



India and Israel have transformed a once cautious relationship into a multidimensional strategic partnership that encompasses defense, intelligence, technology, cybersecurity, trade, and innovation, underpinned by decades of cooperation and shared security interests. (Credit: Shutterstock)

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Strategic Partners in Practice: India and Israel's Multidimensional Engagement

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Introduction

India–Israel relations have witnessed a marked acceleration under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, evolving from cautious engagement into a confident and multidimensional strategic partnership.¹ Recent diplomatic developments underscore this shift. While Prime Minister Modi's three-nation tour from December 12 to 17, 2025, to Jordan, Ethiopia, and Oman reaffirmed India's sustained engagement with the Arab world and Africa, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar's visit to Israel during the same period highlighted New Delhi's determination to maintain strategic balance in West Asia—as India refers to the Middle East—rather than pursue exclusivity.²

This strategic balancing approach, however, has not prevented India from deepening its bilateral relationship with Israel. Prime Minister Narendra Modi undertook a state visit to Israel from February 25 to 26, 2026, at

Netanyahu's invitation, marking another significant milestone in bilateral relations.³ During the visit, Modi became the first Indian prime minister to address the Israeli Knesset, where he described India–Israel relations as a partnership “grounded in shared experience and shared aspirations” and stated that the two countries' strong partnership not only serves their national interests, but also contributes to global stability and prosperity.⁴ Addressing the Knesset, Modi noted that “India stands with Israel, firmly, with full conviction, in this moment, and beyond,” reinforcing a shared commitment against global terror.⁵

During his discussions with Netanyahu, the two leaders agreed to elevate India–Israel relations to a “special strategic partnership for peace, innovation, and prosperity.” The visit produced 27 outcomes, including 17 agreements and memoranda of understanding, alongside

10 additional announcements and initiatives. Modi described the decision to elevate the relationship as “historic,” saying that it reflected the aspirations of the peoples of both countries. The two sides also agreed to strengthen cooperation in defence and security, building on the November 2025 “Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Defence Cooperation” and establishing a roadmap for future cooperation, including joint development, joint production, and technology transfer. Cooperation was further expanded across critical and emerging technologies, cybersecurity, space, energy, scientific research, innovation, agriculture, water management, and other areas.⁶

The two countries also noted that their Bilateral Investment Agreement (BIA), signed on September 8, 2025, in New Delhi to replace a legacy 1996 treaty, was on track to enter into force on July 4, 2026, reflecting growing trust and a long-term strategic outlook.⁷ Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Sa’ar has underscored the rapid strengthening of bilateral ties, stating, “Relations between Israel and India are stronger than ever, and we are moving forward together on defence, innovation, and economic cooperation with a shared commitment to deepen and broaden this strategic partnership.”⁸

In this context, the article highlights the evolution of India–Israel relations from a cautious and ideologically constrained approach into a robust strategic partnership, underscoring the significance of Modi’s 2017 visit; the expansion of defense, intelligence, and technology cooperation; India’s nuanced balancing of Israel and Palestine policies; and Israel’s historical support during critical crises and enduring role as a reliable strategic partner.

Strategic Reality and India’s Reassessment

For decades, India’s engagement with Israel was constrained by domestic political considerations, ideological preferences, and concerns about potential reactions from Gulf countries.⁹ However, this restraint rarely translated into support for India’s core national interests. There has long been a strategic sentiment in New Delhi that despite India’s consistent support for Arab causes, particularly on Palestine, major Arab and Muslim countries have re-

mained largely silent on Pakistan-sponsored, cross-border terrorism and have routinely aligned with Pakistan on the Kashmir issue.¹⁰

Historical patterns reinforce this perception. During the India–Pakistan wars of 1965 and 1971, no major Arab or Muslim country issued meaningful diplomatic support in India’s favor.¹¹ Even today, when India faces cross-border terrorism, it does not receive the level of support it expects.¹² Over time, this gap between expectation and outcome has compelled Indian policymakers to reassess whether ideological caution was truly serving the national interest.

Israel, by contrast, has consistently supported India during critical moments.¹³ During the 1962 Sino-Indian War, Israel extended discreet but crucial support to India at a time of severe military unpreparedness. Despite the absence of formal diplomatic relations, Israel supplied small arms, ammunition, mortars, and related military equipment, helping India address immediate battlefield shortages. Given India’s geopolitical situation and its longstanding ties with Arab states and the Palestinian issue, New Delhi exercised deliberate caution regarding the public visibility of such assistance.

Some accounts drawing on Israeli archival documents suggest that Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru may have personally written to Israeli Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion, underscoring India’s grave predicament and urgently requesting military support.¹⁴ Although Indian official records do not publicly confirm this correspondence, these accounts reflect a pragmatic response to an extraordinary security crisis.¹⁵ As noted in analyses published on *The Times of Israel* blogs,¹⁶ arms shipments were reportedly requested to be delivered without Israeli flags or identifiable markings to avoid a diplomatic fallout. While this assistance could not decisively alter the war’s outcome, it strengthened India’s immediate defensive capacity and laid an early foundation of strategic trust.

This pattern continued during the 1965 India–Pakistan War when Israel again provided covert military assistance, including 160 mm M-58 mortar ammunition and other specialized weaponry actively employed by Indian forces. Defense histories and monographic studies indicate that

such supplies formed part of an informal security relationship well before the establishment of formal diplomatic ties in 1992, with some of this equipment remaining in India's inventory for decades.¹⁷

During the 1971 India–Pakistan War, Israel again provided covert military assistance to India. Historical research, including the book *The Blood Telegram* by Gary Bass, which draws on the papers of Indian diplomat P. N. Haksar, indicates that Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir authorized an Israeli arms manufacturer to supply India and the Mukti Bahini (meaning “Liberation Army” in Bengali—a guerrilla resistance movement that fought for the independence of East Pakistan from West Pakistan during the 1971 war) with mortars, ammunition, and a few military instructors ahead of, and during, the conflict.¹⁸ This support was delivered discreetly, and Golda Meir reportedly indicated she would support full diplomatic ties in return for closer cooperation. In addition to material supplies,¹⁹ Israel provided intelligence assistance and tactical training to Indian forces and the Mukti Bahini, enhancing battlefield effectiveness in East Pakistan. While there is no public record of formal Israeli diplomatic backing at the United Nations, archival accounts suggest that Israeli leaders expressed political sympathy for India's position and the humanitarian crisis in East Pakistan. Israel's assistance in 1971—covert, targeted, and carefully managed—strengthened India's operational capabilities and reflects a broader pattern of special strategic support provided quietly during India's major security crises.

Most notably, during the 1999 Kargil War²⁰—when the United States declined to supply weapons—Israel provided urgently needed precision-guided munitions and surveillance drones, enabling the Indian Air Force to target Pakistani intruders entrenched in mountainous terrain. Israel quickly supplied laser designator pods (such as the Litening pod) and laser-guided munitions integrated onto India's Mirage 2000 fighter jets, allowing accurate strikes on fortified positions along high ridges while adhering to restrictions on crossing the Line of Control (LoC). In addition, Israel provided unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) and reconnaissance systems,²¹ which helped monitor enemy bunkers and troop movements in difficult terrain, greatly enhancing Indian commanders' situational aware-

ness. Israel also delivered artillery shells and mortar ammunition, filling critical gaps in India's munitions stocks and ensuring continuous operational capability. These systems were urgently delivered and rapidly integrated into Indian operations, contributing directly to battlefield successes. Israel's readiness to provide advanced military technologies without restrictive conditions illustrated the growing strategic trust and defense partnership between the two countries. Israeli support to India during such critical moments is often remembered in India as a defining element of the bilateral relationship. As former Israeli Ambassador Daniel Carmon observed, “India often reminds Israel that it was there for India during the Kargil War. Israel was one of the few countries that supplied weapons to India in the conflict, and Indians do not forget this support.”²²

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Importantly, even during the recent Operation Sindoor, following the Pahalgam terror attack on April 22, 2025, in which more than 26 innocent civilians were brutally killed by terrorists, Israel stood firmly with India and provided substantial and critical military support.²³ Israel supplied essential material and strategic assistance that significantly enhanced India's operational and defense capabilities. Israeli-origin systems, such as Barak-8 air defense missiles, were deployed to intercept Pakistani missile and drone attacks, demonstrating the effectiveness of jointly developed defense platforms. Indian forces also employed HARPY and HAROP loitering munitions, which enabled precise strikes against enemy air defense systems and high-value targets, while Heron Mk II long-endurance UAVs provided real-time surveillance and intelligence, greatly improving battlefield situational awareness. Israel additionally supplied critical ammunition and munitions to sustain operations.

Beyond hardware, Israeli expertise in integrating these systems offered operational guidance, helping Indian forces rapidly deploy advanced technologies in high-altitude terrain. Official statements highlighted this

support; Israel's ambassador to India, Reuven Azar, affirmed India's right to self-defense, while the director-general of Israel's Ministry of Defense directly conveyed full support to India's defense secretary and reaffirmed deeper strategic cooperation.²⁴ Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu also acknowledged the performance of these systems, stating, "The things we provided before worked very well on the field . . . we develop our weapons in the field and they are battle-tested. They worked fine and we have a pretty solid foundation."²⁵ Building on this operational partnership, India and Israel have recently expanded formal defense collaboration through major joint production and technology-sharing initiatives. These include co-development of missile systems such as LORA and Ice Breaker, procurement of additional Heron Mk II UAVs and MR-SAM air defense systems, Close Quarter Battle (CQB) carbines produced under "Make in India" initiative, and potential conversion of commercial aircraft into refueling tankers. These agreements signal a shift from ad hoc operational support to long-term strategic and industrial cooperation, strengthening India's defense readiness while consolidating the India-Israel partnership in advanced technologies and operational capability. The combined effect of operational assistance and ongoing strategic collaboration underscores Israel's growing role as a reliable defense partner for India.

Moreover, in the early 1980s, Israel reportedly offered operational support to India to neutralize Pakistan's nascent nuclear program at the Kahuta uranium enrichment facility. According to investigative journalists Adrian Levy and Catherine Scott-Clark in *Deception: Pakistan, the US and the Global Weapons Conspiracy*, Israel viewed Pakistan's nuclear ambitions as a strategic threat and proposed a preemptive strike inspired by its 1981 Osirak operation in Iraq.²⁶ The plan envisioned Israeli F-16s and F-15s operating from Indian airbases, such as Jamnagar and Udhampur, with India providing refueling and logistical support, reflecting shared concerns over nuclear proliferation. Some accounts suggest that then-Prime Minister Indira Gandhi initially approved the operation, bringing India, Pakistan, and Israel "within a hair's breadth of a nuclear conflagration,"²⁷ but the plan was eventually shelved due to geopolitical risks, fear of retaliation, domestic instability, and pressure from the

United States.

Beyond the strike proposal, Indian military officials reportedly traveled secretly to Israel in 1983 to acquire electronic warfare equipment and technical guidance to counter Kahuta's air defenses,²⁸ highlighting operational-level coordination. Contemporary commentary, including statements in 2025 by Assam's chief minister, Himanta Biswa Sarma, has referred to India's decision not to act as a "historic blunder," noting that Israel had offered both intelligence and strike planning support.²⁹ Academic analyses conclude that India ultimately declined the operation due to the high risk of escalation, the absence of a nuclear deterrent, and potential diplomatic fallout, even though Israel was prepared to participate operationally. These things illustrate the depth of India-Israel strategic cooperation, even during a period when formal diplomatic ties did not exist, aligning with India's core security concerns.³⁰

From Normalization to Momentum

India established diplomatic relations with Israel in 1992, but for decades the relationship remained limited and largely discreet. Earlier governments adopted a defensive approach shaped by Non-Aligned Movement legacies, domestic political considerations, and concerns over how closer ties with Israel might be perceived in the Middle East and, within India, by certain domestic political constituencies.³¹ As a result, greater emphasis was placed on managing these concerns than on advancing national interests, and India's cooperation with Israel—despite its strategic value—remained shaped by diplomatic caution and normative balancing rather than long-term strategic objectives.

This, however, changed after Narendra Modi came to power in 2014. The process of change gained real momentum after Modi's visit to Israel in 2017. Moreover, his decisive electoral victory produced a stable single-party government and removed the constraints of coalition politics. This political stability, combined with Modi's pragmatic and interest-based approach to foreign policy, enabled a more open and confident engagement with Israel and accelerated the deepening of bilateral ties.

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Prime Minister Modi's historic visit to Israel in July 2017—the first by a sitting Indian prime minister—marked a departure from a cautious and ideologically constrained approach.³² Underscoring this moment, Modi declared, “It is my singular honour to be the first ever Prime Minister of India to undertake this ground-breaking visit to Israel My visit celebrates the strength of centuries-old links between our societies,”³³ reflecting a commitment to deepen cooperation across multiple domains. The visit coincided with the 25th anniversary of full diplomatic relations and elevated ties into a broader strategic partnership encompassing defense, technology, innovation, water management, agriculture, and cyber security.



Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at a press conference during Modi's historic July 2017 visit to Israel, the first by a sitting Indian prime minister. (Credit: Wikimedia Commons)

During the three-day visit, India and Israel signed seven MoUs covering industrial research, technological innovation, and agriculture, reinforcing the transition from cautious engagement to a strategic partnership. Reflecting on the visit's significance, strategic analyst C. Uday Bhaskar, director of the Society for Policy Studies, noted that the visit “brought into the open a relationship that had long existed quietly and decisively transformed it into a full-fledged strategic partnership,”³⁴ underscoring how

Modi's engagement institutionalized and legitimized India–Israel cooperation across critical domains. Modi also addressed the Indian diaspora, announced the establishment of an Indian cultural center, expanded direct air connectivity, and extended Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) benefits to Indian Jews who had served in the Israeli military.³⁵ Notably, Modi did not visit the Palestinian Authority—marking the first time an Indian Prime Minister engaged Israel without coupling it with Palestine—thereby signaling a deliberate policy of de-hyphenation and a nuanced recalibration of India's West Asia diplomacy. This deliberate de-hyphenation was rooted in Modi's interest-based diplomacy, which prioritized tangible national gains over inherited ideological conventions.

The visit was widely seen as pivotal both symbolically and strategically: It broke historical diplomatic barriers, strengthened mutual trust and goodwill, and demonstrated India's willingness to pragmatically pursue its national interests while balancing its stance on Palestine. Strategically, leaders from both countries highlighted cooperation in defense, counterterrorism, and economic partnership, with Modi describing the ties as “special” and Israel viewing India as a major partner in trade and technology. Minister of External Affairs S. Jaishankar later called the visit a “goosebumps moment,” noting that bilateral relations had “really taken off,” with expanded cooperation in innovation, research, and deeper engagement under India's Make in India initiative.³⁶ This visit thus set the stage for a new era of strategic, technological, and economic collaboration that continues to grow, extending across defense, intelligence, counterterrorism, trade, technology, and innovation.

Importantly, India's growing engagement with Israel has not altered its long-standing position on Palestine. India was the first non-Arab country to recognize the Palestine Liberation Organization in 1974 and to recognize the Palestinian state in 1988.³⁷ It continues to support a two-state solution and has consistently reaffirmed this stance at the United Nations.³⁸ Even amid the Gaza conflict, India has provided significant humanitarian assistance, including food, medical supplies, and disaster-relief material, demonstrating that strategic partnership with

Israel does not come at the cost of humanitarian responsibility.



Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu attend a demonstration of the Gal-Mobile water filtration system at Olga Beach, Israel, July 6, 2017. Modi's historic visit highlighted the expanding India-Israel partnership in technology, innovation, agriculture, and water management. (Credit: Wikimedia Commons)

Over the years, India's total developmental and financial contributions—including funding for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and other welfare projects—have amounted to around \$170 million, covering initiatives to improve livelihoods, infrastructure, and essential services.³⁹ Currently, India is implementing additional project and developmental support worth approximately \$40 million, and it contributes \$5 million annually to UNRWA, with total assistance since 2002 reaching roughly \$39.5 million. For the fiscal year 2024–25, India released two tranches of \$2.5 million each, fulfilling its annual commitment, a gesture publicly acknowledged by the Palestinian embassy as a testament to India's "unwavering support."⁴⁰

Beyond financial contributions, India has sent substantial humanitarian aid, including 30 tonnes of medical supplies and life-saving medicines during ongoing conflicts, and, in previous crises, such as in 2023, dispatched about 70 tonnes of aid, including 16.5 tonnes of medical materials.⁴¹ Even many Muslim-majority countries have not provided the level of support to Palestine that India has since independence, underscoring India's consistent commitment to humanitarian responsibility, alongside its strategic partnerships.

Engagement Shaped by Regional Shifts

Contrary to widespread misconceptions, India's engagement with Israel has often followed developments within the Arab world itself. The Camp David Accords of 1978 between Egypt and Israel established a framework for peace in the Middle East.⁴² They paved the way for the 1979 Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty, ended decades of hostility, and made Egypt the first Arab country to formally recognize Israel—developments that signaled to India a shifting regional landscape and contributed to its gradual policy recalibration. When India normalized ties with Israel in January 1992, it did so after consultations with PLO leader Yasser Arafat, who explicitly encouraged New Delhi to establish diplomatic relations with Tel Aviv, noting that India could influence Israel only through direct diplomatic engagement—a view that proved decisive.⁴³

The same pattern is visible today. The Abraham Accords of 2020 fundamentally reshaped West Asian geopolitics, enabling Arab states such as the U.A.E., Bahrain, Morocco, and Sudan to normalize relations with Israel.⁴⁴ Initiatives like I2U2 and the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) became possible only because regional countries themselves chose engagement, with active support and facilitation from the United States; I2U2, in particular, would not have been possible without the U.A.E.'s active participation.⁴⁵ Even today, economic engagement between Israel and Arab countries, such as the U.A.E. and Egypt, exceeds India's direct engagement with Israel.⁴⁶ Israel's recent gas deal with Egypt,⁴⁷ economic co-operation with the U.A.E., and Jordan's projects with Israel reflect deeper ties with Israel than those between India and Israel. Importantly, during the recent conflict between Israel and Iran, many of these countries supported Israel by neutralizing Iranian missiles and drones launched into their airspace, while key U.S. military bases and the U.S. Central Command are located in the region. Furthermore, more Muslim-majority countries are expected to move toward normalization in the future; the recently released U.S. National Security Strategy lists normalization of ties with Israel in this region and beyond as one of its core objectives, reflecting Washington's proactive role.⁴⁸

Historically, India has remained defensive in its engagement with Israel, often constrained by domestic and external perceptions, creating a self-image of cautious diplomacy.

A Reliable Strategic Partner

Today, Israel is among India's most important defense and intelligence partners. According to Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), Israel remains one of India's largest arms suppliers, accounting for about 13 percent of India's major arms imports between 2020 and 2024, reflecting deep mutual trust.⁴⁹ Israeli drones, missiles, surveillance platforms, and air defense systems have significantly enhanced India's operational capabilities. UAVs, like the Heron and Searcher drones, have improved India's surveillance, reconnaissance, and intelligence-gathering capabilities along critical frontiers, including the LoC with Pakistan and the Line of Actual Control (LAC) with China, enabling persistent monitoring and rapid response to emerging threats.



A Kolkata-class destroyer fires a Barak 8 surface-to-air missile during trials in December 2015. Jointly developed by India and Israel, the Barak 8 exemplifies the defense and technological cooperation that has become a cornerstone of the two countries' strategic partnership. (Credit: Government of India/Wikimedia Commons, GODL-India)

Unlike Western suppliers, Israeli defense cooperation comes with fewer geopolitical conditionalities, making Israel a particularly valuable partner as India seeks to reduce vulnerabilities arising from overdependence.⁵⁰ This reliability adds value to India during moments of crisis. Co-production and technology transfer also support India's Atmanirbhar Bharat agenda by strengthening domestic defense manufacturing and securing supply

chains during crises. A central platform is the Joint Working Group (JWG) on defense cooperation, co-chaired by senior officials from both countries, which meets regularly to review projects and facilitate agreements and memoranda of understanding (MoUs) between the two sides, enabling technology sharing and joint capability development.

India and Israel also work closely in Washington, where lobby groups and institutional mechanisms from both countries coordinate efforts to facilitate defense technology transfers, co-development, and related initiatives. Israel supports India's strategic objectives in the Indo-Pacific and West Asia, including IMEC and Adani's Haifa Port project, both of which help counter expanding Chinese influence in the region.⁵¹ The corridor strengthens India's trade and geopolitical footprint in Eurasia, reduces reliance on chokepoints like the Suez Canal, and deepens connectivity between South Asia, the Middle East, and Europe. The Port of Haifa, now majority-owned by the Adani Group, serves as a vital maritime gateway linking Asia and Europe and acts as a strategic node in IMEC's trade and connectivity ambitions.

Israeli leaders, including Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, have emphasized its economic and connectivity significance. Further highlighting this partnership, Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar lauded the Adani Group's investment as a "symbol of trust" important for both countries, noting that it reflects the deepening strategic partnership between India and Israel and underscores mutual cooperation across defense, innovation, trade, and broader strategic areas.⁵² These developments reinforce India's strategic positioning in a multipolar world, enhance West Asian and Mediterranean maritime connectivity, provide alternatives to China-led infrastructure initiatives, and encourage private-sector engagement that complements state-to-state cooperation.

Emerging Tech Cooperation

India and Israel have been deepening cooperation in critical and emerging technologies as a central component of their strategic partnership, encompassing defense hardware, semiconductors, artificial intelligence (AI), cybersecurity, research and development, and innovation

ecosystems.⁵³ Joint technology and innovation partnerships go beyond traditional buyer-seller dynamics to include co-development, co-production, and structured technology transfer agreements that strengthen India's technological base. Institutional mechanisms, such as MoUs signed under the India-Israel Joint Working Group (JWG) on defense cooperation, formalize collaboration in AI, cybersecurity, Research and Development, and defense industrial partnerships, enabling structured knowledge exchange and joint capability development. Reflecting this convergence, India's Defense Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh noted that "this MoU provides a unified vision for technology collaboration and co-development, underscoring our shared commitment to innovation and self-reliance."⁵⁴

In November 2025, during the 17th JWG meeting in Tel Aviv, India and Israel signed a major defense and tech-sharing MoU establishing a roadmap for co-development, co-production, and joint innovation across AI, cybersecurity, defense research and development (R&D), and technological innovation, marking a shift from traditional procurement toward long-term, high-tech collaboration.⁵⁵ India has also enhanced engagement with Israeli startups, particularly in cybersecurity, medtech, and mobility. Indian Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal highlighted plans for deeper collaboration with Israeli startups as part of broader bilateral trade and technology talks, reflecting a deliberate effort to strengthen connections between Indian and Israeli innovation ecosystems by leveraging India's market scale and Israel's deep-tech expertise.⁵⁶ Joint R&D initiatives under a bilateral innovation agreement between India's Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and Israel's Directorate of Defense Research and Development (DDR&D) are accelerating projects in drones, robotics, AI, quantum technologies, photonics, and biosensing, with startups and micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) from both countries participating to promote dual use applications.

At the Bengaluru Tech Summit 2025, Israel showcased its largest-ever national pavilion in India, featuring more than 20 deep-tech companies in smart mobility, autonomous systems, energy management, and data infra-

structure, and highlighting growing demand for joint ventures, pilot projects, and real-world technology testing.⁵⁷ Further strengthening high-value tech cooperation, Hyderabad's Blue Cloud Softech signed a \$150 million partnership with an Israeli semiconductor design company to co-develop advanced edge-AI chips in India, covering technology integration, hardware design transfer, and domestic manufacturing setup, thereby enhancing India's AI hardware capabilities and indigenous semiconductor development.⁵⁸ These initiatives reflect a strategic and institutionalized approach to advancing India-Israel collaboration in critical and emerging technologies, innovation, and defense, fostering a resilient, innovation-driven ecosystem that complements broader national security priorities.

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Cybersecurity, in particular, has become a formal pillar of India-Israel cooperation. India and Israel have signed a series of MoUs on operational collaboration between India's Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-IN) and Israel's National Cyber Directorate (INCD), facilitating joint responses to cyber threats, incident information exchange, capacity building, and the sharing of best practices.⁵⁹ This partnership provides a framework for regular dialogue, mutual training, and operational exchanges to enhance protection against cyberattacks.

Highlighted as a priority area during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 2017 visit to Israel, cybersecurity cooperation has expanded through reciprocal visits, professional seminars, and high-level interactions, enabling both nations to leverage Israel's experience and India's expertise in digital security to confront emerging cyber challenges while fostering a resilient, innovation-driven ecosystem.⁶⁰ The 2025 MoU institutionalized and expanded collaboration in cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, research and development, and advanced

technological innovation, alongside defense cooperation, enhancing operational ties between CERT-IN and INCD, enabling structured cyber-threat monitoring and response, robust information sharing, capacity building, and the adoption of best practices, thereby signaling a deeper strategic and long-term partnership in cyber and critical technologies.

Counterterrorism Cooperation and Shared Strategic Resolve

India and Israel have consistently treated counterterrorism as a core pillar of their strategic partnership. Oshrit Birvadker, a senior fellow at the Jerusalem Institute for Strategy and Security (JISS), observed that “Israel plays a significant and growing role in India’s current military strategy, particularly in light of escalations with Pakistan and the broader counterterrorism context.” She further noted that “from Israel’s perspective, India is not only a key market but also a strategic partner that shares common concerns over terrorism, border security, and extremism.”⁶¹

During his visit to Israel in December 2025, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar emphasized that both countries share a “zero tolerance” policy toward terrorism, strongly condemning attacks and reaffirming mutual support in counterterror operations.

During his visit to Israel in December 2025, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar emphasized that both countries share a “zero tolerance” policy toward terrorism, strongly condemning attacks and reaffirming mutual support in counterterror operations.⁶² Jaishankar and his Israeli counterpart Gideon Sa’ar discussed regional security challenges and the need for deeper operational and intelligence cooperation, highlighting joint strategic efforts to address terror threats.⁶³ High-level statements by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu have repeatedly characterized terrorism as a shared concern requiring coordinated action, including intelligence sharing and operational collaboration. Notably, on October 7, 2023, following the

unprecedented Hamas terror attacks on Israeli civilians, Prime Minister Modi expressed that India was “deeply shocked by the news of terrorist attacks in Israel” and stood in solidarity with the Israeli people at that difficult hour, unequivocally condemning the violence.⁶⁴ Public diplomacy has reinforced this alignment: In May 2025, the Indian Embassy in Israel stated that “India and Israel stand together against terrorism,” while Israeli Ambassador Reuven Azar affirmed India’s right to self-defense, declaring that terrorists have “nowhere to hide.”⁶⁵ These official statements underscore that counterterror cooperation extends beyond defense procurement to a comprehensive strategic partnership grounded in shared security priorities. When it comes to counterterrorism cooperation, Israel has consistently emerged as India’s most reliable and steadfast ally, demonstrating political clarity, operational commitment, and sustained support during periods of heightened security challenge.

National Interest as the Guiding Principle

When calls emerged urging India to halt defense cooperation with Israel amid the Gaza conflict, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar was unequivocal. India’s decisions, he said, would be guided by national interest and by partnerships with countries that had stood by India during moments of national security threat. As Jaishankar put it, “Where Israel is concerned, it is a country with which we have a strong record of cooperation in national security. It is also a country that has stood by us at different moments when our national security was under threat. So, when we take any decision . . . we will definitely be driven by our national interest.”⁶⁶

India–Israel relations are neither ideological nor reactive; they are pragmatic, interest-driven, and grounded in strategic realism. From Israel’s discreet military assistance during the 1962 Sino-Indian War to its timely support during the Kargil conflict and, more recently, Operation Sindoor, Israel has repeatedly demonstrated a willingness to stand with India at critical moments of national security stress. This historical continuity has shaped the Indian strategic establishment’s perception of Israel as a reliable and dependable partner. As more Muslim-majority countries move toward normalization with Israel,

criticism of India's engagement appears increasingly misplaced. Ultimately, foreign policy must be shaped not by hesitation or moral posturing but by a clear-eyed assessment of national interest—and on this count, the India–Israel partnership stands on firm ground.

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Looking forward, the India–Israel partnership is set to deepen further across multiple domains, reflecting not merely transactional defense cooperation but a durable strategic convergence. In a highly transactional and fragmented global order—marked by volatility, systemic vulnerabilities, and geopolitical conditionalities that often constrain strategic autonomy—such proven reliability across decades assumes added strategic value. As both countries confront evolving security challenges, technological competition, and shifting geopolitical alignments, collaboration in emerging areas such as artificial

intelligence, quantum technologies, advanced surveillance, and space-based systems will be critical to maintaining operational readiness and strategic independence. Beyond state-led initiatives, deeper private sector engagement, joint research and development, and integrated innovation ecosystems will strengthen resilience, secure critical supply chains, and facilitate meaningful technology transfer.

At the same time, greater emphasis is likely to be placed on joint production and co-development in India, particularly in defense, shaped by Israel's evolving geopolitical constraints and India's push for domestic manufacturing under the Atmanirbhar Bharat framework. Israel increasingly views India as one of the few partners combining strategic trust, favorable public perception, and a large emerging market, while India sees defense co-production as a means to overcome supply-chain vulnerabilities and enhance indigenous capabilities—making this a clear win-win extension of a partnership anchored in long-term credibility and strategic reliability.

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