THE ISRAELI-SOVIET / RUSSIAN RELATIONS.

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**Introduction**

*The idea of a Jewish 'nationality' is definitely reactionary not only when expounded by its consistent advocates (the Zionists), but likewise on the lips of those who try to combine it with the ideas of Social-Democracy (the Bundists). The idea of a Jewish nationality runs counter to the interests of the*J*ewish proletariat, for it fosters among them, directly or indirectly, a spirit hostile to assimilation, the spirit of the 'ghetto*'.

**LENIN{****[[1]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/israeli-soviet-russian-relations" \l "_edn1" \o ") }**

Except for 1948-1949, Moscow was hostile towards Israel and supported the Arab countries against the Jewish state. As a result of Gorbatchev's ascent to power in 1985, a slow reassessment of the soviet policy toward Israel began and in October 1991 full diplomatic relations between the two countries were restored after their breakdown during the June 1967 Arab Israeli war. In this study we shall retrace the Soviet-Israeli relations and Russian-Israeli relations in a chronological pattern by taking into consideration the two main issues witch affected these relations: the Arab Israeli conflict and the Soviet Jewish emigration to Israel. Thus we shall discuss the relations between the Soviet Union and the Zionist movement before foundation of the State of Israel, then we shall discuss the Soviet Israeli relations under the leaderships of Stalin, Khrushchev Brezhnev and Gorbatchev. Finally we shall tackle the Russian-Israeli relations since the collapse of the Soviet Union.

**Soviet relations with the Zionist movement**

Before the Bolshevik revolution, Lenin, the founder of Soviet State, in a letter to the Iskra, wrote that he was completely hostile to the foundation of a Jewish statehood ([[2]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/israeli-soviet-russian-relations" \l "_edn2" \o ")). Indeed, since its inception the Bohevik party regarded Zioni as a reactionary hostile ideology. Lenin denounced all forms and currents of Zionism, included socialist leftist elements in the movement. Lenin called Zionist ideals fairy tales. In his view, the Jews were not a nation and the solution of the Jew question could be found in the voluntary assimilation of the Jews among the nations where they lived ([[3]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/israeli-soviet-russian-relations" \l "_edn3" \o ")).

Although Lenin adopted a strong line against anti-Semitism, was equally a fervid anti-Zionist describing it as a greater enemy social democracy than anti-Semitism ([[4]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/israeli-soviet-russian-relations" \l "_edn4" \o ")). However, while the Bolsheviks were opposed in principle to Zionism in every shape a form, the Jewish question was not one of their most urgent preoccupations, either during the civil war or the years of NEP.

Left-wing Zionism had been based on the assumption that the Jewish question was insoluble in a capitalist society. The rise of Bolshevism created an entirely new situation. The new regime, internationalist in character, formally abolished all forms of discrimination against minorities and promised to change the social structure of the Jewish masses, to find productive work for them, and did not preclude some form of cultural-national autonomy. The end of anti-Semitism seemed in sight, and, if so, it must have appeared utterly pointless to leave a Socialist country for one which was as yet far form from reaching this advanced stage in its political-social development ([[5]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/israeli-soviet-russian-relations" \l "_edn5" \o ")) .

However, the Jews were regarded by communists as the last survivors of capitalism, while anti-communists considered them to form part of the Soviet leadership. In the first half of the 1920s, 16 to 26 percent of the Party's central; committee were Jews as well as 23 to 37 % of  Politburo members ([[6]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/israeli-soviet-russian-relations" \l "_edn6" \o ")).

**The Stalin era**

Seeking to strike the opposition, a great number of which were Jews, Stalin used the anti-Semitism factor. Thousands of Jews were arrested and driven to the Gulag.

However, a turning point in Stalin's policy was his support for the edification of Israel. It is almost certain that, were it not for the support of the Soviet Union to the newly proclaimed state of Israel concretized by the sending of extensive military aid (via Czechoslovakia), and giving it diplomatic support as well, Israel would not have seen the day. But why did Russia support Israel and recognize the state after the United States? Because of strategic and ideological considerations.

The strategic considerations focused upon Soviet desire to drive Britain out of the Middle East. In the aftermath of World War II, the Soviet Union, under Stalin's leadership, sought consolidate its security through the acquisition, either directly or by proxy, of regions contiguous to its borders. The Middle East did not escape the Soviet efforts at control. Moscow sought to establish military bases and territory in Turkey and Iran. This policy precipitated the Truman Doctrine and the Turkish-US and Iranian-US alignments. For its part Great Britain sought to create a bloc of pro-British Arab states stretching from Egypt to Iraq both to stop Soviet penetration of the region and to enhance British position there. Although most Arab states far from enthusiastic about the British scheme, the primary regional opponent to the British plan was the Jewish community of Palestine. Similarly opposed to the British plan was the Soviet Union which saw the British military bases of Egypt, Jordan, Palestine and Iraq as a threat against the Soviet Union itself. A coincidence of interests therefore placed the Soviet Union and the Jewish community of Palestine on the same side during diplomatic activity at the United Nations in 1947 and the Arab*-*Israeli war of 1948-1949. Furthermore, an independent  Jewish state would split the bloc of Muslim Arab states the British seeking to establish while also depriving the British of the Haifa harbor and of the bases in the Negev desert ([[7]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/israeli-soviet-russian-relations" \l "_edn7" \o ")).

In terms of ideology, the emerging state of Israel was in Stalin's view at that time, potentially a true "people’s democracy". As such, it deserved support in the competition that was taking place between the "socialist" and "imperialist" systems ([[8]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/israeli-soviet-russian-relations" \l "_edn8" \o ")).

However, while he was willing to aid the state of Israel, Stalin was unwilling for any manifestations of Jewish nationalism within the borders of the USSR. Stalin' s destruction of Jewish culture during the 1948-1953 era and his murder of top Jewish poets and writers worsened the Israeli-Soviet ties. The Jews were accused of "economic crimes" and made scapegoats for Soviet economic difficulties in the early 50's and in 1952, 24 leading Jewish writers were murdered as Stalin sought to destroy the Jewish cultural leadership of the Soviet Union. In 1953 came the announcements of the" Doctors' Plot": Jewish doctors were accused of trying to murder Soviet military and civilian officials. Ties were broken off in February 1953, one month before the death of Stalin.

**The Khrushchev Era**

White diplomatic relations between Moscow and Jerusalem were restored soon after the death of Stalin and the Doctor's plot was declared to be a hoax, the Soviet Union slowly began to shift to the Arab side for considerations not unlike those which motivated Stalin's decision to aid Israel almost a decade earlier ([[9]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/israeli-soviet-russian-relations" \l "_edn9" \o ")). By the mid-1950s Soviet interest had shifted to Egypt, whose leader, Gamal Abdul Nasser, had adopted an anti- British posture much as the Israelis had done in the late 1940s. Once again the British were seeking to establish an anti-Soviet military alliance in the Middle East, this rime with US support. The alliance, known as the Baghdad pact, came into being in early 1955 and soon became a target of both Soviet and Egyptian attack. The Soviets rightly saw in the Baghdad pact an attempt to link the anti-Soviet NATO and SEATO alliance ([[10]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/israeli-soviet-russian-relations" \l "_edn10" \o ")). Nasser saw in the pact a return of British influence in Arab world. Once again, as in the case of Soviet aid to Israel in the 1947-1949 period, there was a commonality of interest the Soviet Union responded to a regional powers' request diplomatic support and military aid. Nasser's acquisition of Soviet arms posed a threat to Israel and one of the main goals of Israel's participation in the October 1956 tripartite military attack (with Britain and France) against Egypt following the nationalization of the Suez Canal, was to prevent Nasser from using his Soviet arsenal against the Jewish state. However the Soviet Union, because of its preoccupation of the Hungarian problem, played a little role in the Suez crisis which ended thanks to US pressure on Britain and France.

Later the Soviet Union sought to capitalize against the Eisenhower doctrine and the growing conflict between the US and Egyptian policy in the region. But the contest for leadership in the Arab world between the new Iraqi leader General Qassim (who overthrew the pro-British Nuri Said government in July 1958) and Nasser posed a dilemma and the Soviet decision to side with Qassim led to a temporary US-Egyptian reconciliation.

To the strategic factor one must add the 1949 Israeli Gen elections. The Israeli communist Party won 3.5 % of the vote 22% of which came from Arab voters. This defeat showed its effect in foreign policy in 1949. Israeli Prime Minister Ben Gourion clearly stated Israel's alignment with the United States and the Western bloc ([[11]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/israeli-soviet-russian-relations" \l "_edn11" \o ")). This was concretized by Israel's decision to side with the United States in the 1950 Korean war. Thus the 1949 general elections proved to the Soviet Union that there was no serious hope that Israel would, in the near future, become a 'people's democracy' of the sort Stalin had envisaged ([[12]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/israeli-soviet-russian-relations" \l "_edn12" \o ")).

Meanwhile, the status of Soviet Jewry remained tenuous. Khrushchev revived the Soviet anti religious campaign closing down a number of Soviet churches and Synagogues. However the international considerations (China 's changing from an ally to an enemy) and economic problems (difficulty in the implementation of the economic plan compelling the US to seek aid from the USA) led to a small amelioration of the condition of Soviet Jewry. Thus in 1961, and for the first time since Stalin obliterated Jewish cultural institutions in the USSR in the late 1940s, a national Yiddish periodical, Sovietishe Heimland, was introduced. In 1963, the Soviet government relaxed a ban on the baking of matzoh in response to protests from the West. Also in 1963, the Soviet government, in need of grains from the United States because of its poor harvest, condemned an anti-Semitic book “Judaism without embellishment" written by Trofim Kichko because "it might be interpreted in the spirit of anti-Semitism.

**The Brezhnev Era (****[[13]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/israeli-soviet-russian-relations" \l "_edn13" \o "))**

When Brezhnev came to power in 1964, Soviet-Israeli relations remained cool because of two factors: Israel's

 continuous pressure on behalf of Soviet Jewry and Moscow's continuous support of the Arab cause in the Arab-Israel conflict. But it was the Soviet policy in the Middle East that caused the break of diplomatic relations between the Soviet Union and Israel following the June 1967 Arab-Israeli war.

Having suffered serious reverses elsewhere in the Third World and perceiving new opportunities for extending Soviet influence in the Middle East, the new Soviet leadership soon decided to make the region the primary focus of  Soviet efforts in the Third World. At the time the Middle East looked particularly promising (deterioration of Egyptian-US relations, British intention to pull out from Aden and Arabian peninsula accession to power in Syria of a left-wing government). Moscow began to adopt as of 1966 an offensive policy in the Middle East in an intention to push Western influence out of the Middle East.

However, for the Soviet strategy to be successful Israel had to exist, and Soviet strategy required the continuation of Israel existence bath for this reason and because Moscow did not wish to alienate the United States, or US Jewry, by calling for Israel's destruction. Yet, by supplying both Egypt and Syria with advanced Soviet weapons, and by supporting Arab diplomatic efforts against Israel, the Soviet leaders may have given the, impression that Moscow would support Syria and Egypt should a conflict with Israel result from the growing Arab-Israeli tension.

Syria, emboldened by bath Soviet military aid and by al alliance with Egypt in August 1966, stepped up its guerrilla attacks against Israel, only to be met by increasingly severe retaliation. Fearing that Syria 's pro-Soviet regime might fall as a result of its internal problems and Israeli attacks, Moscow  supplied false information to Egypt that Israel was preparing to attack Syria, Nasser, acting on this information, moved his troops into the Sinai in mid-May 1967, then ousted the United Nations Forces there and announced a blockade of the straits of Tiran to Israeli shipping. These moves, together with the adherence of  Jordan to the Syrian-Egyptian alliance at the end of May, helped precipitate the Six-Day war. While the Soviet  leaders seemed to have grasped the potential consequences of their actions in late May, they were ineffectual in arresting the trend of events as Israel decided to attack Egypt on June 5 and defeated all three of its Arab opponents, capturing in the process  the Sinai peninsula, the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and the Golan Heights.

The Israeli victory seemed at first a significant defeat for the Soviet drive for influence in the Middle East. Indeed, Soviet military equipment and training had proved of little value and the Soviet's failure to aid Syria and Egypt while the y were being defeated served to lower Soviet prestige in the Arab world. The only substantive action taken by Moscow and Its Eastern  European allies was to break diplomatic relations with Israel.

Yet paradoxically, the aftermath of war was to witness major  Soviet gains in the region. One of the main consequences of the war was further radicalization of the Arab world and a weakening of the US position in the area. Algeria, Egypt, Iraq and Syria all broke diplomatic relations with the United States  because of US aid to Israel during the war, and in 1969 there was further deterioration in US position, as a left-wing regime came to power in Sudan and the pro-Western regime of Libya’s King Idriss was overthrown.

Meanwhile, by quickly re-supplying Egypt and Syria weaponry that restored their military credibility and championing Arab demands at the UN, the Soviet Union was able to restore its position in the Arab world.

Thus, by 1970, after fifteen years of determined effort the Soviet Union appeared to have achieved all its strategic goals and political aims in the region-namely replacing the west as the leading power there and diminishing the threat to Soviet security form the south ([[14]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/israeli-soviet-russian-relations" \l "_edn14" \o ")). The west had no political stronghold in region and its political influence was significantly reduced. In contrast, the Soviet Union had a military presence in all major Arab states (Egypt, Syria and Iraq) and had also established a permanent naval presence in the Mediterranean, symbolized more than 40 surface ships ([[15]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/israeli-soviet-russian-relations" \l "_edn15" \o ")).

In another development, Soviet Jews began to take independent action themselves discomfiting not only the Soviet Union but Israel itself as the latter was initially unsure how to handle this new phenomenon of Jewish activism.

Heartened by Israel's victory in June 1967, an event that restored their Jewish national pride and proved that Israel was a viable state, and convinced that liberalization in the USSR was no longer possible after the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 19 activists among the Soviet Jews began to apply to emigrate to Israel. The Soviet regime, perhaps spurred by its border skirmishes with China in March 1969 and wishing to gain Western support or at least neutrality in case the Sino-Soviet border battles were to escalate into a more serious confrontation, permitted more than two thousand Soviet Jews to leave in 1969.

But the Sino-Soviet border confrontation had diminished by the Spring of 1970 and, with the US invasion of Cambodia, fear from a Sino-US alliance directed against the USSR was reduced. As more Soviet Jews applied to emigrate in 1970, Soviet leadership changed its policy by holding a series of so-called show trials in December 1970, May and June 1971. The trials appeared to be aimed both at stemming the flow of valuable scientists and engineers which the regime could not afford to lose and also at deterring other Soviet Jews from emigrating.

In the Leningrad trial, the accused were Jews having been refused exit visas to Israel. The defendants were accused of allegedly conspiring to hijack a plane. They were given the death penalty. The international outcry that greeted the death penalty and the trial itself forced the Soviet leaders to commute the sentences to long prison terms. It also had the effect of bringing the Soviet Jewish emigration question to the fore front of public attention in the United States and Western Europe, and this in turn resulted in an international conference on Soviet Jewry in Brussels in February 1971.

This form of intimidation came to an end in July 1971 which coincided with the US Secretary of State Henri Kissinger's visit to China, the first official visit to be undertaken by a US official since the communist takeover of China in 1949. With Kissinger's visit a Sino-US alliance was now a possibility. This may have been the impetus that prompted Soviet leaders to allow a massive increase in the emigration of Soviet Jews in last three months of 1971- from about two hundred per month in the first three quarters of 1971 to three thousand per month by December.

The Soviet Jewish exodus continued through the first seven months of 1972 as US President Richard Nixon visited both Peking and Moscow. During his visit to the Soviet capital Nickson signed a strategic arms limitation agreement (SALT 1) and made a commitment to increase Soviet-American trade.

Meanwhile, in addition to the specter of Sino-American alliance, the Soviet leaders were confronted with the worst harvest since 1963. Thus they were forced to begin negotiations for a major grain purchase from the United States. In another development, the Soviets were ejected from their air and naval bases in Egypt in July 1972, an action that weakened their strategic position in the fast Mediterranean. The reason was that Egyptian President Anwar Sadat had been unhappy with the lack of Soviet military support for his confrontation with Israel.

Soon after the Soviet departure from Egypt the Brezhnev regime imposed a prohibitively expensive head tax on educated Jews seeking to emigrate to Israel. This move may have been aimed to soothe Arab feelings at a time when the Soviet position in the Middle East was deteriorating. For it is clear that the increasing exodus of Soviet Jews to Israel, many of whom work of military age and possessing technical skills useful to the Israel economy, was very unpopular with the Arabs. The move may also have been an attempt to deter Jewish scientists and technicians from emigrating and to secure Western funding for the expensive Western technology the USSR needed. The head tax precipitated a very strong US reaction spearheaded by Senator Henry Jackson who sought to tie the exodus of Soviet Jews to the trade benefits sought by the Soviet leadership in an agreement that was to be signed by the Nixon Administration in October 1972 but needed congressional ratification to become a law. As congressional support for what became known as the Jackson amendment to the trade bill began to rise, Soviet leaders made a series of concessions exempting émigrés over the age of 55 from paying the head tax and reducing the required payment for others by the number of years a prospective emigrant had worked for the state. In addition a number of Jews were allowed to leave without paying a tax. However this did not suffice to quell the rising tide of congressional support to the Jackson amendment. The Soviet leadership permitted then 44 university 'Students to depart from the Soviet Union without paying the head tax. This concession did not stop the momentum of the

Jackson amendment. As the Soviet Union, the Soviet-American détente received a number of blows in the latter part of 1973. In September of that year Soviet physicist and dissident Andrei Sakharov spoke against détente unless it was accompanied by democratization in the Soviet Union. One month later came the war in which the Soviet leadership acted to enhance its own position in the Middle East and undermine the US position. It did so by organizing an air and sea lift of weaponry to Syria and Egypt, by urging all other Arab states to aid the Syrians and Egyptians in the conflict with Israel and by supporting the Arab oil embargo against the United States. The Americans replied by the Stevenson Amendment which limited the US credit to the USSR to a total of 300 million and prohibited credits for the production of Soviet gas and oil. While they were willing to live with the Jackson amendment, and evidently worked out a formula for Jewish emigration, via Kissinger's mediation, these concessions were predicated on the USSR's receipt of sizable US economic credits. When faced by the rigid limitations of the Stevenson amendment in January 1975, the Soviet leaders repudiated the trade agreement they had reached with the Nixon Administration in 1972.

However the Soviet leaders did Dot terminate the Jewish emigration after repudiating the trade agreement. The leadership's willingness to continue emigration albeit at a reduced rate have been due to three factors:

-The new US President Gerald Ford had committed himself personally on Soviet Jewry and had given his assurances that he would personally hold the Soviet Union to account for more humane emigration policies.

-Another strategic arms limitation agreement was being negotiated.

-The Soviet leaders wanted to hold an European security conference to ratify the postwar division of Europe, and they were compelled to give at least lip service to the principle of emigration for purposes of family reunification in order to get the Western Powers to sign what has become known as the Helsinki agreement.

To the above mentioned factors one must add that the decrease in Jewish emigration was due to the fact that the. 1973 war and its aftermath made Israel appear less desirable in the eyes of Soviet Jews.

It is noteworthy to mention that while in the initial years of mass emigration (1971-1973) the vast majority of emigrating Jews went to Israel, by 1976 almost half were going elsewhere or "dropping out" in the Israeli parlance. The reasons for these dropouts are many: threat of war in the Middle East, deficiencies in the Israeli society, Israel's bureaucratic inaptitude in resettling the emigrants. To these reasons, denied by the Israelis, one must add the following: American Jewish Distribution Service (JDC) and The Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS) were offering greater economic incentive to go to the US.

In the Middle East, the Soviet Union was excluded from the evolving Israeli-Egyptian peace process. Egyptian leader Anwar Sadat was convinced that the Soviet Union could supply arms to Egypt for another war, but it could not force Israel to make any concessions. He was convinced that the only road to regaining Egypt's lost territories led through Washington ([[16]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/israeli-soviet-russian-relations" \l "_edn16" \o ")).

Consequently, except for a short period at the Geneva Conference in 1973 and a rare moment of consensus with the United States (the Vance-Gromyko statement of October 1977), the Soviet Union was excluded from the Egyptian-Israeli peace process which led to the signing of an Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty in 1979 and to direct Egyptian-Israeli talks.

**The Gorbatchev era**

As a result of Gorbatchev's ascent to power in 1985 a slow reassessment of Soviet policy toward Israel began. Although Soviet Union reestablished diplomatic ties with Israel only shortly before its breakdown in 1991, consular ties between the two countries were set up in 1987 and cultural and economic exchanges increased quite dramatically. Although many publications in the Soviet Union criticized the stand adopted by previous governments that Israel was guilty for all problems in the Middle East and that they encouraged internal anti-Semitism ([[17]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/israeli-soviet-russian-relations" \l "_edn17" \o ")).

It must be said that Gorbatchev's policy toward Israel inconsistent and often contradictory. On the one

Gorbatchev called on the Arab countries and the PLO to take a more realistic stand toward Israel, he allowed the resumption of a massive Jewish immigration from the Soviet Union to Israel.

Soviet cultural contacts expanded and many famous Soviet artists, writers and musicians visited Israel. The scope and volume Soviet-Israeli relations in this field was much more impressive than such contacts with other countries with which the Soviet Union had been maintaining diplomatic relations. On the hand, Gorbatchev was slow in normalizing relations with Israel.

 Soviet officials were reluctant to visit Israel and the Soviet Union officially demanded political concessions from Israel concerning the Arab Israeli settlement before it would reestablish diplomatic ties with the Jewish state. The Soviets wanted Israel's acceptance of the PLO and direct Israeli-PLO negotiations and / or Israel’s approval of and participation in an international conference with the United States and the Soviet Union as cochairmen.

The normalization process began in July 1985 with a secret meeting between the Israeli and Soviet ambassadors to France, continued in 1986 with public consular-level talks in Helsinki in August, and an extended meeting between Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres and Soviet Foreign Minister Edward Shevardnaze. Then in a span of several years by early 1991, the Soviet Union established consulate General in Israel and Israel did the same in the Soviet Union, and only on the eve of the Soviet Union's dissolution, full diplomatic relations between the two countries were restored in October 1991. The Soviet Union also decided to support the US-led initiative to repeal the 1976 UN General Assembly resolution equating Zionism with racism. December of the same year saw the opening of an Israeli embassy in Moscow and of a Soviet (Russian) embassy in Tel Aviv.

After the Demise of the Soviet Union

Following Yeltsin’s accession to Power and the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia 's position on Israel could be summarized by the following issues:

**Abandonment of ideological hostility toward Israel**

Russia in contrast to the Soviet Union, abandoned its ideological hostility toward Israel and Zionism. Zionism is no longer stigmatized by Moscow as a movement whose goal is to undermine the solidarity of the working people, and distract the Jewish workers from struggle for socialism. Russian authorities do not abject to cooperation with Zionist organizations for Israel, American or Zionist organizations from other countries.

The Emigration factor

Emigration of Jews to Israel and the fact that the country a large /about 1 million people/ Russian community is  an important factor of bilateral relations. This is the reason expansion of cultural ties with Israel is the most visible evidence of improvement in Russo-Israeli relations. Thus the special role of Russian speaking Israelis and Russian Jewish émigrés should be emphasized. Russian artists, actors, writers and other literary figures are most welcome in Israel.

Diplomatic relations

The two countries constantly exchange delegations, at the top level as well as at the others. In March of 1999, Israeli Pre Benjamin Netanyahu paid a working visit to Moscow. On April 22nd and 23rd, Russia 's Foreign Minister visited Israel in framework of his Middle East tour.

The Israeli government, which Ehud Barak formed in Jul 1999, announced that to strengthen ties with Russia was a priority task. On August 2nd, 1999, Premier Ehud Barak visited Moscow. On December 2nd, 1999, Israel's Vice Premier Foreign Minister Levi paid a working visit to Moscow.

On January 5-7th, 2000, Russia's first President Boris Yeltsin visited Israel in the framework of the celebration of the 2000th year of Christianity. Yeltsin and his delegation, which comprised Igor Ivanov and other top officials, held meetings with Israeli President Ezer Weizman and Vice Premier Yitzhak Mordechai. On January 31st-February 2nd, 2000, Levi was in Moscow attending a plenary session of the Group for Promoting Multilateral Talks in the Middle East.

A meeting between Russian President Vladimir Putin and Israeli Premier Ehud Barak, which was arranged within the framework of the Millennium Summit in New York in September of 2000 helped to increase mutual understanding at the top level.

In October and November of 2000, the effort of the Russian diplomatic corps to ease tensions and overcome the crisis in Palestinian-Israeli relations resulted in Igor Ivanov's two visits to Israel.

On January 23-25th, Israeli President Moshe Katzav paid an : official visit to Russia. He had an audience with Vladimir Putin and meetings with Premier Mikhail Kasyanov, speakers of both houses of the Federal Assembly Yegor Stroyev and Gennady Seleznyov, Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov, and Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia Alexis II.

On May 20-22nd, 2001, Israeli Premier Ariel Sharon was in Moscow meeting with Vladimir Putin, Premier Mikhail Kasyanov, and Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov.

On September 3-6th, 2001, Israeli Premier Ariel Sharon came to Russia to meet Russian President Vladimir Putin, Premier Mikhail Kasyanov, and Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov.

On November 3rd 2003, Sharon visited Russia for the third time describing Russia to be one of the most important players on the International arena adding that President Putin was a true friend to Israel.

Political dialogue between the two countries, including which takes place in the framework of a bilateral Middle East Committee set up by Russia and Israel's foreign ministries covers a wide scope of issues.

**The Arab-Israeli dilemma**

Russia does not support the Arab States and the PLO Palestinian Authority any longer. On the contrary, Russia adopted a more or less even handed approach which is subject to different influences and hesitation from time to time. This change started already in Gorbatchev's period and became visible after Gorbatchev's administration followed the US in the initiative to annul the 1976 UN assembly resolution which had equated Zionism .Since that time on the Soviet and then the Russian record of voting in the UN had undergone a change. Moscow  no longer automatically supported the policy of the Arab states the PLO as it had in the recent past .The Soviet Union and later Russia were co-sponsors of the 1991 Madrid conference on Middle East and of subsequent negotiations held between Arabs and Israel in Washington, Moscow and other locations. By and large Moscow's stand toward Israel and on the Arab Israel question began to resemble the US position. Russia's policy toward Israel became motivated by economic interest.

**Economic interests and technical cooperation**

Other ties include bilateral agreements The following intergovernmental agreements exist between the two countries:

-on air traffic (1993);

-on trade and economic cooperation (1994);

-on scientific-and-technical cooperation (1994);

-on cooperation in the field of agriculture and associated industries (1994);

-on cooperation in the field of healthcare and medical science (1994);

-on cooperation in the field of culture and education (1994);

-on cooperation in the field of tourism(1994);

 -on cooperation in the field of postal and electric communication (1995);

-on cooperation and mutual help in customs affairs (1997);

 -on cooperation in the framework of combating crime (1997);

- on creation and conditions of functioning of cultural centers (1996);

-on special measures to ensure the safety of civil aviation (1997);

-Convention on Prevention of Double Taxation and Measures to Provide against Evasion of Income Taxes (1994); -on the terms and procedure of issuing visas for owners of business and diplomatic passports (2002).

The sides are currently busy reconciling the drafts of a memorandum on consular issues and agreement on encouragement and protection of investments, on  legal assistance and legal relations in civil and family affairs on cooperation in research and use of space for peaceful purposes on cooperation in the field of combating illegal financial operations, etc.

On August 13th, 1998, the sides signed an inter-mini Memorandum on Mutual Understanding in Cooperation in the Field of Perfecting of Professional and Language Training of Diplomatic Personnel. On March 25th, 1999, they added an intergovernmental Program of Cultural Cooperation t 1999-2001 Agreement on Cooperation in the Field of  Cultural and Education.

In 2001, according to preliminary information, the volume of commercial operations between Russia and Israel reached  938.7 million dollars. Israel retains an interest in development of economic links with Russia.

In June of 1995, Moscow hosted the first session of a joint Russian-Israeli Commission on Trade and Economic Cooperation. The second and third sessions took place in Israel and Moscow on November of 1997 and January of 2000 respectively. The issues discussed included the prospect: launching large joint economic projects in the fuel and energy complex, industrial and transport construction /including the possible construction of a subway system in Tel Aviv/, telecommunications, medicine and medical industry, aircraft industry, and space exploration.

In 1998 and in December of 2000 Israel launched its satellites Tehsat-2 and EROS-A1 with the help of Russian racket launchers. The launch of Russia 's space vehicle Spektr-Rentgen Gamma with an Israeli ultraviolet telescope Tauvex bas been postponed until 2003 because of financial difficulties.

A number of joint agro-industrial projects have been realized on Russian territory.

Oil Interests

In the summer of 2003, Israel bas completed modifications to its primary transit pipeline, known as the Tip line, which will : allow Russian crude oil to reach Asia. The line Dot only will enhance Israeli energy security and Russia 's economic prospects, but also is a threat to Saudi Arabia. In the post September era Russia and Israel have discovered in Saudi Arabia a new rival.

The latter is accused of supporting the Palestinian Intifada and the Chechens. There is also an economic dimension to the rivalry. Saudi Arabia is a key player in OPEC and endeavors to keep oil prices robust. This affects Israel which imports 99 % of its oil needs.

The line, built in 1968 originally allowed Iranian crude oil to bypass the Suez Canal. In 1979, however, with the Islamic Revolution in Iran, the Tipline largely was shut down; it bas been used since only for the odd shipment from Egypt's Red Sea production areas. But when the last Intifada began in September 2000, even Egyptian transit all but dried up. With the new modifications, however, Russian crude now can flow in the opposite direction.

The bulk of Russia 's waterborne exports come from the black Sea ports of Tuapse, Odessa and Novorossiysk. However Turkish transit restrictions on the traffic-choked Bosporus and Dardanelles keep Russia from using supertankers for its black Sea exports, dramatically limiting the distance Russian crude can travel economically. Israel, with a daily crude demand for  278,000 barrels, not only falls within the range that small Russian tankers can service at reasonable costs, but the Tip option allows Russian crude to be shipped further still, since both Ashkelon and Eilat and can handle supertankers. Small Russian tankers can now dock at Ashkelon and load their crude into the Tipline, which will ship the cru de south to supertankers waiting at Eilat. The crude then can proceed to any place in South or East Asia. The line is currently operates at 400 000 bpd, but easily could be expanded to its design capacity of 1.2 million bpd.

**Military Cooperation**

In 1995, Russia and Israel signed a Memorandum on Mutual Understanding in Military Cooperation, which envisages development of contacts and exchange of delegations between the defense ministries of the two countries.

In 1997, a Russian-Israeli contract was signed at the 42nd international aerospace show in Le Bourget to supply 50E planes to China. Yet Israel suspended the project under US pressure after the first aircraft was manufactured ([[18]](https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/israeli-soviet-russian-relations" \l "_edn18" \o ")).

In June 2001 Russia and Israeli experts have coordinated a  program to design an A-50 El long-range radar system based on I-76TD cargo aircraft. The systems were to be purchased by India.

CONLUSION

Retracing the Soviet/Russian -Israeli relations one can conclude that they have been affected by two main factors:

-The strategic factor: Soviet strategic interest in the Middle East in the cold war era made her play a major role in the Arab Israeli conflict siding with the Arabs against Israel.

-The Soviet Jews and their emigration to Israel coupled with an anti-Semitic Russian attitude. In fact anti-semitism like any other form of racism becomes particularly rampant when society needs a scapegoat to blame the existing social and economic difficulties which was the case of the Soviet Union and is the case of Russia today. As for the Jewish emigration to Israel we have seen that they affected Soviet relations with other countries mainly the United States which severed economic ties with the Soviet Union when the latter put on restrictions on Jewish emigration. In today's relations the presence of more than one million Soviet Jews in Israel constitute a positive factor in the bilateral relations between the two countries

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**العلاقات الاسرائيلية - السوفياتية / الروسية**

يعرض البحث العلاقات التي قامت بين إسرائيل والاتحاد السوفياتي، وتواصلت بعد انهياره، مع روسيا الإتحادية التي قامت على أنقاضه.

ويعرض بطريقة تسلسلية لهذه العلاقة، من التواصل الذي أقامته الحركة الصهيونية مع الدولة السوفياتية قبل نشوء دولة إسرائيل، مروراً بالعلاقة الإسرائيلية ­ السوفياتية في عهود ستالين وخروتشيف وبريجينيف... حتى غورباتشوف، ثم يواصل متابعة هذه العلاقة بعد انهيار السلطان السوفياتي، أي في عهدي يلتسين وبوتين.

وباعتبار الإتحاد السوفياتي كان من الدول التي اعترفت مبكراً بدولة إسرائيل إثر قيامها في نهاية الأربعينات من القرن الماضي، فقد كان من المفترض لهذه العلاقة أن تشهد تطوراً بالغ الإيجابية.

إلا ان هذا لم يحصل في الواقع، إذ إن السوفيات، ولا سيّما بعد وصول عبد الناصر إلى سدة الحكم في مصر، والتيار الجماهيري العربي الواسع الذي جيّشه، انتبهوا إلى ان مصالحهم تفرض عليهم الابتعاد ولو خطوة عن إسرائيل، والاقتراب بالمقابل خطوتين من العرب. ومع تكامل ملامح المعسكرين الدوليين في الخمسينات، والمؤلفين من الولايات المتحدة وحلفائها من جانب، والإتحاد السوفياتي والدول الدائرة في فلكه من الجانب الآخر، صار بعض العرب يُحسبون على السوفيات، بينما ظهرت إسرائيل في خضم العلاقة الوطيدة مع الولايات المتحدة والمعسكر الغربي عموماً. وهكذا انخفضت وتيرة العلاقة السوفياتية ­ الإسرائيلية إلى حدودها الدنيا، إنما من دون حصول القطيعة الكاملة، وبات مختلف الفرقاء يلهثون خلف مصالحهم، بينما لم يتورط "الكبار" في خلافات "الصغار"، وصارت العلاقة السوفياتية ­ الإسرائيلية تخضع لوزن التوافق الاميركي ­ السوفياتي.

والواقع أن المصالح السوفياتية في منطقة الشرق الأوسط إبان الحرب الباردة، دفعت بموسكو إلى الواجهة من خلال محاولاتها الدؤوبة إقامة رأس جسر في المنطقة، وبذلها مساعدات كثيرة، عسكرية وتجهيزية بشكل أساسي. كانت الدول العربية التي تلقّتها في أمسّ الحاجة إليها، في مواجهة إسرائيل التي أغدق عليها الاميركيون ومعسكرهم شتى أصناف الدعم والمساندة. وسرعان ما أصبح الإتحاد السوفياتي لاعباً أساسياً على حلبة الشرق الأوسط، وعنصراً لا يمكن إغفال وجوده وثقله في ميدان النزاع العربي ­ الإسرائيلي. وباستثناء فترة 1948 ­ 1949 حيث كانت العلاقات الاسرائيلية ­ السوفياتية هادئة وطيبة بفعل الهواء الدافئ الذي أثارته عملية الإعتراف السوفياتي المبكر بالدولة الناشئة، وبفعل المساعدات العسكرية السوفياتية للإسرائيليين في حرب 1948 عن طريق تشيكوسلوفاكيا، فقد طبعت العلاقة السوفياتية ­ الإسرائيلية في ما بعد بطابع سلبي، كان دائماً معرضاً للتفاقم كما حصل عام 1967 عندما أقدمت موسكو على قطع علاقاتها الديبلوماسية مع تل أبيب إثر حرب حزيران 1967. إلا أن العداوة التي أعلنها العرب المتحالفون مع موسكو، ضد إسرائيل، لم تدفع موسكو إلى موازاتها، لا سيّما وان الغطاء الأميركي ­ الإسرائيلي (في ظل توازن الرعب الأميركي ­ السوفياتي) كان يحول دون أي خطوة عملية في هذا الاتجاه.

وهكذا يتضح أن المصالح السوفياتية في الشرق الأوسط كانت مثابة عامل استراتيجي ترك تأثيره المباشر على العلاقة مع إسرائيل.

أما العامل الاستراتيجي الآخر في ميدان هذه العلاقة فقد تمثل بهجرة اليهود السوفيات إلى إسرائيل إضافة إلى الموقف السوفياتي الذي اعتبره الإسرائيليون معادياً للسامية.

وبالنسبة لموضوع هجرة اليهود السوفيات إلى إسرائيل، فإن موضوع الهجرة من داخل الإتحاد السوفياتي كان بحد ذاته خاضعاً لمعوّق أساسي وهو القانون السوفياتي الصارم في منعه الهجرة، سواء كان لليهود أم لغير اليهود من المواطنين السوفيات.

إلا أن القبضة السوفياتية التي بلغت مرحلة الهرم بعد ضعف الإتحاد السوفياتي، لم تعد قادرة على حماية قوانينها الصارمة، خصوصاً في ظل الحاجة السوفياتية المتزايدة إلى ... القمح الأميركي. وهكذا فإن مشاكل موسكو الإقتصادية والتي كانت تبطّن مشاكل أدهى في بنية النظام والدولة السوفياتيين، اضطرت الإتحاد السوفياتي إلى اختصار الضوابط الصارمة التي يضعها على الهجرة، ولا سيّما هجرة اليهود السوفيات إلى إسرائيل. فكانت بالتالي العلاقة الأميركية ­ السوفياتية عاملاً بارزاً في إفساح المجال أمام هجرة اليهود السوفيات إلى إسرائيل، وهي الهجرة التي بلغت أوجها في عهد غورباتشيف، وأثمرت وصول عدد المهاجرين من اليهود السوفيات إلى إسرائيل إلى حوالي المليون نسمة.

لكن ما كان يحصل في تلك الآونة لم يكن يتفق تماماً ، لا مع الرغبات السوفياتية المعلنة، ولا مع المصلحة السوفياتية الوطنية، بمعنى أن تلك الهجرات اليهودية كانت تتم رغماً عن السلطات المركزية التي لا تملك منعها...

وهذا كلّه تغيّر اليوم مع تسلّم الكسندر بوتين مقاليد السلطة في ... ما آل إليه الإتحاد السوفياتي السابق، أي روسيا الإتحادية. فالعلاقة الوطيدة بين موسكو ­ بوتين والولايات المتحدة انعكست علاقة إيجابية وطبيعية تماماً بين روسيا الإتحادية والدولة الإسرائيلية. وبات بوسع "اليهود السوفيات" الذين استقروا في إسرائيل، أن يعملوا على تطوير تلك العلاقة، وهو ما اجتهدوا ويجتهدون في تحقيقه، بتشجيع مبرر من قبل بوتين الذي لا يكبح اندفاعه بهذا الاتجاه، إلا رغبته في عدم إثارة حفيظة "أصدقائه العرب".

- See more at: https://www.lebarmy.gov.lb/en/content/israeli-soviet-russian-relations#sthash.Cn3jsBRk.dpuf