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Zionist Regime's Pivot to Asia: Background, Causes and Examples

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Abstract

The East turning policy of the Zionist regime, first proposed by Netanyahu as “Pivoting to Asia”, refers to the increasing relations of this regime with Asian countries; a policy apparently modeled on Barack Obama’s “Pivot to Asia”. During his visit to Singapore in 2017, Benjamin Netanyahu, then prime minister of the Zionist regime officially announced the policy of turning to Asia and said that Israel is clearly pivoting towards it.

Various factors can be pointed out as to why the relations between Israel and Asian countries have improved. Many believe that the economic rise of the Asia-Pacific region and the accentuating role of the countries of this region in acting in the international arena has caused Israel to turn to Asian countries. However, it seems that this pivot must have other reasons as well. The present article, using the descriptive-an-

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alytical method and library sources, seeks to determine the reasons leading to Israel's pivot to Asia.

Despite the fact that Israel is geographically located in Asia and a large part of its population consists of Jews with Asian roots; a look at the history of this regime's relations with Asian countries reveals that in the first decades after the formation of Israel, Tel Aviv was not very interested in communicating with Asian countries; a condition probably originating from the fact that most Asian countries were colonies or did not have much weight in the field of international politics in that time. However, the end of cold war turned the tide and because of the fact that Israel was seen a gate through which Asian countries could put themselves in the bosom of the winner of the cold war, that is the US, the relations between Tel Aviv and Asian countries grew further. But as it was said, it was not until 2017 that Netanyahu accounted Israel's pivot to Asia.

Generally speaking, this pivot can be attributed to four factors: A) Collapse of the Bipolar System after the End of the Cold War: During the Cold War, the relationship with Israel was considered a taboo for many countries that were defined in the Eastern Bloc, as well as members countries of the Non-Aligned Movement, because Israel was defined as the aggressor in the conflict with the Palestinians, as well as a member of the Western bloc. In addition, the world's dependence on the oil of Arab countries and the embargo of Israel's business partners by these countries was the reason for the refusal of further relations. However, after the end of the Cold War, a change in practice was seen. Israel was a close ally of the United States which was considered the winner of the Cold War, and many countries that were previously in other blocs looked to Israel as a vehicle for getting closer to Washington. B): Increasing Role of Asia-Pacific in Global Relations: The second reason that has been put forward for Israel's pivot to Asia is the increasing weight of the Asia-Pacific in the global economic and security; a fact crystalized by examples such as the unprecedented speed and volume of China's economic growth, the surprising movement of the "4 Asian Tigers", turning of Asia into the largest consumer and production market in the world and the high volume of foreign exchange reserves of Asian countries. C) Decline of Europe's Position in Israel's Relational Structure: For many years, Europe was considered Israel's main economic and security partner. However, the study of Israel's trade with the European Union shows a downward trend; in 2013, the European Union, the United States of America, and Asia accounted for 32, 28, and 21 percent of Israel's exports, respectively, but in 2015, Asia surpassed the United States with 25 percent and stood next to Europe with 28 percent. D) Growing Rift between Obama and Netanyahu: Another factor that

caused the Netanyahu government to think of finding new partners other than its traditional partners was the intensification of the rifts and feuds between Netanyahu and Obama; leading to cooling of relations between these two which have always had “special relationship: with each other.

This condition caused Netanyahu’s administration to think of ways to circumvent this isolation. Israel adopted several strategies such as: A) Strengthening Relations with Eastern European Countries: For years, Israel’s foreign policy was focused on Western Europe; which can be considered a legacy of the Cold War or a reflection of the weaker economy of the East Europe countries. But the conditions described earlier made Israel pay more attention to these countries. The main communication between the Zionist regime and the governments of Eastern Europe has been conducted through the Visegrad Group. In February 2019, Israel announced that it would host the first-ever Visegrad meeting outside of Europe. The said meeting was canceled due to the dispute between Poland and Israel, but Netanyahu hosted the leaders of Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovakia at his residence. B) Re-establishing ‘Periphery Doctrine’: David Ben-Gurion, the first prime minister of Israel, suggested that in order to escape from the isolation imposed by the Arab countries, it is necessary to strengthen relations with the neighbors of these countries, such as Iran and Turkey; a strategy called the “‘Periphery Doctrine’” Regardless of the various analyzes that exist about the success or failure of this strategy, after the end of the Cold War and the increase of diplomatic relations between Israel and many countries of the world and even a number of governments that previously had a history of war with this regime, the peripheral doctrine lost its importance in Israel’s foreign policy and was gradually forgotten. But after the 90s and especially the beginning of Netanyahu’s first term as prime minister in 1996, we saw the revival of this strategy. This time, the Zionist regime began to strengthen its relations with the countries of the Caucasus and Central Asia, as well as Greece and Cyprus, in order to contain its new rivals or enemies, such as Turkey and Iran. The process became more intense in the years after the start of Netanyahu’s second term in 2009, and was called by some as “Periphery Doctrine 2” and especially C) Pivot to Asia: The official adoption of the “Pivot to Asia” policy dates back to Benjamin Netanyahu’s visit to Singapore on February 20, 2017. During this trip, Netanyahu stated in a press conference that: “We are clearly and purposefully pivoting towards Asia”. As it was said before, the adoption of this strategy has various reasons, such as the increase in the economic power of Asian countries, Israel’s technological and economic power, Europeans criticism of the Zionist regime and disagreements between Obama and Netanyahu. It is worth mention that

another factor that has increased Israel's relations with Asian countries is the use of Asian workers in Israel; about half of Israel's construction workers are currently nationals of Asian countries such as the Philippines, Thailand, Nepal and China. For example, China and the Zionist regime signed an agreement in 2020, according to which 20,000 Chinese workers were employed in the Israeli construction sector.

Key words: Asia, Pivot to Asia, Zionist Regime, Israel's Asian Policy.