving ahead to develop bilateral cooperation has understood by our friends including the PLO and other Arab states.

On the Political Front, Israel made it clear to India, that it does not expect that her establishing diplomatic ties with Israel should effect her good relations with the Arab States.\textsuperscript{56} Mr. Rabin and Mr. Peres were believed to have made it clear hat they fully respected New Delhi’s stand on Palestine, though they might not agree with it, they also explained that they did not want India’s friendship with it, under lining by the up gradation of diplomatic relations some 14 months ago, to affect its traditional ties with the Arabs. As it happened this was followed by a gesture which exemplified Tel-Avis’s Stance. When Mr. Dixit expressed a desire to meet Palestinian Leaders, arrangements were made

\textsuperscript{53} Pradhan, Bansidhar, \textit{Indo-Israeli ties after the Press Visit}, New Delhi, May 23, 1993, pp. 20-21
\textsuperscript{54} Ibid., p. 21.23
\textsuperscript{55} Nation and the World, New Delhi, April 6, 1994.
\textsuperscript{56} Gershon Kedar, Second Secretary Embassy of Israel, Newest and Fastest Growing Indo-Israeli Relations.
to travel to an occupied territory where he met a 12 member Arab delegation. No Israeli was present during the meeting.\textsuperscript{57}

India’s then Minister of external Affairs R.L. Bhatia has said: “Countries located to in the Gulf region should not be ‘distributed’ perturbed or fearful” on India’s growing ties with Israel. Arab countries in the Gulf have expressed concern at the new initiative being launched by India towards harmonizing ties with Israel, particularly after the visit of Israel’s Foreign Minister and Deputy Prime Minister Shimon Peres. Mr. Bhatia reiterated that India’s relation with Israel would not come in the way of New Delhi’s stance on Palestinian issue. \textsuperscript{58}

The "turning point' of Indo-Israeli relations came in 1998 when elections led to a political change in the country (India). The long rule of congress party, with its socialist outlook, lost to the BJP, the extremist Hindu party and Atal Bihari Vajpayee became the prime minister of India. Home Minister and the deputy Prime Minister, L.K.Advani, the strong man in the party was a great admirer of Israel. Eversince Indo-Israeli relations progressed rapidly from agricultural sector to defense. Vajpayee after becoming Indian prime minister met his Israeli counterpart Benjamin Netanyahu in New York when both were there on the eve of United Nations session. Both agreed to exchange the visits in order to develop the bilateral relations further.\textsuperscript{59} After Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Indian national security advisor Brajesh Mishra visited Israel in September 1999. He had meetings with Israeli officials and leaders on various aspects of

\textsuperscript{57} The Times of India, New Delhi, April 3, 1993.
\textsuperscript{58} The Pioneer, August 7, 1994
\textsuperscript{59} Indian Express, September 25, 1998.
bilateral cooperation in multiple fields. This visit provided a major boost to the Indo-Israeli relationship. This relationship has assumed much significance after the Kargil crisis-1999 with avenues of cooperation in security, defense and technology sectors opening up. During the Kargil conflict, Israel was one of the countries to extend a lot of backstage help to the BJP's coalition government of India, on various aspects from information sharing to strategic consultations. It was only when the BJP came to power in 1998 that India took some steps towards the normalizing the relations with Israel by sending ministers of high rank such as L.K.Advani, Jaswant Singh and other military officials to strengthen the relations from Agricultural sector to Defense.

The BJP government in India has made a paradigm shift from cultivating the Arab world towards a strategic partnership with Israel. This shift became evident from a series of high level visits by senior Indian governments officials like Advani, who visited Israel in 2000 during a high profile tour that took him also to UK and France. His mission was to develop international cooperation in controlling the terrorism. L. K. Advani, a hard liner closely associated with the BJP's past campaign against the 'appeasement' of India's 200 million Muslims, visited Israel in June 2000. Advani became the first senior member of Indian government to visit Israel since the normalization of the ties in 1992. Foreign policy watchers in India have been talking about the NDA government's tilt towards Israel. After Advani’s visit to Israel, Jaswant

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61 Ibid.
62 India Cosying upto Israel; The Best of Friends, www.users.senet.co.qu.
Singh became the first Indian foreign minister who visited Israel in July 2000. During his visit to Israel, both the countries decided to setup a Joint Commission to steer their relationship in the economic, scientific, energy and cultural spheres. Jaswant Singh and his Israeli counterpart, David Levy both agreed to establish a Joint Forum for combating terrorism. During the visit, Jaswant Singh proclaimed:\cite{63}

> Israel is the only country helping India to combat the Pakistani aided terrorism along its northern border. Neither the United States nor the European Union is prepared to condemn Pakistan or assist India to combat the threat. Israel is the only country willing to transfer high technology to India.

He further argued, “We were thrown out of the loop of West Asia, particularly in the post Gulf War scenario. We have been now drawn into the process of peace here. It is a beginning”\cite{64}.

Until 1992 when New Delhi established diplomatic relations with Israel, at the time, prime minister of Israel Yitzhak Rabin and the Foreign Minister Shimon Peres had played well to Hindu extremist sentiments and stressed on the need for India and Israel to cooperate to combat the “Islamic fundamentalism” and “terrorism”\cite{65}. The Israeli foreign minister Shimon Peres also visited India in January 2002. He had some discussions with his Indian counterpart, Indian prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, and Home minister L.K. Advani and defense minister during his visit. He disclosed that Indo-Israeli relations are witnessing the highest level of friendship since a couple of years of BJP’s rule. Equating the struggle in Palestine with the trouble in

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \cite{63} India and Israel, The Best of Friends, www.users.senet.co.au
\item \cite{64} Ibid..
\item \cite{65} India and Israel; An Unholy Alliance, www.geocities.com
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Kashmir, he stated that India and Israel were joint victims of the global scourge of terrorism. He said that India could look up on Israel as a friend in the war against terrorism. This analysis of equating the trouble in Kashmir with the problem in Palestine is not that much appeal given the realistic nature off circumstance.

BJP after coming into power provided major boost to the relations between New Delhi and Jerusalem. Along with its sister Hindu militant organization, the BJP had been critical of the pro-Arab foreign policy of Congress governments and has always been pro-Israeli. Israel was and is regarded a potential ally against the threat of Islamic militants. Pro-Israeli Indians proclaim 'Yehudi-Hindu bhai bhai (Jews Hindu brothers) Israel and America are allies for many reasons. As for India, being a key ally along with them seems to be a ludicrous proposition. Colin Powell the then US secretary of state ignoring India announced, 'Pakistan to be the "major non-NATO" ally. The B.J.P. led Indian government cut a sorry figure since its prime minister's oft-repeated dictum that India, "a natural ally of America" had fallen flat on its face.

So long as Congress governed India, the area of Indo-Israel cooperation remained limited to commercial and cultural exchanges. However, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) after coming to power has assiduously cultivated
Israel as a friend and a military partner. Since 1998, there are constant Indo-Israeli contacts 'on various levels, especially in the realm of cooperation in the purchasing of Israeli arms.  

The Congress led by Narsimha Rao bowed to the international circumstances. Narsimha Rao was no statesman and his policies resorting to pretext of “pragmatism” as a pretext entered into petty compromises with Israel, throwing to the wind age-old ideal.

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70 Bhatti, Maqbool Ahmad, India Cosying upto Israel, 31st July 2000