

The Changing India-Palestine Dynamics in Post Abraham Accord Era: Re-evaluating India's Pro-Israel and Pro-Palestine Stances

AMIT KUMAR*¹ AND JAI KUMAR SAROHA²

¹Department of Political Science, Chaudhary Charan Singh University, Meerut (U.P.) India

²S.D. P.G. College (C.C.S. University, Meerut), Ghaziabad (U.P.) India

ABSTRACT

The research study aims to examine the changing India-Palestine dynamics in the post-Abraham Accord era, with a focus on reassessing India's pro-Israel and pro-Palestine stances. Through an analysis of India's historical support for Palestine and its growing ties with Israel, this research seeks to identify the implications of the Accord for India's role in the Israel-Palestine conflict and its broader foreign policy objectives in the Middle East. The findings of this study will contribute to a deeper understanding of India's evolving approach towards the Palestine issue and its strategic alignments in the region.

Key Words : Changing India, Palestine dynamics, Post Abraham Accord Era, Pro israel

INTRODUCTION

The India-Palestine relationship has witnessed dynamic shifts over the years, influenced by geopolitical developments and India's foreign policy objectives. In the post-Abraham Accord era, which normalized relations between Israel and several Arab states, including the United Arab Emirates (UAE), it becomes imperative to examine the changing dynamics between India and Palestine and reassess India's pro-Israel and pro-Palestine stances.

The historical context of India's relationship with Israel and Palestine provides a backdrop for understanding the present situation. India has long upheld a pro-Palestine position, rooted in its support for the rights of the Palestinian people and their quest for self-determination. This support was reflected in India's recognition of Palestine as a state in 1988 and its consistent backing of Palestine in multilateral forums such as the United Nations.

However, recent geopolitical developments have influenced India's engagement with both Israel and

Palestine. The 2020 Abraham Accord, which led to the normalisation of relations between Israel and the UAE, marked a significant shift in regional dynamics and resulted in a ripple effect across countries¹. India, recognizing the strategic importance of its relationship with Israel and the UAE, has sought to balance its engagement with both parties while re-evaluating its pro-Israel and pro-Palestine stances.

Shifting perspectives in India's foreign policy approach towards Israel and Palestine have been driven by various factors. Firstly, India's growing economic and defence ties with Israel have prompted a deeper engagement between the two countries. These ties encompass areas such as technology, agriculture, and defence cooperation, which have proven mutually beneficial. Secondly, considering the UAE as a significant strategic partner, India has taken cognizance of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the UAE and Israel. This development has had indirect implications on India's relationship with Palestine and necessitates a reassessment of its pro-Palestine stance.

India's historical stance on the Israel-Palestine conflict:

India has historically maintained a balanced stance on the Israel-Palestine conflict. In 2017, the Indian Prime Minister made landmark visits to both Israel and Palestine, demonstrating India's efforts to engage with both sides. Furthermore, India voted against the U.S. and Israel in 2017, opposing the unilateral declaration of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. India's support for Palestine was evident in various international forums, such as voting in favour of accepting Palestine as a full member of UNESCO⁽ⁱ⁾ in 2011 and supporting a UNHRC⁽ⁱⁱ⁾ resolution to examine Israel's offensive in Gaza in 2014². However, recent developments indicate a shift in India's stance, with a stronger pro-Israel position during the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This evolution suggests a nuanced approach by India, balancing its historical support for Palestine with a growing engagement with Israel.

Abraham Accord and its impact on regional dynamics

The Abraham Accords, signed on September 15, 2020, brought a significant shift in regional dynamics. The Accords refer to a series of bilateral agreements on Arab-Israeli normalisation, primarily between Israel and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Bahrain, mediated by the United States. These agreements aimed to establish diplomatic relations, promote economic cooperation, and foster regional stability.

The Abraham Accords marked a historic breakthrough as they led to the normalisation of relations between Israel and Arab countries that had previously not recognized Israel. This shift in regional dynamics challenged the traditional Arab-Israeli conflict paradigm, paving the way for increased cooperation and engagement in west Asia.

The impact of the Accords on regional dynamics has been significant. It has fostered a new era of cooperation and peace in the region, providing opportunities for economic, technological, and security collaborations. The Accords have encouraged further dialogue among regional actors and demonstrated that diplomatic solutions can be pursued to resolve long-standing conflicts.

Additionally, the Accords have prompted other Arab

nations, such as Sudan and Morocco, to consider normalising their relations with Israel. This has expanded the scope of the Accords and strengthened the potential for enhanced regional cooperation.

Moreover, the Abraham Accords have had broader geopolitical implications. They have brought Israel closer to the Gulf states, aligning their interests against common adversaries like Iran. This alignment has the potential to reshape regional dynamics and security strategies.

In conclusion, the Abraham Accords have had a transformative impact on regional dynamics, redefining relationships between Israel and Arab countries and opening new avenues for cooperation and engagement in west Asia. These agreements have the potential to reshape the geopolitical landscape of the region, fostering peace, stability, and economic progress.

India's Engagement with Israel:

India's economic and strategic ties with Israel have experienced significant growth in recent years, encompassing various sectors and areas of cooperation. This relationship has become mutually beneficial for both nations, contributing to economic development, technological advancements, and strategic collaborations. Here is an examination of India's growing ties with Israel:

Economic Cooperation:

India and Israel have strengthened economic ties through trade and investment. Since the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1992, bilateral trade has expanded, with India being one of Israel's largest trading partners in Asia. Both countries have sought to enhance cooperation in sectors like agriculture, water management, renewable energy, defence, and startups³.

India-Israel Trade		
Time period	Export (in \$ billion)	Import (in \$ billion)
2012-2013	3.74	2.36
2013-2014	3.75	2.31
2014-2015	3.29	2.33
2015-2016	2.82	2.1
2016-2017	3.06	1.96

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Defence Collaboration:

Defense cooperation has been a crucial component

(i) United Nations educational, scientific and cultural organisation

(ii) United Nations human rights council

of India-Israel relations. The defence partnership includes joint military exercises, defence technology transfer, and procurement of defence equipment. Israel has emerged as one of India's leading defence suppliers, with defence deals amounting to billions of dollars.

Technological Exchange:

India and Israel have been actively involved in technological and innovative collaborations. This includes joint research and development projects, technology transfer, and knowledge sharing in fields such as agriculture, water management, cybersecurity, and digital technologies⁵.

Cultural and People-to-People Exchanges:

Cultural and people-to-people ties play a crucial role in strengthening the India-Israel relationship. Various initiatives, such as cultural festivals, exchange programs, and tourism, have facilitated greater understanding and interaction between the two nations⁶.

India's reasons behind the deepening relationship with Israel:

1. Since India and Israel started official relations in 1992, their trade has grown significantly. In 2022-23, their trade, excluding defense, was \$10.77 billion, with India exporting \$8.45 billion worth of goods to Israel and Israel exporting \$2.32 billion to India. In April-October 2023-24, their trade, excluding defense, was \$4.42 billion⁷.
2. When the Prime Minister of India visited Israel in July 2017, they signed seven agreements focusing on collaboration in innovation, technology, water, agriculture, and space and science. They also established a \$40 million fund, called the India-Israel Industrial R&D and Technological Innovation Fund, to support joint projects.
3. India is the second-biggest trading partner of Israel in Asia and the seventh largest in the world.
4. In 2022, a group led by India's Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone Ltd. (APSEZ) bought the Haifa Port Company Ltd from the Israeli government for \$1.18 billion⁸.
5. In March 2021, Indian Oil Corporation Limited partnered with Israel's Phinergy to produce aluminium-air battery systems in India. This collaboration aims to advance green

transportation by developing fuel cells and local hydrogen storage solutions⁹.

Agriculture:

Since 1993, India and Israel have had an agreement for agricultural cooperation. This involves sharing knowledge and technology in areas like research, education, and training. They work together on joint projects, facilitated by agencies like MASHAV and CINADCO from Israel. These collaborations operate on three-year work plans with action plans developed accordingly. MASHAV, in particular, has active projects in India, including a demonstration farm in Pusa. In May 2023, the Indian Council for Agricultural Research (ICAR) and MASHAV agreed to establish the India Israel Innovation Centre for Agriculture (IIICA).

Water Technologies:

In November 2016, an agreement was signed between India and Israel on cooperation in managing and developing water resources. In July 2017, during the Prime Minister's visit to Israel, additional agreements were made regarding a national water conservation campaign in India and reforms for the Uttar Pradesh Jal Nigam. In May 2023, India and Israel signed Letters of Intent to establish Centers of Water Technology (CoWT) at the Indian Institute of Technology, Madras, and the Indian Institute of Technology, Roorkee.

The Israeli company IDE has constructed multiple desalination plants in India. One of these, a plant capable of producing 100 million litres of water per day, was established in Nemelli, Tamil Nadu, and began operating in 2013. This was the second desalination plant in Chennai. Additionally, IDE has built India's largest desalination plant in Jamnagar, with a capacity of 160,000 cubic metres per day.

Innovation and Science and Technology Cooperation:

India and Israel collaborate on science and technology through a committee set up under an agreement signed in 1993. During Prime Minister Modi's visit to Israel in July 2017, an agreement was signed to create the India-Israel Industrial R&D and Innovation Fund (I4F). This involved the Department of Science and Technology in India and the National Authority for Technological Innovation in Israel. Each country contributed \$20 million over five years (2018-2022)¹⁰.

The fund supported joint industrial research and development projects in important areas like agriculture, water, energy, healthcare, and ICT⁽ⁱⁱⁱ⁾.

India's historical support for Palestine:

India's historical support for Palestine is a well-known fact in international politics. Since the 1950s, India has consistently supported the Palestinian cause and recognized Palestine as a state since 1988, which was an indication of its commitment to the rights of the Palestinian people. India's support for Palestine is rooted in the principles of anti-colonialism and non-alignment that guided its foreign policy during the Cold War era. India supported the Palestinian national movement against British and Israeli colonialism and their proponents. However, India's support for Palestine has undergone some changes in recent years due to several factors, including strategic and economic considerations¹¹. Despite this, India's historical support for Palestine has remained a significant part of India's foreign policy, and it continues to advocate for a peaceful resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

- India co-sponsored the draft resolution on “the right of Palestinians to self-determination” during the 53rd session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) and voted in favour of it.
- In 2011, India voted in favour of Palestine becoming a full member of UNESCO.
- India co-sponsored and voted in favour of the UNGA^(iv) Resolution on November 29, 2012 that enabled Palestine to become a ‘non-member Observer state’ at the UN without voting rights.

India's diplomatic engagements with Palestine in recent years:

India's diplomatic engagements with Palestine in recent years have witnessed certain changes and continuity. Over time, India's policy towards Palestine has evolved, influenced by various factors. India continues to express support for the Palestinian cause, advocating for a two-state solution and the rights of the Palestinian people¹². However, there have been shifts in India's approach, with a greater emphasis on strengthening ties with Israel, which has resulted in more balanced engagement with both Israel and Palestine. India strives to maintain a delicate balance by engaging with both sides

(iii) Information and communications technology

(iv) United Nations general assembly

while recognizing the importance of its historical support for Palestine. This approach reflects India's evolving foreign policy and its efforts to navigate complex geopolitical dynamics in the region.

- Jawaharlal Nehru library at AL Azhar University in Gaza city
- Mahatma Gandhi library and student activity centre at Palestine Technical college
- India-Palestine centre of excellence at AL Quds university
- India- Palestine centre for empowering women “TURATHI”.
- First international day of Yoga 2015 was celebrated in Ramallah.

Changes in India's Stance post-Abraham Accord:

India's stance on Palestine has remained consistent in recent years. It continues to support the Palestinian cause and advocates for a two-state solution that can be achieved through direct negotiations between both sides. India's support for Palestine is an integral part of its foreign policy, rooted in its historical recognition of the Palestinian Liberation Organization as the sole representative of the Palestinian people. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Palestine in 2018 further solidified India's support, as he was awarded the highest Palestinian honour in recognition of India's enhanced backing of the Palestinian cause¹³. India's position emphasises the importance of a peaceful resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and calls for the establishment of a sovereign and independent Palestinian state¹⁴.

Impact of the Abraham Accord on India's approach towards Israel and Palestine:

The Abraham Accord, signed in 2020, is a significant development that has impacted India's approach towards Israel and Palestine. Historically, India has had a nuanced and balanced position on the Israel-Palestine conflict, emphasising its support for a peaceful resolution based on negotiations and the establishment of a sovereign Palestinian state. However, the Abraham Accord has led to some shifts in India's stance.

- Firstly, the Abraham Accord has brought Israel's relations with Arab countries out into the open and has been seen as a major breakthrough in

the Arab-Israeli conflict. India, which has strong socio economic engagements with both Israel and the Gulf countries, has welcomed the establishment of diplomatic relations between the UAE^(v) and Israel, considering both countries as strategic partners. This shift in alliances and the growing relations between India and Israel have influenced India's approach towards the Israel-Palestine issue.

- Secondly, India's historical support for Palestine has undergone a significant shift in recent years, with the current government moving towards a stronger security alliance with Israel for geopolitical and pragmatic considerations. This shift has been reflected in India's voting pattern at international forums where it has abstained from resolutions critical of Israel and has engaged in enhanced defence and intelligence cooperation with Israel.

It is important to note that despite these changes, India has maintained its call for a peaceful and negotiated resolution to the Israel-Palestine conflict, reiterating the need for direct talks between the parties involved. India believes in a two-state solution, whereby Israel and Palestine can coexist peacefully within mutually recognized borders, living side by side as neighbours.

Conclusion and possible future trajectories for India's involvement in the Israel-Palestine issue:

India's involvement in the Israel-Palestine issue has evolved over the years, and its future trajectory will largely depend on various geopolitical and domestic factors. Here are a few possible future trajectories for India's involvement in the Israel-Palestine issue:

- **Maintaining a balanced approach:** India has traditionally maintained a balanced approach in its engagement with both Israel and Palestine. Despite recent shifts in alliances and growing security cooperation with Israel, India has reiterated its support for a peaceful resolution and a two-state solution. It is likely that India will continue to support negotiations and encourage dialogue between the two parties while advocating for the rights of the Palestinian people.
- **Strengthening economic and diplomatic ties with Israel:** India's economic and diplomatic ties

with Israel have grown significantly in recent years. Both countries have been collaborating in various sectors such as defence, agriculture, and technology. This trend is likely to continue, and India may further deepen its engagement with Israel, including increasing trade and investment ties.

- **Enhanced role in mediating the conflict:** Given India's long standing relationship with both Israel and Palestine, there is a possibility that India could play a more active role in mediating the conflict. India's diplomatic prowess and non-aligned status make it a potential mediator, especially with its growing influence in the international community. However, it would require a willingness from both parties and a conducive international environment for India to take on a more prominent mediation role.
- **Aligning with regional dynamics:** India's involvement in the Israel-Palestine issue could also be influenced by regional dynamics, particularly its relations with Arab countries. As more Arab countries normalise relations with Israel, India may find itself navigating complex geopolitical dynamics. Balancing its ties with Israel and its historical support for Palestine will be crucial for India's future engagement in the issue.

It is important to note that these are possible trajectories and the direction of India's involvement in the Israel-Palestine issue can be shaped by various factors including changing global dynamics, domestic priorities, and regional developments.

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