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Q8(a)

How does India-Israel bilateral ties reflect the autonomy of India's foreign policy choices?

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2022 · PSIR GS 2 · 20 marks · Recent developments in Indian Foreign policy

Recent developments in Indian Foreign policy: India's position on the recent crisis in Afghanistan, Iraq and West Asia, growing relations with US and Israel; vision of a new world order.

Core demand of the question

- How does India-Israel bilateral ties reflect the autonomy of India's foreign policy choices?
- Write at 20-mark length

Revision summary

India kept Israel at arm's length in the NAM decades, then opened fully in 1992.

Defence and technology became the core of the bilateral.

Autonomy means choosing that core without a US or Arab veto.

Continued UN votes on Palestine show de-hyphenation, not capture.

Gulf energy and Iran files run in parallel, which is multi-alignment.

Introduction

India recognised Israel in 1950, kept a thin relationship through the Cold War, and opened full ambassadors in 1992. Deeper defence and technology ties since then show that New Delhi will choose partners against older bloc habits. Autonomy is the point of the story, not a romance of the relationship.

Body

From freeze to choice

- Cold War India voted with Arab and NAM positions on Palestine and delayed full embassy exchange. That was also a choice, driven by energy, diaspora in the Gulf, and anti-colonial identity.
- 1992 full diplomatic relations, after the Cold War and after Madrid-process optics, showed that the old package deal could be unbundled.

What the bilateral now contains

- Defence, drones, intelligence, and agriculture technology became the hard core.
- Water, start-ups, and homeland security added a civilian layer.
- High visits and a public partnership replaced the earlier hush.

How this is autonomy

- Autonomy, in Indian usage, is the right to decide each file. E. H. Carr would note that all States mix morality and interest; India stopped treating Israel as a forbidden moral absolute.

- India still votes at the UN on Palestinian questions in ways that annoy Israel. That **de-hyphenation** is the proof of choice, not of capture.
- Gulf energy, Iranian Chabahar, and Abraham Accords-era diplomacy show a West Asia policy of several channels at once, which is multi-alignment rather than a US or Arab veto over New Delhi.
- Realist self-help after 1990s terrorism and after 1998 status-seeking made Israeli defence a tool. NAM rhetoric did not get a veto over that tool.

Limits of the showcase

- A relationship can look autonomous and still be shaped by US technology rules and by Hindu-nationalist affinity politics at home.
- Gaza wars periodically test how far public diplomacy can hold the two-track vote-and-weapons mix.

Judgment

- India-Israel ties reflect autonomy because they were delayed when NAM logic demanded delay, deepened when security and tech demanded depth, and still sit beside a Palestine voting record. That is issue-based choice.

Flow diagram

Cold War thin ties -> 1992 full relations
1992 full relations -> Defence tech
Defence tech -> Autonomy as issue-based choice
UN Palestine votes -> Autonomy as issue-based choice

Conclusion

India-Israel relations display foreign-policy autonomy as the power to open, thicken, and still qualify a partnership. Full ties after **1992** and **defence cooperation** did not abolish Palestine votes. The mix is the Indian claim to decide, not to join someone else's camp.

Facts & figures

1992

Exchange of full ambassadors between India and Israel after decades of limited relations.

Defence cooperation

UAVs, missiles, and intelligence ties that became a visible part of India's self-help kit.

NAM / Palestine votes

India's long UN voting pattern on occupation and statehood that did not vanish after 1992.

De-hyphenation

Policy of treating Israel and Palestine as distinct files rather than a single moral package.

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