

## **Geo-culture and Security, Israel's Actions in Iranian Culture Territory (Case Study: India)**

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### **Abstract**

India and Israel are in a multilateral long-term relationship with each other. Iran, as a third party, has two different stances with regard to these two countries. On the one, Iranian culture has its root in India and Iranian have longstanding formal and informal relationship with this country; on the other hand, because of the emergence of Israel and the way it treats Muslims it has been known as a usurper since the Islamic Revolution and is regarded as one of Iran's enemies. Relationship between Iran's enemy and ally can create conditions worthy of study. This study is aimed at evaluating geo-culture policies of Israel in India and its impact on cultural influence of Iran in the Indian subcontinent. This is a descriptive-analytical research, the results of which are obtained based on library studies. The research hypothesis is that expansion of friendly ties between Israel and India could threaten Iran's national interests. Studies have shown that Israel has adopted various policies to reduce the effectiveness of Iran influence in Indian society and limit the influence of Persian culture.

**Keywords:** Iran, India, Israel, Geo-culture, Security.

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### **1. Introduction**

Expansion of influence and dominance in other countries and among nations is one of the most enduring principles of geopolitical power relations. Competition of powers in the international arena with the intention of protecting national interests and reducing the power and influence of rivals in political, economic and cultural fields is the ongoing approach of all political units. The best way to defeat an opponent is to isolate it and reduce its legitimacy and influence in global arena and his geographical area. Influence is undercover dominance over a geographical region and its resident (Hafeznia, 2011:367) that can be exerted with different tools. Influence strategy offers little sensitivity and the dominant is unknown to viewers. Intervention and influence tools can be economic, cultural, scientific, political, social, media or diplomatic. Geo-culture, used by Immanuel Wallerstein for the first time, is a complex process of power, culture and geographical environment interactions during which culture and cultural tools are used to exert influence and control rivals. This form of influence and domination is linked with the expansion of communication among countries and cultures and it seems to be of greater efficiency with the advancement of communication technologies. In this case, countries can take the advantage of their cultural relations with other countries to harm the interests of the third countries. India and Israel are two countries that Iran has overt political stance over. On the one hand, Iran does not recognize Israel and consider it an enemy for Iranian Islamic and political ideology; On the other hand, India has long historical and friendly relations with Iran and is defined within the Iranian culture. Naturally, relationship between Israel and India, with whatever rank or level, affects Iran-India relationship. Israel interest in establishing relations with India has geopolitical roots in the formation of Israel in the Middle East. Formation of Israel after World War II, in the Islamic region of Middle East, brought about geopolitical isolation and feeling of being surrounded by the Muslim world. To resolve this crisis, being united with a country to be able to

communicate with, found special significance. Announcing the strategy (surrounding countries) by Ben Gurion, founder of Israel's new government, was a measured policy to partially deal with its recognition problem in the international arena. Israel's foreign policy priority was to establish relation with non-Muslim countries. India has been one of the target countries; a country with special place in the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran because of its proximity to Iran, deep-rooted historical and cultural ties between Iran and India, and developing economic relations. So, since the establishment of Israel, relation between the two countries has continued despite usual ups and downs.

The relationship was on the one hand influenced by the specific situation of Israel in the Middle East, and on the other hand affected by the relationship between India and Pakistan. However, in recent years, relations between the two countries have been increasing or as interpreted by some it has become strategic. For instance, in mid-january of this year, Sushma Swaraj, Indian Foreign Secretary, travelled to Israel for the first time to meet Ray Vienna and Benjamin Netanyahu, president and prime minister of Israel. He traveled three months after Pranab Mukherjee's - President of India - purposeful journey to Israel on October 2015, which was unprecedented travel in its kind in the history of bilateral relations between these two countries. Some analysts of the region issues believe that Swaraj travel was a sign of strategic relations between Israel and India that is becoming even friendlier than before. The Indian Foreign Minister's visit is a part of Indian government effort to not only make their relations with the Zionist regime broader and deeper, but make it more obvious (Shakeri, 2016). Given these conditions, bilateral relations between India-Israel and India-Iran is the subject of this research. This study seeks to evaluate geo-culture practices of Israel in India and its impact on cultural influence of the Islamic Republic of Iran. According to aforementioned reasons, this study is attempt to answer how does Israel affect cultural – identity communities of

India and how does it affect IRI national interests? Default answer to this question is that it seems Israel's territory development in cultural-identity borders of IRI would result in decreased geo-culture potentials and limited regional influence of Iran.

## **2. Theoretical Concepts and Principles**

### **Culture and Cultural Influence**

According to Peter Taylor, culture is a set of knowledge, belief, art, morals, laws, customs and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society (Basharieh, 2000:8). Richard Muir interpretes culture as social heritage of society and believes that it includes not only goods and material innovations but also intellectual outputs such as ideas, values, beliefs, and desires of the society (Muir, 2000: 261). But, the word "geo-culture" that was used for the first time by Immanuel Wallerstein is a combination of two words; Geo and culture. Simply, geo-culture signifies elements such as culture, language, ethnicity, and religion in geopolitical practices (Roshan and Farhadian, 2006:130). In other words, geo-culture refers to impacts of cultural conflicts on political entities (Mojtahedzadeh, 2002). In another definition, geo-culture or cultural geo-politic is a complex process of power, culture and geographical environment interactions during which culture, as other phenomena of a social system, constantly changes its form to improve, interact and move through time in the context of geographical environment of the earth. Heidari argues that geo-culture combines geo-spatial processes of cultural power of different role players who are continually interacting at different social layers of an integrated environment (2005: 94, 95). Generally, studying the relationship between culture – whole across its depth and extent - and politics and power is an issue that could be of interest in geo-culture (Hafez nia, 2005: 106). Geo-culture analysis requires adopting a universal view to cultural processes and forms. To put it in other words, geo contains concepts that makes universal consideration and political world view inevitable (Gharayagh Zandi, 2008:

149).

In the 19th century, Samuel Phillips Huntington explicitly mixed culture with politic in the theory of conflict or clash of civilizations and using historical experience he tried to introduce a dominant paradigm for interpretation of the world status after The Cold War, from his point of view. Huntington global system had several civilization blocks according to which modern international politics is defined on the basis of cooperation and clash of civilizations (Huntington, 2009: 23-25). Focusing on such idea indicates that global policies are gradually moving toward cultural interests. According to Huntington the main source of human classification and dominant source of future conflicts is cultural. National governments will remain the most powerful actors of the world scene; however, major conflicts in global politics, between different nations and groups, will occur due to clash of civilizations (Huntington, 1999: 27).

Proposing theories, such as Fukuyama's end of history theory and Huntington's clash of civilizations, emphasizes on the role of culture in global relations and equations (Bilis and Smith, 2004: 1029). Understanding these theories signifies discussion of spheres of influence and impact. This is pursuing these policies that help achieving some national goals and interests. That is why, to promote local and foreign targets, countries in global system try to somehow affect other countries and communities since the act of influencing the behaviour of others is one of the key issues in international relations (Roshandel, 1995: 93). In geo-culture, land, history, language and culture are among the tools used by rival countries. Cultural tools that may be used by Israel to exert influence in India and narrow down cultural realms of Iran are analyzed in this study.

### **3. Research Findings**

#### **3.1. Cultural-identity ties between Iran and India**

In Discovery of India, Jawaharlal Nehru says: "among the tribes and people who communicated with India and influenced the culture of this country,

Iranian were the oldest and most impressive people. This sentence alone is well enough to show ties between Iran and India; however, these ties have been examined in several categories.

- A. Common historical background: Iran and India are countries with ancient roots in common. According to archaeologists and historical documents, a mutual relation between the two countries goes back to 5000 years ago. Jawaharlal Nehru, Prime Minister of India, writes about the history of relations between Iran and India: among the many races and peoples that have contacted with and influenced Indian life and culture, India has had the oldest and most durable ties with Iran. Actually, the history of relations between these two countries goes back to even before Indo-Aryan civilization, because both Indo-Aryan tribes and ancient Iranians were from common origins but then separated and took different ways (Nehru, 2007).
- B. Common religion: Iranians and Indians had common religious beliefs during two eras; before and after the advent of Islam. Throughout history, India has been dominated by Iranian regime for several times and at the time of every historical dynasty it was influenced by Iran. The first period was the Vedic era when Aryans and Iranians were living together or were just separated but had not yet forgotten common customs. The name is derived from the Veda book, the oldest Aryan book, which was the principal pattern of life for both Indian and Iranian Aryans prior to Avesta (Mashkoo, 1983: 58-59). Before the advent of Zoroaster, Iranian Aryans were Vedic, too. Zoroaster and Islam both were distributed in the Indian subcontinent through Iran and provided the ground for the spread of Iranian culture and civilization in those regions. During the Islamic era, different regimes took the control of this country and developed Iranian Islamic culture in India and therefore Islam found its way to India through Iran. Also, the influence of Iranian mysticism and Sufism on the Indian subcontinent has a long history. Indians were familiar with

thoughts of mystics such as, Ibrahim Adham, Bayazid Bastami, Ghazali, Abu Saeed Abalkheir, and Sanai. They managed to create profound changes in Indian's religious thought and knowledge (Azkaei, 1991:74). Since when Islam spread over India through Iran, Iranian sent out their national traditions like Nowruz, Mehregan and Sade to India. Since then Indians celebrate the beginning days of Farvardin which coincides with Hindu's Magge (Basant Party) (Shahriar Naghavi, 1976:35). Therefore, it can be said spread of Islam and Iranian culture in the Indian subcontinent was mostly the result of efforts made by Iranian Sufis and Muslim Sheikhs who encouraged Indians to embrace Islam using their spiritual influence among the people who were (Nayer Noori, 1996:855).

C. Cultural construct: Bvzanf, Sanskrit scholar, after scientific research on grammar rules of Sanskrit and Avesta was succeeded to prove, for the first time, the claim of similarities between Avesta and Sanskrit languages and their much the same grammar. This indicates linguistic association between two nations even after the separation of their lands (Moein, 1959: 176). The spread of Persian language in India was very high. Indians familiarity with Persian language goes back to the 8th century, at the same time when Ghaznavyan entered India. With the establishment of the Mughal Empire in India, Persian became the official language of Indian subcontinent for 700 years, i.e. until 1832 AD, when it was replaced by English (Atarodi Ghoochani, 1968: 78). Migration of a large number of scientists and scholars and poets of the Indian subcontinent, Indian kings' interest in Persian, and its prevalence in India, were among reasons of spread of Persian language.

Iranians created particular changes in different fields of art in India including painting, calligraphy and architecture. The Maurya Empire invited many Iranian artists to their capital city, who were ostracized after the downfall of the Achaemenid, and used the artists' art of architecture to build their palaces (Tafazoli, 2004: 45). Iranian post-Islamic architecture has left

far more profound influences in India. Indians interest in growing garden during the Timurid era, at the same time with the Safavid era, has led the India's ruling government, the Gurkani, to promote Persian architecture and Iranian tradition of garden growing, with a particular style, by Iranian artists. Abdul Samad Shirazi and Mir Seyyed Ali Tabrizi were among the painters and calligraphers trained by professor Kamal al-Din Behzad, who migrated to India in the Safavid era with Homayoun, the son of Gurkan's Baber Shah, and created a new style of Persian-Indian painting which is known as Mongolian style (Ghoravi, 1973:36). Added to painters, there were also calligraphers who migrated to India and created valuable works of art. Including Abdulrashid Deylami, Seyyed Ali Tabrizi, and Khajeh Abdulbaghi (Dastgerdi Nasr Abadi, 1984: 208). With all these commonalities, the first official cultural agreement between the two countries dates back to 1956. The cultural agreement, consisting of an introduction and fourteen articles, was signed by Ali Asghar Hekmat, Iranian Ambassador in India, and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Minister of Culture of India, in New Delhi. The establishment of Iran and India Association in 1963 was one of the most common measures took to make the two nations more close to each other. With the victory of Islamic Revolution, extensive communication was established between Indian Muslims, especially Shiites, with Iran. India was among the first countries which recognized the Islamic Republic of Iran after the Revolution. After the victory of Islamic Revolution, the two countries embarked on signing an agreement on a cultural exchange program in 2004-2005. In 1995, Hashemi Rafsanjani, Iran's President at that time, travelled India to sign executive program of culture, science and technology exchanges between the two countries. Also, in 2002, with Iranian President, Mohammad Khatami, trip to India, the executive program cultural exchanges was revised and extended for 2002-2005. During Mr. Khatami's official visit to India, a formal agreement was signed to establish a community for common heritage



protection. During the first decade of the Islamic Revolution, based on the policy of supporting the Muslims of the world and communicating with Islamic groups, Iranian government managed to obtain influential position among Indian Muslims and used Muslims power as a reliable instrument to spread its revolutionary ideas to limit the Indian Government in the development of its relations with Israel and the West. However, during the second decade of the revolution the influence decreased with the expansion of relations between Iran and the Government of India because Iran limited its policy of supporting the Muslims to maintain its relationship with India and declared its neutral stance regarding Muslims disputes with extremist groups Hindus and did not interfered with India's prejudicial policies. Now, after three decades since the Revolution, with reduced relations between Iran and India, due to influence of the United States in New Delhi and increased dependence of India to the West, Iran is trying to expand its influence in India once again by reviving his position among Indian Muslims but, given the new dependencies of Indian Muslims to other centres of power, both local and foreign, it seems that success of policy of returning to them is not that much possible. Religious leaders of Indian Muslims are considerably under the influence of Pakistan in their interactions with local powers and parties as well as foreign policy on issues like Kashmir. In the meantime, Saudi Arabia offered financial support to obtained the trust of the Muslims of this country who were in difficult economic situation; thus, in such political situation, revival of Iran's past position and influence among Indian Muslims will face many constraints(Molazehi, 2013).

### **3.2. Means and elements of forming identity used by India and Israel**

Since 1992, when Indian diplomatic relations with Israel were brought back to normal, their mutual relations have been growing. Their relations were mostly focused on defence, security and information sharing issues; but economy and science and technology aspects of theirs relations have

become more dynamic recently. President of India, Prnap Mukherjee, in his recent trip to Israel, said “Israel has been of help to India to whenever India was in emergency situation”. President of India explained that, by crisis, he meant military conflict between India and Pakistan in the Kargil region in 1999 but there are evidences showing that Israel has also helped India in military confrontations between Pakistan and India in 1965 and 1971. In the parliament of 2008, Lal Krishna Advany, the leader of the opposition of BJP party, said: Palestine must achieve independence and sovereignty and, at the same time, rights of Israel must be completely recognized by all its neighbours. Those who say that Israel should be removed from the world map geography, even if they are from Asia, they are regarded as a threat to regional and global peace. Since 2014, when the right-wing Hindu party, Bharatiya Janata, formed the government in New Delhi, by leadership of Moody Naryndra, major changes were made in the interests of the Zionist regime. When Moody appointed Ms. Sushma Swaraj, the former president of India and Israel parliamentary friendship group, as a Minister of Foreign Affairs, there remained no gap in the chain of elements that linked India to Israel. Media statistics show that, since the end of January 2016, at least 15 meetings or telephone conversation were held between higher level officials of both sides or heads of the two state have met on the sidelines of international events. Among the most significant meetings were Netanyahu's meeting with Modi on the sidelines of the climate summit in Paris in 2015 and Israel Air Force Commander trip to India in this year (Shakeri, 2016). In the following, common areas that linked the two countries are discussed.

#### **A. Indian Jewish Community**

Historical influence of Jewish Society in the fabric of Indian economy, politic, and culture, and the common link between these two, left many direct and indirect impacts on Indian political, social and cultural trends, and the Jewish community in association with East India colonial company has

been acting as Israel lobby in India. In the meantime, by providing organizational, intellectual and financial supports for the Jewish community, Israel used it as a Trojan horse in various aspects of India.

The Bene Israel; most of who are the residents of Maharashtra state. Later on, they reached Mumbai, Old Delhi, Ahmedabad Karachi and Pune, as well. Marathi was their native language. They were lost in their living environment due to spread of culture and tradition. Their face and dress up are like the rest of India's Marathi. At the time of British rule in India they reached higher levels and their income was several times higher than non-Jews Indian. From the late 18th century and 19th century, Jews of Bani Israel were given posts in government, military, posts, and railway. They are more active in Indian film industry and Indian music and dance teaching

The Baghdadis; in the late 18th century, a great group of Jews migrated from Syria, Yemen, Iraq, Turkey, Iran and Afghanistan to northern India and Kashmir and later on resided in Mumbai and Kolkata. The first generation of Kolkata Jews spoke Arabic at home. Then, British took its place. Baghdadi Jews extended their business limits from Baghdad to Surat Mumbai and Kolkata, then to Singapore, Hong Kong, and finally reached Japan. From the 1940s onwards, their population decreased. Many of them now live in Israel.

The Sephardic Jews; they migrated from Western Europe, Netherlands, Spain and ... to India. Their native tongue was Ladino. Indians called them Pardesi Jews. In Indian language Pardesi means strangers – foreigner. They were trading coral with Europe for a long time. Most of them were living in “Coral Merchants” street which still exists with the same name.

According to some experts, the most powerful lobbies in India belong to Israel and Germany. Israel lobby in India began its activity since the early days of Israel formation in 1948. Only two months after the creation of Israel, one of the Israel citizens published a magazine called "India and Israel" in Bombay. The role of the Jewish lobby in the recognition of Israel

by India in 1950, is undeniable so much that, in response to the request of representative of Israel for declaring recognition of Israel, in October 1949, in Washington DC, Nehru stated that: I do not do this In U.S state for I don't want anyone think that this action is taken under American influence. Indian Jewish council, which is now renamed to Indian Jewish Federation, was founded in 1976 India by two communities of India - the Baghdadis and the Bene Israel - with the goal of trying to establish diplomatic relations between the two countries and facilitate visa process. The institution formed friendly India and Israel associations – which played important roles in the development of cultural and political relations between the two countries - in major cities of India (New Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata and Ahmedabad)(Tohidi, 2014).

### **3.3. Hinduism and Zionism (India-Israel Association):**

Formation of Zionist regime on Palestinian land, which was regarded as Africa-Asia turning point, could be an opportunity for West and British colonialists to take control over Mediterranean, The Red Sea, and the Middle East. Throughout history, India has been among the places of great significant to the West and East colonists due to its outstanding features (vast geographical area, soil fertility, large populations and different religions, domination over the northern Indian Ocean and the Arab Sea). The roles of Jewish, Zionist movement, overt and covert interference in India's domestic and foreign policies to reinforce East India Company, and destruction of local regimes of the country, during the colonial period cannot be ignored. Over time, enmity with Muslims became a common point between India and Israel and to harness the power of Islam in the peninsula, Zionists tried to help India get rid of economic problems and strategic military weaknesses so as to make it a major power against Islam. In 1975, Yhvshva trykvr (Israel's consulate in Mumbai, its former consulate in Los Angeles) stated that: government of Maharashtra, whose capital is I Mumbai, has been of great help to Israel and that: Indians are usually so

friendly ([www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com)).

Choosing Mumbai for Israel consulate, the current capital of the state of Maharashtra (centre of radical Hindus), indicates special interest of Zionism to abuse of power and feeling of this group. Jana sangh party [Bharatiya Jana Sangh (BJS) 1951-1977] was a right-wing extremist party with intense anti-Islamic orientation during 1950-1970. It chose its members from fanatic Hindus and it was the leading political party in establishing relations with Israel which supported it in India's domestic and foreign policies. Atalbiharibajpai, the chairman of Jana sangh party, went to Jerusalem as a head of a group, in 1969 (two years after the Six-Day War between Arabs and Israel). When returned, he said that: what we saw in Israel, more than anything else, convinced U.S that Arabs have to accept Israel's existence as a state and nation (the same, 91). According to the Journal of Nedaye Mellat (Lahore, sixth of June 1970), Jana sangh party and Singh Syvak party members are under military training in Israel. Since Janata party (BGP) is also the intellectual descendant of Jana sangh party, in connection with Israel and acting against Islam, it is now the leader of proponents of the development of relations with the Zionist regime. Meir Kahana's words - the Jewish rabbi - in an interview with the magazine Hindustan Times confirms this (twenty-sixth of November 1986): "there would not be two governments on earth to be united an in agreement as India and Israel are against Pakistan's nuclear weapons. It is therefore not surprising if the greater part of our discussion is about these matters". It is clear why some researchers believe that: to Israel, India is like a "big walnut" that it is ready to break it". (Harry& Segal, 1964: 250)

In the years after World War I, Indian subcontinent witnessed an Islamic movement called "Caliphate Movement" which was against occupation of Jerusalem by England and the Jewish Agency. Since that time there has remained some anti-Zionist feelings among Indian Muslims which erupts sometimes like a volcano, in crucial situations. Therefore, when, in August

1977, Moshe Dayan (Israel's minister of defense in the Arab-Israeli Six-Day War) asked Morarji Desai, prime Minister of India, to establish full political relations between India and Israel, Desai pointed to anti-Zionism feelings of Indian Muslims and regarded it as barrier to development of their relations. In 1952, the first Islamic Conference was held in Karachi (capital of Pakistan on that time) and headed by Haj Amin al-Husseini. Characters and warring groups from thirty-six Islamic countries participated in it to exchange their idea about the problems of the Islamic world, especially in occupied Jerusalem. Malik Bin Nabi, Algerian author, quoted from one of the leaders of Zionism in 1958 that: "it is necessary to create strong ties between India and Israel to destroy the glory of Islam" and after quoting this he added: this clearly indicates that the war between the two governments of India and Pakistan has set on fire (Bin Nabi, 1986: 106). Details of the aforementioned quotes can be found in Ben Gurion speech which was delivered after the Arab-Israeli Six-Day War (June 1967) in Sorbonne University in Paris and published by Jewish Krvnyl weekly magazine. Ben Gurion said: "the global Zionist Movement consider that its duty not to neglect the danger lied in the Pakistani government (for Israel)... so the most important task necessary for Zionism today is to start operations against the Pakistani government". He added: "since the inhabitants of the Indian subcontinent, are Hindu and their hearts is full of hatred towards Muslims because of past historical events, we believe that India is the best base in which we can lead the operations against Pakistan; therefore, it is essential to take the control of this base and through it enter our deadly blow to Pakistan - the enemy of Judaism and Zionism (Hamed, 1996: 20-26).

#### **3.4. Baha'ism, Israel and India**

Close cooperation between them with Israel is one of the criteria of Baha'ism. After the exile of the Iranian Baha'is, Palestinian became the world centre for Baha'ism (Universal House of Justice). Special relationship among Baha'is not new but dates back to before establishment of Israel; It

was born and grew in response to British colonialism and Jewish Agency. After the exile of the Baha'is of Iran to the Ottoman territory, during kingdom of Qajar Shah, and irritant wandering in Baghdad, Edire (Adrianople), and Istanbul, since Ottoman government rejected them, Bahá'u'lláh and his followers resided in Acre, near Haifa, in 1861.

Baha'i ties with Britain, in implementation of its policies an undeniable role of Britain in supporting the formation of Israel, was approved by the Baha'is and their leaders. Mirza Hossein Ali Baha (founder of Baha'ism) raised hope of forming a Jewish community in the Promised Land, "newspapers wrote about the importance of this sacred faith, even recalled tidings of their prophet, Bahá'u'lláh, because of Israel and their dignity in the Promised Land and Israel" (Ahang-e Badi'e, 1968: 29). British protection of the Baha'is and Jewish Zionists in Palestine provided the grounds for further closeness of two states; both of which had a common enemy, i.e. Muslims and Shiites, who could endanger their identity and nature of their presence. Israel government was established in 1948, during the lifetime of Shoghi Effendi. In July 1947, in a letter, Shoghi emphasized on notable points of common interests of Baha'is and Zionism and by comparing the Baha'i interests with that of Muslims, Christians and Jews in Palestine, he concluded that: "only Jews interest towards the Palestine is somewhat comparable to the Baha'is' interest in this country". This connection is confirmed by the Israeli authorities; Mansouri, quoted Ben-Gurion's statement from the news: "since the establishment of Israel government, Baha'is have always had sincere relationships with Israel government"(1998: 332). It seems that, to implement Ben-Gurion strategy, influencing on political and religious layers by Baha'ism is the best way to establish deep rooted relationships. Signs of mutual influences of Israel and Baha'ism can be found in September 2003, when Ariel Sharon - Prime Minister of Israel – travelled to visit India. In this journey, he visited Baha'is Centre in New Delhi; the visit showed Baha'i importance to Israel (Safa,

2004: 8). On the other hand, what made Hindus interested in Baha'is was their special Islamic thoughts which was clearly in contrast to Islamic attitudes of Pakistan. Baha'i leaders have always insisted on the separation of religion from politics as well as Baha'is and Baha'ism from the world of politics.

Finally, to expand its influence in India according to strategy of neighboring countries, which was proposed by Ben-Gurion, Israel turned to various political, diplomatic, military, commercial, and safety solutions. This doctrine is based upon heterogeneity of Israel government with the Arab- Islamic environment in the Middle East. So, to get out of isolation and siege of Arab countries and their collective confrontation with the emerging government, Israel had no choice but to turn to countries outside the Arab environment (Rabinovich & Reinharz, 2007:167). India is one of the main countries, who has also experienced the same situation with Muslims and the Pakistani government, as its old enemy so this was the best opportunity to establish relations and strategic partnership. In the next section, association of this condition with the cultural influence of Iran is discussed.

#### **4. Analysis and Discussion**

Cultural and identity elements can be categorized in two groups: symbolic elements (land, places, structures and buildings) and Foundational elements such as common beliefs, mentality and thinking and common sense. These factors and values are especially merged and both are depended on and linked to each other.

Decades of insecurity and war has affected India and Israel officials shared perceptions of tensions and threats as well as their adoption of common policies in the Middle East. Increased political, economic, and security relations of Israel and India has provide the ground for expansion of cultural and identity influence of Israel. Reducing international legitimacy of ideological enemies of the two countries, such as Iran and Pakistan, is



among the common goals of both countries. To achieve its national goals and interests, Israel has turned to cultural influence by variety of means such as influencing deep layers of culture, identity and religion of India, and creating a sense of unity with Indian state and nation. Focus on religious feelings and interests have prepared the ground for influencing the deepest levels of Hindu beliefs through closeness to the Hindu god. Using architectures and art to show they have a same god as Baha'is, preparing the ground to enhance unity, forming Baha-Hendism, and lining it to Baha-Zionism, are the other planned objectives of Israel. Benefiting from long-standing conflict Hindus and Muslims has been Israel's long-standing policy in the Indian subcontinent. Establishment of places of worship with religious architecture, tourist attraction, cultural propaganda attempts in the architectural environment, public services such as schools, hospitals and welfare facilities, and resorts were other techniques of Baha'is propaganda to justify themselves in countries like India and among the public. One of the Israel's tool, which India was also interested in using it to achieve its goals, at least on the issue of Kashmir and Pakistan Muslims, was the use of artificial Baha'i thoughts to reform Islamic thought against itself by different means in this area. The policy of weakening religious identity of Muslims and separating Muslim population in India and Pakistan was one of the geo-culture policies of extremist Hindus which was supported by Israel. Deep ties India and Israel in politics, economy, security and defence, have facilitated establishing cultural ties for the Zionist regime. To create a deviation and reform Muslims thoughts and beliefs as well as political and ideological streams, religious instruments such as Baha'ism were used. Investment on structures and buildings architecture, Such as Baha'I Temple, tourist attraction, and increasing the popularity of allied figures, were geo-cultures strategies of Israel in India.

## **5. Conclusion**

Given the importance of India to Israel and relations between the two

countries, Israel is trying to expand its influence in India using different cultural and identity tools. Israel expands areas of its identity and culture activities beyond the political and territorial borders of country aimed at confronting with cultural identity and culture influence of other countries, including Iran, or at least it can have such consequences. These efforts can lead to finding powerful allies in South Asia, in the neighbourhood of Muslim countries like Pakistan, which is somehow linked with Islam and may be regarded as a strong deterrent leverage. Strengthening Israel's footsteps in India and intensification of relations with this country may increase Israel's influence in identity-based communities, such as the Baha'is and even Zoroastrians, and limits the ways for cultural influence of Iran. Added to this, it can increase the long-term contradictions of India's foreign policy and reduces Iran potentials of using its shared historical and cultural ties with India. It can also prevent Iran's influence in the Muslim community of India as well as formation of united front between Iran and India in regional and global issues. Some analysts believe that India is reaching a regional power status and has the potential of establishing relations simultaneously with hostile countries and decide on the basis of its national interests. However, it should be noted that even more powerful countries like the United States of America and some European powers have been under the influence of powerful Israel lobbies every now and then; thus, Israel's influence on India should not be easily passed on.

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