

## ***India-Israel Relations: Scaling Newer Heights***

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The evolving nature of Indo-Israeli relations, particularly since the early 2010s, has clearly indicated both sides have attained a certain degree of comfort to exhibit and talk openly about their steadily growing multifaceted ties. This was not the case for most period following India's recognition of the State of Israel in September 1950. Several factors, including India's domestic political factors and foreign policy postures, especially Non-Alignment policy, then Cold War dynamics as well as prevailing West Asian regional politics had kept both countries away from normalising their ties. The relations remained frosty for almost four decades until they both established full ambassadorial-level diplomatic relations in January 1992. It could also be noted that the prospect for an early normalization of the relationship was mainly hindered by political factors, most prominent of which were the policies adopted by Indian leaders like Mahatma Gandhi and the first prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru.<sup>1</sup> The eventual rapprochement could be considered a late coming together of two ancient peoples.

India's stance towards Israel throughout the Cold War period was based upon an anti-Western and anti-imperialist worldview, which was also shared by the Arabs and the Muslim world.<sup>2</sup> In addition, Israel's intimacy with the United States (US), particularly during the 1960s, was loathed by the Indian government, which was at the time suspicious of American foreign policy.<sup>3</sup> It was towards the end days of the Cold War that there was a wind of change in international politics when India and Israel made efforts to normalise their ties. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, which was India's main diplomatic and strategic ally during the Cold War, it was left without a reliable partner, and was "forced to reorient its foreign policy to accommodate the changing international milieu."<sup>4</sup> This coincided with the period when the Soviet military industry faced a crisis, which, then, had compelled India to find an alternative source for its weapons imports, and Israel became an appealing

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source. In the words of a scholar, "...Threats emanating from across the border favoured India's reassessment of its relationship with Israel. As well, the shifting tide in Middle East politics, vis-à-vis the Arab-Israeli conflict, made India rethink its policies toward Israel as it became clear that it would have to upgrade diplomatic relations with Israel to participate in the Middle East peace process..."<sup>5</sup>

In addition to the above, the normalisation of relations between Israel and the People's Republic of China (PRC) in late January 1992 had also left a major impact on the Indian decision-makers vis-à-vis the Israel policy. For Israel, the early 1990s were an important period in its politico-diplomatic history as it succeeded in forging political ties with several Southeast Asian countries, including Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. Facing isolation in its own region since its establishment in 1948, Israel was in constant search of international political partnerships and diplomatic recognition, and, therefore, started to give considerable importance to the wider Asian region, too.

Eventually, India decided to establish full ambassadorial level relations with Israel, a country which is known worldwide for its technological advancement and for having excellent relations with its largest benefactor – the US. Importantly, India had found in Israel a partner who could meet its defence requirements, following the void left by the disintegration of the Soviet Union, its earlier supplier. Then onwards, military-security cooperation (and arms trade, in particular) has emerged as one of the most striking features of the Indo-Israeli ties,<sup>6</sup> which remained a closely guarded affair for several years. However, as the relations progressed against all odds, there is a visible display of confidence on both sides to discuss the need to intensify the overall bilateral cooperation, and not only restrict to the defence sector. This is because of the reason that India and Israel have managed to "come out of the closet,"<sup>7</sup> and are more interested in working together closely on areas of mutual national and strategic interests. As mentioned briefly earlier, Israel's continuous quest for partnerships (economically, politically, militarily, culturally, etc.) with newer players in Asia, its requirements for larger markets for its products as well as for economic and technological cooperation,<sup>8</sup> has coincided with similar foreign and economic policy objectives of India (embarking on reforms to liberalise its economy) during the 1990s.

The gradually emerging shifts in the geopolitics of the wider West Asian region in recent years have also given an important leeway to both countries to not only explore avenues for cooperation bilaterally, but also, the possibility to involve like-minded third countries for trilateral or "minilateral" partnerships, which has become a trend in the emerging world order. To this end, Israel's

normalisation of relations with two key Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries—the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Bahrain—in August-September 2020, famously known as the Abraham Accords,<sup>9</sup> is a breakthrough, and this development will likely lead to further engagements between the signatories of the mentioned accord and India in the near future. As it is, India, Israel and the UAE have already initiated a joint collaboration in the field of solar energy in mid-2021, which is highlighted below while discussing Indo-Israeli energy cooperation that is at the nascent stage.

In light of the above, the governments of India and Israel have strengthened their engagements, more so by identifying newer areas of cooperation in almost all the domains, namely agriculture, water, energy, science and technology, education, culture, tourism, trade and commerce, cyber security, food security, artificial intelligence and, most importantly, defence. Longstanding cooperation in military-security-defence, however, forms the backbone of a growing partnership, which could have important implications for both countries in the economic, political, and security realms in the future. There is a widely held belief that these two countries have further strengthened their ties, following the victory of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in the 2014 elections, considering the mentioned Indian ruling party's reputation as a strong supporter of Israel.<sup>10</sup>

It is against this backdrop that this article predominantly discusses the recent trends in the Indo-Israeli military-security cooperation (with a focus on arms trade and technological collaboration), while also highlighting the newly explored potential area of cooperation, that is, energy-related ties. The paper mostly covers the period between the early 2010s and 2021 during which the bilateral cooperation in these sectors was on an upward trajectory.

### **Maturation of Defence Cooperation**

For a prolonged period, discussions about Indo-Israeli ties were mostly restricted to cooperation in the defence sector. This was primarily because following the normalisation of relations in 1992, both countries explored the potential areas upon which they could cooperate, and defence became the dominant feature of the then-evolving ties. Initial steps taken in this regard were evidenced by the rising frequency of the visits of high-level military-security officials of the respective governments during the 1990s. Indicating a keen interest to intensify the military dimension of bilateral relations, India sent its first military attaché to Israel in 1997, which was a strategic decision.

Subsequently, Israel began to offer India both investment and technical cooperation in matters related to military aircraft, reverse engineering, and the upgrading of weapons systems.<sup>11</sup>

It is equally important to note that Israel's credibility as a reliable arms supplier proved itself during the 1999 Kargil War (between India and Pakistan) during which Israel maintained its arms sales to India and quietly provided significant military assistance. Its willingness to supply arms, including ordnance, laser-guided bombs, and unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) had played an instrumental role in further solidifying the defence relations with India.<sup>12</sup> Thereafter, the defence cooperation grew considerably, marked by heightened Israeli arms sales, while most major countries restricted their technological exports to India following the 1998 Pokhran nuclear test. This became a major turning point in Indo-Israeli relations in the late 1990s.

Therefore, the bilateral discussions and negotiations that took place during the mid- and late-1990s had led to a further breakthrough in defence cooperation, which provided India with cutting-edge technologies and eventually led to co-production, which is fast becoming an important trait of the ties. Over some time, Israel has emerged as one of India's top arms importers, with annual arms trade touching the figure of over US\$1 billion.<sup>13</sup> Beyond mere arms trade, the military-security cooperation is expanded to other areas, including joint production, joint maritime exercises, intelligence and information sharing, counter-terrorism cooperation and so on.

### **Major Boost to Cooperation**

Looking at the trend in India-Israel ties, it is noticeable that defence cooperation, in particular, has received a major boost during the rule of the BJP-led coalition government in 1998, a similar pattern which is currently being witnessed following the landslide victory of the same political party in the 2014 and 2019 Indian general elections. This is not to say that the previous Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government gave less attention to this aspect of bilateral relations. Some of the most important military deals, including joint-collaboration ventures, had been initiated and signed by this previous government. Having said that, one of the reasons for the present bonhomie, as argued by some scholars, has not only been triggered by the economic interests of the two governments to conduct business but there is also a perceived ideological affinity, which is bringing the respective leaderships closer. In the words of Khinvraj Jangid, an Indian scholar who analyses Israeli politics.

“... The ideological alignment between India and Israel around cultural-religious nationalism coupled with neo-liberal free market economy is an important driving force today. The way each State defines its national-identity has direct links with the attitudes towards the other. The significant rise of BJP, therefore, asserted and continues to assert closer relations with Israel. The current ideological alignment matters in their ongoing bilateral relations as much as the Nehruvian ideology mattered in the past ...”<sup>14</sup>

Moreover, there is also a shared security concern, which has facilitated an expansion of the ties. Unabating threats from non-state actors (including terrorist organisations) in the respective hostile neighbourhood have pushed India and Israel towards forging robust and comprehensive military-security cooperation, and not only focus on their defence trade, which is undoubtedly a lucrative means of generating foreign earnings for Israel. For instance, during the period 2015-2019, India’s arms imports from Israel increased by 175 percent, making the latter its second-largest supplier of major arms.<sup>15</sup> During 2016-2020, Israel alone accounted for 43 percent of India’s imports.<sup>16</sup>

It can, therefore, be said that it is the combination of (mainly) these elements – security, economics, politics and ideology – that have been attributed to the rapid growth of partnerships between the two countries in recent years. One of the manifestations of this thriving partnership is the ever-expanding military-security cooperation, which has moved further from a patron-client dynamic (where Israel is the patron and India is the client) in favour of promoting joint ventures in defence and other areas of the bilateral relationship.

### **Arms Trade and Technology Collaboration**

In the wake of the BJP’s historic election victory in May 2014, several prognoses were made regarding the likely nature of the Indo-Israeli bilateral relations, one of them being the military-security dimension.<sup>17</sup> As anticipated by many, there has been a discernible upsurge in the bilateral engagements in this sphere, and unlike in the 1990s, discussions on the same have become more open and candid, even leading former Israeli ambassador to India, Ron Malka, to comment, “Since we have a strong friendship, whatever India needs from Israel to defend itself, we are there and available to India because this is how we manage our friendships and especially a precious friendship like with India.”<sup>18</sup> The statement itself has demonstrated the politico-diplomatic goodwill gesture that exists to take the relations to an advanced level. On the ground, military-security cooperation in the form of arms trade as well as

technology transfer and licensed production has emerged as an important dimension of the Indo-Israeli “strategic partnership”, a status of the bilateral relationship that was raised during the visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Israel in July 2017, the first ever by an Indian head of the government. Israeli counterpart Benjamin Netanyahu’s reciprocal visit to India in January of 2018 paved the way for further expansion of overall bilateral ties, and these visits reflected the importance accorded by each, with defence cooperation remaining one of the mainstays. Such politico-diplomatic moves have also cemented the political ties, giving leeway to strengthen overall partnerships.

The maturation of the Indo-Israeli defence cooperation has come at a juncture when the present Indian government is pushing for indigenisation in the defence sector, that is, to develop and produce defence items within the country, with an objective to make it a self-reliant nation in defence production. By placing importance on home-grown defence manufacturing programs, India has made a transfer of technology (ToT) as one of the components of strategic partnerships with some of its international weapons suppliers, including Israel, the United States (US), Russia, France and the United Kingdom (UK). Alongside their traditional arms trade, there are ongoing discussions regarding ToT with these global arms exporters. It is also partially this aim and objective of India, which has further necessitated the need to cooperate closely with a technologically advanced country like Israel, which earned its reputation for designing and manufacturing some of the world’s most sophisticated weapons systems, particularly unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), missiles and anti-missiles systems, air defence systems (such as Iron Dome and Green Pine radar), electronic warfare systems (EWS), law enforcement equipment, naval patrol boats and numerous types of arms and ammunitions.

Notwithstanding the aforementioned Indian government’s initiatives to reduce dependency on external arms vendors, the country occasionally will continue to import certain categories of armaments from international sellers, including Israel. This is mainly because some of the defence industrial bases remain underdeveloped as compared to Western exporters and it will take time to manufacture technologically advanced systems. Simultaneously, the Israeli defence industry has a significant presence in the Indian market and has secured a comfortable space. Israel’s share in India’s defence market began to increase significantly from 2014 onwards. Given this, certain specific Israeli-origin defence items will continue to be procured by India, from time to time and on a requirement basis.

It is noteworthy that following the Balakot airstrikes in February 2019, the Indian Air Force (IAF) spoke of arming its fleet of Sukhoi Su-30MKI multirole fighters with the Rafael-manufactured I-Derby ER (extended range) beyond-visual-range air-to-air missile (BVRAAM), following the phasing out of its aging Russian-made Vympel R-77 (AA-12 “Adder”) AAMs by 2021-22. The IAF opted for this radar-guided missile because of its superiority over Russian technology, which reportedly failed to intercept Pakistani missiles during the dogfight in February 2019. Furthermore, after using Rafael-developed SPICE (Smart, Precise, Impact, Cost-Effective) 2000 bombs in the Balakot airstrikes against terrorist training camps, the IAF signed another deal with Rafael to procure a batch of these items, with delivery slated for September 2019. Following this clash, the Indian Army (IA) also reportedly approved an “emergency purchase” of 240 Rafael-made Spike medium-range (MR) anti-tank guided missiles (ATGM) and 12 launchers for immediate operational requirements.<sup>19</sup> In the wake of recent border tensions with China along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in the Eastern Ladakh region in 2020, India even considered an acquisition of more Israeli defence items, including Negev light machine gun manufactured by Israel Weapons Industries (IWI). After this standoff, the Indian military and the National Technical Research Organization (NTRO) reportedly deployed Heron medium altitude long endurance (MALE) UAVs to provide technical surveillance. This has demonstrated how some of Israel’s defence products have continued to catch the attention of the Indian armed forces because of their performance in times of crisis.

By trading in state-of-the-art defence items as well as military technology, Israel and India have created an important synergy not only between the governments but also between defence firms, both private and state-owned. The importance of such cooperation was underscored during Modi’s 2017 visit, when both the leaders (along with then Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu) “agreed that future developments in this sphere should focus on joint development of defence products, including transfer of technology from Israel, with a special emphasis on the Made in India initiative.”<sup>20</sup>

The rapidly growing cooperation is signified by existing collaboration programs, involving Israeli technology in the field of missiles, air defence systems, UAVs, and more. This is a domain, which can be expected to see further advancement in the near future. Certain initial progress has been made in the field of UAVs with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in February 2020 between Israel Aerospace Industries and the Indian firms – Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) and Dynamic Technologies

Limited (DTL) – to manufacture advanced UAVs in India and to market the products abroad. Similarly, in 2018, another initiative was agreed upon between India's Adani Defence and Aerospace and Israel's Elbit Systems to launch the Adani Elbit Unmanned Aerial Vehicles complex at Hyderabad in Telangana (in India). This collaboration is the first private UAV manufacturing facility in India and the first one outside Israel to manufacture Hermes 900 medium altitude long endurance (MALE) UAVs. Such a collaboration is also extended towards the small arms category as India's Punj Lloyd Raksha Systems and IWI agreed (in May 2017) to establish a manufacturing plant in Madhya Pradesh (in India) to produce advanced weapons, such as X95 assault rifle, Galil sniper, Tavor assault rifle, Negev light machine gun, and the Ace assault rifle. These are some of the popular Israeli arms systems, which would be useful for India's law enforcement agencies.

In the missile domain, an important outcome of the collaboration was the successful test-firing of the jointly developed (between IAI, DRDO and Indian Navy) Barak-8 Long Range Surface-to-Air Missile (LRSAM) in December 2015. Further, in May 2017, India's Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) signed a contract worth US\$630 million with IAI to jointly develop four LRSAMs for the Indian Navy (IN). Extending this joint initiative towards a new variant, under an agreement signed between the IAI and DRDO in July 2018, the latter will jointly develop with IAI Medium Range Surface to Air Missile (MRSAM), at an estimated cost of US\$2.5 billion. This particular system would have a substantial indigenous component. The MRSAM is a land-based variant of the above-mentioned LRSAM, which the IN test-fired in mid-2018 and early 2019. In July 2019, India's Kalyani Rafael Advanced Systems (KRAS) bagged a contract worth \$100 million from Rafael to supply the IAF and the IA with approximately 1,000 missile kits for Barak-8 missiles. Cooperation in this domain, however, has also been extended to co-production. In February 2020, IAI and BEL entered into an MoU for collaboration on establishing a new centre for providing product lifecycle support, including repair and maintenance services for the air defence systems in India. The need for these items has increased in recent times due to the aggravation of threats to India's territorial sovereignty. Tellingly, these mentioned collaborative ventures not only lessen the burden of manufacturing on the state-owned industries but also help in creating jobs in the private sector, which could bolster indigenization programs in the future.

Looking at the success stories of a few Indo-Israeli collaborations, both countries, in September 2020, signed a bilateral agreement to establish a sub-working group (SWG) on defence industrial cooperation with a focus on the

transfer of technology, co-development & co-production, artificial intelligence, innovation and joint export to friendly foreign countries.<sup>21</sup> Identically, in October 2021, India and Israel decided to set up a task force to put together a comprehensive 10-year roadmap to identify new areas of collaboration, including defence procurement, production and research and development. These strategic decisions have brought to the fore the intent of both countries to give more thrust to defence industrial cooperation involving Israeli-origin technology, its decades-old expertise and India's manufacturing skills. The arrangements also bode well with India's growing aspirations to promote its exports of indigenous weapons systems as well as jointly developed items.

Looking at the contours of the relations, there exists ample opportunity for both countries to continue cooperation in the defence realm. Regardless of the current efforts, which are being taken up by India, Israel's technological expertise is sure to be a key source in its drive to develop a self-reliant defence industry. Moreover, closer coordination between the two defence industries is expected to continue for a foreseeable future, which will also be important to meet the increasing demands of all three wings of the Indian armed forces.

### **Potential Energy Ties**

The steady progression of the Indo-Israeli relationship has opened another window of opportunity to forge cooperation in a pivotal domain – energy. Gradually, both countries have started to gain momentum in this field, particularly following the signing of an MoU in 2018 to strengthen engagements in the oil and gas sector.<sup>22</sup> The decision to cooperate in this field has happened at this timely juncture when Israel is emerging as a key West Asian natural gas exporter, and India is diversifying its energy sources in this region and elsewhere. In the long run, increasing importance given by both countries to renewable sources of energy may facilitate further cooperation.

The developing Indo-Israeli energy cooperation signifies convergence of interests to promote the use of renewable sources energy in the respective countries. India, over the past decade, has expressed an interest in Israeli investments in its renewable energy sector, while this West Asian country has also wanted to rope in India as a potential partner in clean energy.<sup>23</sup> The similarity in the goals of both governments to generate electricity using renewable sources has widened the scope of cooperation. For instance, Israel has set a goal to increase its solar-based energy generation to 30 percent of electricity generation by 2030, similarly aligned with that of the Indian government's target to generate 450 Gigawatt—about 60 percent—using

renewable sources.<sup>24</sup> In light of this, the respective governments have emphasised increasing investments to promote renewable energy domestically and also by forging international partnerships. Both countries also have the technological skills and investments to jointly-develop renewable energy domains. As a starter, the Indian Oil Corporation inked an agreement with an Israeli start-up, Phinergy, to jointly manufacture Aluminum-Air systems in India.<sup>25</sup> These initiatives support the goals of the “Make in India” initiative while laying the groundwork for diversifying India’s energy sources. Moreover, the willingness exhibited by Israel to join the India-led International Solar Alliance (ISA) aligns very well with the objectives of both countries to scale up their partnership in clean energy.

A commonality in the foreign policy pursuits of India and Israel has also favoured the building of energy-related ties. In particular, both governments are making considerable efforts to forge partnerships in the renewable energy sector. In India, this is a matter, which has gained increasing traction during the last few years. Underscoring the importance of it, a former Indian foreign secretary in June 2021 emphasized “augmenting India’s renewable power capacity,”<sup>26</sup> while, in 2020, Prime Minister Modi called for more foreign investments in India’s green energy sector. Israel, on the other hand, carries similar goals, considering its rising demand for electricity due to an increasing population, lack of natural resources, particularly hydro-facilities, and to reduce emissions. The renewable energy initiatives which India has been taking up are also well within its efforts to diversify energy sources due to increasing volatility in the international crude oil prices, which it intermittently faces from some of its Gulf suppliers, too. Diversification of energy sources, therefore, could be considered an ideal step to augment its energy security in the long run. Given this, it would be prudent to have an energy-rich partner and Israel could become one of the new sources for India in the near future.

Israel and India are also involved in energy exploration and drilling activities in the Mediterranean, which will facilitate their desires to scale new heights in the bilateral relationship. The 2018 oil/energy-related MoU entails collaboration agreements and joint ventures to strengthen cooperation in this newly explored sphere. It should be mentioned that Israel is gradually emerging as a regional natural gas exporter, particularly after it discovered the gas field, *Leviathan*, in December 2010,<sup>27</sup> with its immediate neighbours – Egypt and Jordan – becoming key clients since early 2020.

In 2018, marking a breakthrough, Indian firms officially entered the Israeli energy sector when the latter’s energy ministry granted license to

several Indian companies for oil and gas exploration and drilling in Israeli waters. This provided the right opportunity for India, which already has its expertise in drilling and exploration, to engage with Israel by signing the MoU in January, setting out goals to cooperate in the oil and gas sector, including joint-economic projects. While thus far, India-Israel partnerships have focused on fossil fuels, there is a growing realization in both countries of the need to substitute these materials with renewable sources of energy.

While prospects for enhanced bilateral energy-related cooperation loom large, the emerging geopolitical dynamics in the West Asian region, marked by the recent realignment of ties between Israel and the Gulf countries, can also open avenues for multilateral partnerships. In other words, Israel's normalization of relations with the UAE and Bahrain in 2020 could be considered a timely breakthrough, which should push India and these states to explore opportunities for collaborations, including in the energy sector. This could be done by bringing together investments from these Gulf states, Israeli-origin technology, and India's manufacturing skills. For instance, in May 2021, as the first project of its kind, the International Federation of Indo-Israel Chambers of Commerce initiated a trilateral partnership between Israel, India and the UAE to develop an "innovative robotic solar cleaning technology".<sup>28</sup> Such an initiative could lead to further partnerships, and a similar arrangement could also be explored with Bahrain—where India is also increasing its engagements in the renewable energy sector. The paradigm shift, therefore, that is occurring in the wider West Asian region provides India with an abundant opportunity to expand its outreach in its extended neighbourhood (and let alone Israel), which is well within the ambit of its "Look West or Link West Policy."<sup>29</sup> To sum up, the emerging developments suggest that energy ties could act as another catalyst to strengthen Indo-Israeli cooperation.

### **Conclusion**

It is discernible that there is an upsurge in the trajectory of contemporary Indo-Israeli relations. Although this article focuses on two important domains of the bilateral ties – defence and energy – the economic partnerships and cooperation in non-traditional security issues, including climate and food security, water management, agriculture, etc. are significantly on the rise. An indicator of the growth is the satisfactory increment in bilateral trade volume which has touched US\$ 4.82 billion (excluding defence) from April to November 2021, with India becoming Israel's seventh-largest trading partner globally—and the third-largest in Asia.<sup>30</sup> This has indicated the interests of

both countries to not let military-defence cooperation dominate the bilateral relations, but to give equal priority to other sectors, for the benefit of the larger populace.

It is a prudent Indian policy to have focused on strengthening defence technology cooperation rather than only importing Israeli-origin ready made armaments. The existing security challenges, both traditional and non-traditional, Indian quest for technological advancement in defence industries, and Israel's readiness to meet some of the requirements of India will lead to further expansion of defence cooperation between the two countries. As Israel continues to design and develop a wide range of state-of-the-art weapon systems, it will remain an important source of defence equipment and technology for India. At a later stage, India and Israel can even mull over coordinating with countries like France, the US and the UAE and identify new areas for setting up joint ventures in the defence manufacturing sector. This is an important option, which can be explored, particularly considering the close military and political cooperation among the mentioned countries.

Similarly, the initiation of energy-related cooperation could be construed as a clear intention of India and Israel to add more depth to their strategic partnership, which would unfailingly expand the scope of bilateral cooperation. Adding an energy dimension to the present ties will make the partnership more comprehensive. For the furtherance of cooperation, India, in the future, could even explore importing gas from the aforementioned Israeli reserves in the Mediterranean. Such a deal could be well within the ambit of both India's diversification of its energy sources and Israel's quest for its energy markets, creating a win-win situation for both. To intensify its presence, India should strive towards winning more licenses for its companies for further energy exploration and drilling activities and should also encourage the Israeli government to increase its investments in India's energy sector, which currently remains negligible. Israel, a new player in the energy market, should also work towards establishing further energy partnerships with India's growing economy and lucrative consumer market.

Realpolitik and convergence of strategic interests have been instrumental in transforming the relations, thus bringing India's ties closer to Israel, while effectively striking the right balance with Gulf and other West Asian countries, simultaneously. Expanded cooperation across the spectrum of bilateral relations is expected to be the pattern in Indo-Israeli ties. Both countries, taking advantage of the upward trajectory of their relations, are keener in exploring new opportunities to forge not only bilateral cooperation but also trilateral and multilateral partnerships with like-minded countries from the region and

beyond. The emerging geopolitical developments, therefore, in West Asia, have arrived in time for India to further its engagements not only with Israel but also with the regional countries. This fits well into India's current emphasis on "plurilateralism" or "minilateralism", which is increasingly becoming an important hallmark of the present political dispensation's foreign policy pursuits.

**Notes:**

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- <sup>13</sup> Ora Coren, "India Reportedly Ready to Clear \$3 billion in Arms Deal with Israel," *Ha'aretz*, February 12, 2016. <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2016-02-12/ty->

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- <sup>15</sup> "Trends in International Arms Transfers, 2019," SIPRI Fact Sheet, (March 2020): 8.
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