

# India and Israel: an Alliance of the Right-Wing

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# Historical Overview of India-Israel Relations



01

# Historical Overview of India-Israel Relations

Since India's independence in 1947, Indian governments had largely remained non-aligned on the Palestine question.<sup>1</sup>

Nonetheless, India was the first non-Arab country to recognise the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) as the legitimate representative of Palestine in the 1970s.<sup>2</sup> India gave the PLO full diplomatic status in the 1980s, even inviting PLO leader Yasser Arafat to visit India several times.<sup>3</sup>

However, Israeli support for Indian far-right parties, which fed into the current Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP), dates back to the 1960s.<sup>4</sup> Israel also provided arms to India in the 1962 Sino-Indian border war, and in 1965 and 1971 during the India-Pakistan wars.<sup>5</sup>

In 1977, Israeli foreign minister Moshe Dayan carried out a secret visit to New Delhi to meet Indian Prime Minister Morarji Desai.<sup>6</sup>

In 1982, an Israeli report wrote that “factors working in their favour” regarding Israel-India relations included: “the existence of the Hindu-Muslim conflict” and “the formation of the anti-Muslim right-wing Bhartiya Janata Party” (BJP).<sup>7</sup>

After India established diplomatic relations with Israel in 1992, the India-Israel alliance grew in strength.<sup>8</sup> In 1999, Israel provided arms and ammunition for India's war against Pakistan and has continued supplying India with arms ever since.<sup>9</sup>

The election of Modi's right-wing coalition in 2014 solidified the India-Israel relationship, as both India and Israel's governments have shifted increasingly further right, governing on ethno-religious lines that demonise Muslims.<sup>10</sup>

This cooperation has increased markedly since 2017, when Modi became the first Indian Prime Minister to visit Israel.<sup>11</sup> During this visit, the Israel and India signed a defence contract worth around \$2 billion.<sup>12</sup>

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# Military Cooperation Between India and Israel



02

# Military Cooperation Between India and Israel

Israel is India's largest supplier of weapons, including drones, radars, and missile systems,<sup>13</sup> accounting for 46% of Israel's total weapons exports.<sup>14</sup>

In particular, Israel has supplied India with sensors to fortify its borders, and surveillance equipment from the Israeli corporation Pegasus.<sup>15</sup>

The two countries also collaborate on joint defence research and development projects.<sup>16</sup> The Indian and Israeli police forces cooperate in policing and so-called 'counterterrorism' training.<sup>17</sup>

In 2018, Israeli weapons manufacturer Elbit Systems opened a factory in Hyderabad to manufacture long range UAVs – the first factory outside Israel.<sup>18</sup>

In 2022, there were also reports of Mossad agents carrying out arbitrary detention and torture of Kashmiris.<sup>19</sup>

Since October 2023, India has exported explosives and rockets to Israel.<sup>20</sup> This ammunition has been used in Gaza, after a label reading 'Made in India' was videoed amidst the rubble.<sup>21</sup> However, a lack of transparency on India's maritime transfers makes the total value and amounts of these shipments difficult to assess.<sup>22</sup>

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# Economic Relations Between India and Israel



03

# Economic Relations Between India and Israel

In recent years, economic ties between India and Israel have advanced, benefitting Indian software companies.<sup>23</sup>

India and Israel have also entered negotiations regarding a free-trade agreement, although this has not been finalised.<sup>24</sup>

Economic relations between India and Israel have also improved due to the Gulf states increasing normalisation with Israel, which India is reliant on for trade, particularly in oil.<sup>25</sup> Other sectors with economic ties include tourism and agriculture.<sup>26</sup>

In January 2023, an Indian billionaire purchased the port of Haifa for \$1.2 billion.<sup>27</sup>

Since October 2023, when Israel expelled Palestinian workers from working inside 1948 territories, Israel has turned to Indian labourers to fill this gap, especially in construction.<sup>28</sup>

This has been vital for the Israeli economy, as Israel's construction industry had been losing £656 million per month due to the expulsion of the Palestinian workforce.<sup>29</sup> It is notable that Israel exclusively recruits non-Muslim Indian workers.<sup>30</sup>

For Indian workers, Israel offers better pay and higher safety standards than comparable jobs in Gulf states.<sup>31</sup>



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# Political Similarities



## 04

# Political Similarities

There are many similarities between Israel's Likud Party and India's BJP such as their religious supremacist ideologies, both of which demonise indigenous Muslims and relegate them to second-class citizens.<sup>32</sup>

Many BJP supporters regard Israel as a model for a religious nationalist state, referred to as the Hindu Rashtra, that they aim to create.<sup>33</sup> Under the BJP, India has also evicted indigenous Kashmiris from their land in a similar fashion to Israeli evictions of Palestinians in occupied Jerusalem and the West Bank.<sup>34</sup> In November 2019, an Indian diplomat even referenced Israeli settlements as the "model" for expanding the Indian occupation of Kashmir.<sup>35</sup>

In December 2019, Israel passed the Citizenship Amendment Act, which created a pathway for Hindu, Jain, Parsi, Sikh, Buddhist, and Christian communities from Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan to claim citizenship in India.<sup>36</sup> The new law notably excludes Muslims, and bears similarities to Israel's Law of Return, which also aims to reduce the demographic percentage of indigenous Muslims.<sup>37</sup>

During Israel's 2014 attacks on Gaza, Indian police killed a Kashmiri protestor, and arrested 21 people at a pro-Palestine protest in Kashmir during May 2021.<sup>38</sup>

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# India's Support for Israel during the Genocide in Gaza



# India's Support for Israel during the Genocide in Gaza

On 7 October 2023, Modi wrote on social media platform X condemning Hamas' "terrorist attacks", stating "we stand in solidarity with Israel at this difficult hour".<sup>39</sup> Another minister from the BJP also wrote on X that India "may face the situation that Israel is confronting today if we don't stand up against politically motivated radicalism".<sup>40</sup>

Despite Israel's subsequent and ongoing attacks on Gaza being widely condemned, India has refrained from criticising Israel's actions, whilst resolutely condemning Hamas.<sup>41</sup>

On 27 October 2023, India abstained in a UN resolution calling for a ceasefire in Gaza, citing the resolution's failure to condemn Hamas.<sup>42</sup> In late October, some Hindutva fascist groups also gathered outside the Israeli embassy in Delhi, offering to travel to Israel to fight Hamas.<sup>43</sup>

Although BJP supporters are largely supportive of Modi's alliance with Israel, many in India support Palestine, especially in Kerala and Kashmir.<sup>44</sup> India has tried to ban protests in India in support of Palestine since the beginning of the genocide, particularly cracking down on those in Kashmir.<sup>45</sup>

In April 2024, India also abstained from voting for a UN resolution calling for an arms embargo on Israel and an immediate ceasefire in Gaza.<sup>46</sup>

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