

**CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN INDO- ARAB RELATIONS :  
A STUDY OF ISREAL AS A FACTOR**

**Abstract of the**

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**By**

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The Israeli Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon's red carpet welcome by New Delhi along with his brigade of 140 delegates in 1993 has added a new but interesting annexure to India's foreign policy chapter. Although the spirit of the main text of India's foreign policy continues to remain unchanged, however, the newly appended annexure not only deviates and drifts from the cardinal premises of her foreign policy plank but also raises several questions pertaining not only to India's certified ideological frame but also to the emerging alignments, realignments and combinations in international calculations.

In this background of swift developments, this study has been undertaken with a view to explore and analyze the changing contours of India's Arab World policy.

Right from the pre-independence days, India has maintained a strong pro-Arab policy and despite ever changing scenario of international relations and their consequent domestic and global compulsions India's relations with the Arab World are anything but symmetrical as New Delhi continues to give unequivocal support to Arab interests. The continuity of India's pro-Arab policy rests largely on the relevance of West Asian oil for industrial development, security interests in the northern frontiers and India Ocean, and the sensitivities of India's large Muslim population.

India has been consistent and currently appears to be so in its position with regard to the issue of Palestine that no aggressor state should be allowed to enjoy the fruits of its aggression and that the principles of natural justice should not be compromised for the sake of expediency. It has thus shown a remarkable compatibility with majority Arab opinion.

Israel was shocked when India voted against its admission to the UN on 11 May 1949. However India accorded de facto recognition to Israel in September 1950 but did not establish diplomatic relations with it. Israel was again disappointed when it was not invited to the Bandung Conference. The Arab states occupied center stage of the nonaligned bloc with Nasser, Nehru and Tito as its major heroes. In November 1975, India backed the highly controversial Arab sponsored UN resolution equating Zionism with racism and racial discrimination to Israel's utter dismay.

An assertive, dominant and glaring shift devoid of moral turpitude was noticed in India's policy stance since December 1991 vote in the UN recalling the resolution equating Zionism with racism. It was as astonishing and blatant scrapping of India's record of unflinching support to Arab cause on almost all international issue. Arab envoys in the UN

also took strong note of this new change in India's policy on Arab World as an opportunity to make a break. India's attitude of warmth was dwindling in favour of Israel, under domestic compulsions of coalition government and their policies, changing geo political considerations and equations and priorities of New Delhi. India's staunch moral and material support for Palestinian home land and PLO got substituted by carrot and stick policy. On one hand closer ties with Arab argument were reiterated. Yasser Arafat knew that the red carpet is withdrawn, warmth missing and his visit could not evoke any special interest in the Palestinian cause during his 24 hours halt in New Delhi in August 2000.

The Arabs, however, are not averse to any negative implications of India's economic cooperation with Israel. But what worries the Arab World is the "military and nuclear cooperation" between India and Israel. It was believed in several quarters that India and Israel clandestinely worked to develop India's nuclear weaponry.

In these background this thesis has been undertaken to understand the changing dynamic Indo- Arab relations . Consequent upon the emergence of Israel tacitly backed and supported by the U.S.A, as an important player is the feel of armanent and agricultural expertise. The thesis is divided into six chapters.

Chapter I of the thesis presents a historic profile of Indo-Arab relations that have roots right from the dawn of civilization. An interesting aspect aspect of this chapter is that sociocultural ties between the two civilizations have coalesced them into an unity depicting humanity. It has been argued in this chapter that India knows Arab long before Muslims established their contacts with this country. The cultural imprints of those remote times have recently been discovered in both of these lands suggesting close inter-relationships between them. Even some of the scholars gone to the extent of suggesting that the nuclei of older civilizations of India, Egypt and Mesopotamia were not as isolated and detached as they appear to be first sight but, on the contrary, some sort of communion between them did exist, even in those pre-historic time.

Chapter II of the thesis dealing with India's Arab policy reveals that the ancient civilization of the Arab world had a profitable trade and cultural relation with ancient India and possibly some diplomatic relations too. Since the advent of Islam to India, one finds that the relationship became more intimate. The succeeding period of nearly six centuries or so, which is called the golden period, was the most fruitful period in Indo-Arab relations. It is argued in the chapter that India's Arab policy was rooted in three major principles: first, opposition to imperialism and expansionism second, consolidation of the common principles of peace and co-operation and third , restoration of India's cultural, economic and commercial links with the Arab world.

Chapter III dealing with Indo- Arab cultural ties while refuting the theoretical put forth by Huntington in his flawed formulation of the Clash of Civilization theory points to the fact that no civilization is culturally homogenous but on the contrary all civilizations tend to be culturally diverse and this diversity of culture is a result of long and short term effects of inter-state relations of trade, commerce, diplomacy and politics. In this context it is argued in the chapter that the cultural exchange between India and Arab world had been going for

centuries, each creating and borrowing from the other. Thus in the ancient and medieval periods, India and West Asia were the recipient of each other's knowledge and culture. The colonial period saw a halt to this movement. The European expansion was particularly threatening in the sense that it demonstrated the weakness of Arab Muslim culture in the face of new technologies, scientific discourse and modern education. In context of migration and cultural transformation, however, for more than half a century India-Arab relation has been on a distinct historical trajectory that sets it apart from the earlier periods. Over the last few decades, the region had witnessed a series of diverse yet shared movements that profoundly changed the social relations and economic exchange due to the migration. It must perhaps be the strongest vehicle for cultural exchange, impacting on the social as well as political life of India. While Chapter IV focusing on the most vital aspect of India's Arab policy covering Indo-Arab Economic Relations examines the emerging dynamics of economic relation between two regions following the on set of globalization and liberalization processes in terms of various memoranda of understanding, joint ventures and business contracts that have been negotiated between them both at the government and private levels.

A special chapter on India's Palestine Policy has been included in the thesis with the argument that Palestine provided a catalyst in strengthening Indo-Arab relations. It is argument in the chapter that India's relations with the people of Palestine and their just cause to regain their lost territories remains an everlasting aspect of India's foreign policy. Changes may be perceived in her foreign policy postures in view of the fast changing global environment and international scenario, however, these changes are mere aberrations and purely temporary. The spirit of anti – imperialism, fight against exploitation and voluntary discrimination is completely ingrained in the bone and marrow of Indian body politic : as such any deviation from the just cause of Palestinian peoples will be a negation of the fundamentals of India's governing culture.

Similarly a special chapter " Israel as a factor in Indo-Arab Relations" is devoted to understand the domestic and international compulsions in bringing India and Israel closer causing suspicion in many about the future of Indo-Arab relations. It is evident from research that despite normalization of relationship with Israel India has continued to espouse the cause of the Palestinian while at the same time criticizing Israeli steps which hindered peace process. Significantly enough, India has attempted to do a fine balancing act to drive home the point that friendship with Israel was not incompatible with that of the Arab world, especially the Palestinians.

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