WWW.IJRPR.COM

International Journal of Research Publication and Reviews

Journal homepage: www.ijrpr.com ISSN 2582-7421

How Counterterrorism Cooperation and Changing Middle East Politics Have Shaped India-Israel Relations, 2000 to 2024

Akashdeep Saxena

Department of Law and Governance, Jayoti Vidyapeeth Women's University, Jaipur, India

ABSTRACT–

India and Israel kept their relations minimal for more than four decades after 1948. Since 2000 the two states have built a wide partnership that covers defence, agriculture, water and technology. This paper examines how counterterrorism cooperation and changing Middle East politics shaped the partnership between 2000 and 2024. It tests the hypothesis that these two factors became the primary drivers of the relationship and often overshadowed historical sensitivities. A qualitative design was used. Official briefs, a SIPRI data set, think tank reports and scholarly books were examined through document analysis and thematic coding within a combined realist, liberal and constructivist framework. The evidence shows that shared exposure to terrorism built trust and that India's policy of keeping the Israel and Palestine relationships separate allowed closer ties without a break with the Arab world. Still, the hypothesis is only partly supported. Defence procurement, technology access and trade also carried the partnership. Trade fell from USD 10.77 billion in 2022-23 to USD 6.53 billion in 2023-24, which shows that regional conflict can limit even a strong partnership. The paper closes with directions for further study.

Keywords–India, Israel, counterterrorism, West Asia, dehyphenation, strategic partnership, foreign policy analysis

I. INTRODUCTION

India and Israel had long been wary of each other. India recognised Israel on 17 September 1950, but opened embassies in 1992, when it entered into full diplomatic relations [1]. Kumaraswamy maintains that this disassociation was more motivated by anti-colonial sentiments and the minority factor, than by strategic considerations [2]. India's Israel policy was criticised from the beginning and the 1992 decision was the result of long discussions in the Indian political arena, Blarel adds, [3].

Today, no longer is that the case. As per the data given by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), the merchandise trade has increased from USD 200 million in 1992 to USD 10.77 billion in 2022-23 (excluding defence) [1]. The link with defence is just as obvious. According to Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), in 2019-23, India was the largest importer of arms in the world and the top recipient of Israeli arms exports during the same period (37%) [4].

What caused this change to occur? There are multiple responses from writers. Abadi relates it to the pragmatic Indian foreign policy, persistent lingering tensions with Pakistan, competition with China and the dread of Islamic extremism [5]. A special report of the Observer Research Foundation (ORF) argues that terrorism has in many ways brought the two countries together [6]. The Middle East changes matter, too. India depends enormously on the region for energy and a considerable number of Indian workers reside there, which makes it impossible for New Delhi to deal with Israel separately [6].

These explanations are frequently mentioned, but rarely compared and contrasted. These two phenomena will thus be examined jointly in this paper and the question will be raised to what extent they account for the development of the counterterrorism relationship. The study covers the period from 2000 to 2024, including the attacks of 7 October 2023 and the ensuing regional conflict, which significantly affected the diplomatic and strategic context of India–Israel relations. The study relies on the policy statements, official data and literature available at the time of writing, and not on new fieldwork.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Historical Foundations

Early studies are mostly historical. Kumaraswamy studied the Israel policy of India primarily between the period 1948 and 1992 and focussed on the aspects that contributed to the lack of warmth in the relations despite the many commonalities. He emphasizes how much anti-colonial sentiment and the minority factor influence policy [2]. Blarel has a longer perspective, beginning with 1922. The central argument in this paper is that the reasons for

involving Israel did not emerge out of nowhere in 1992, but were a result of long-term debates within the Indian political system [3]. Both works reject the early distance as a lack of common interests and as a political decision. The ending of the period of focus for Kumaraswamy is in 1992, while for Blarel it is in 2012; there is still room for further research in the years that follow.

B. Contemporary Strategic Partnership

Closeness is explained in later studies. The partnership itself, according to the ORF special report by Kumar, is "transactional and strategic" and is built on "principle of pragmatism and trust" and has "survived political changes in both countries." According to it, Israel has provided artillery ammunition in the Kargil conflict in 1999 and that terrorism has united the two countries. It also cautions that the defence relationship had been a largely buyer-seller dynamic, and not anywhere near its full potential [6]. Abadi emphasizes the same pragmatism and then adds that successive Indian governments established relations with Israel without hurting their ties with Arab countries [5].

Post-2014 research provides details. Rajiv mentions that defence and security cooperation are the backbone of the partnership, India's policy towards Palestine remains based on its guiding principles and that the geo-economic aspect was evident at the I2U2 summit held in July 2022. The policy of dehyphenation, which maintains the Israel and Palestine relationships separately, is a major contributor to moving relations forward, Suri and Sethi write, and they highlight water and agriculture as a new aspect of cooperation since 2017 [8]. Writing at the twenty-fifth anniversary of full relations, Sajjanhar argues that India's long hesitation came from its interests in West Asia, including Gulf energy and a large diaspora there, and from domestic political considerations about its Muslim population [9]. In a later monograph Rajiv studies defence cooperation in detail and finds that India's measures to raise domestic procurement and defence indigenisation will shape how Israel takes part in the future [10].

C. Gap in the Literature

Taken together these works explain how the partnership began and what it contains. What they do less often is rank the causes. Counterterrorism, regional politics, defence trade and technology are all named but they are rarely tested against one another with data. This study attempts to correct that lacuna by setting counterterrorism and Middle East politics side by side with defence trade, investment and technology and by testing each of them against the official and institutional evidence.

III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

A. Analytical Framework

The combination of three lenses is utilized. From a realist perspective, the partnership is a reaction to threat. India and Israel are both in challenging neighbourhoods, and their partnership on defence and counterterrorism as a rational balancing in the absence of a formal partnership. The liberal perspective has been advocated by Keohane and Nye and emphasizes interdependence, in which mutual dependence through trade and technology sharing benefits both parties, and they do not wish to lose those benefits [11]. The constructivist lens is similar to Wendt and asks 'how do ideas and identities alter what states think their interests are? [12] A point added by role theory is that states are likely to behave according to the roles that they believe are appropriate to them [13]. That position has shifted from being a leader of the Non-Aligned Movement to a more pragmatic partner of India. Each lens is correlated to the evidence examined here in Table I.

Table 1. Theoretical Lenses and Evidence Examined

Lens	Core idea	Evidence examined
Realism	States respond to threats and seek capabilities	Arms transfers, shared terrorism concerns
Liberal institutionalism	Interdependence rewards cooperation	Trade, investment, agriculture and water programmes
Constructivism	Ideas and identities reshape interests	Dehyphenation, official statements, voting positions

Source: Prepared by the author from [11], [12], [13].

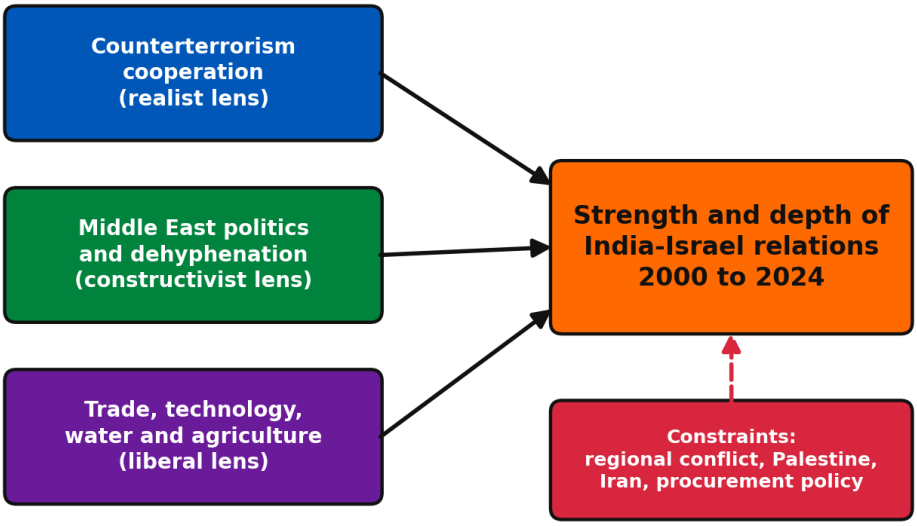


Fig. 1. Conceptual framework of the study.

B. Research Design and Sources

The qualitative and interpretive design was selected because the questions addressed motives and meanings which require more than numbers to relate [14]. The research is a secondary data research, it is a common method of social research of this nature [15] and published official data has been relied upon. The primary sources are the MEA brief on India-Israel relations (July 2024) [1] and the SIPRI fact sheet on arms transfers (March 2024) [4] along with the ORF special report (December 2014) [6] and commentaries (2018, 2022) [9], [8] as well as the Middle East Institute essay (2014) [5] and the joint statement (July 2017) [16] and the books by Kumaraswamy, Blarel and Rajiv [2], [3], [7]. Document analysis was the primary method employed since it is the method that enables careful reading of official and published documents [17]. All figures have been sourced from one of these named sources.

C. Analytical Procedure

The material was coded and grouped into themes using the six phases described by Braun and Clarke [18]. Three themes were kept after review: counterterrorism and defence, Middle East politics and dehyphenation, and economic and technological cooperation. Evidence from before and after 2014 was then compared, since several sources locate a rise in political visibility in that year. Percentage changes were calculated by the author and are marked as such. The study has limits. It does not use interviews, so the private motives of decision makers can only be inferred from public records. The MEA brief is dated July 2024, so official data for the later part of 2024 are not covered. SIPRI figures measure the volume of transfers and do not represent their financial value [4], and Rajiv notes that the Indian government has disclosed the value of its defence dealings with Israel on only two occasions, in 2005 and 2007 [10].

IV. EVOLUTION OF THE RELATIONSHIP, 2000 TO 2024

A. Consolidation, 2000 to 2013

The period began with high level contact. External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh visited Israel in 2000, and Shimon Peres visited India the same year as Israel's Minister for Regional Cooperation [1]. The India-Israel Joint Committee on Defence Cooperation had met for the first time in September 2002 [10]. In September 2003 Prime Minister Ariel Sharon came to India, the first visit by an Israeli Prime Minister, and the two governments signed the Delhi Statement on Friendship and Cooperation [1], [10]. Cooperation also moved beyond arms. Narendra Modi, then Chief Minister of Gujarat, visited Israel in May 2006 to attend a conference on agriculture technology [10]. A comprehensive work plan for agriculture was signed on 10 May 2006 and projects are carried out through the Israeli agencies MASHAV and CINADCO [1]. ORF notes that the agriculture action plan for 2008-2010 focused on four Indian states and that the plan for 2012-2015 widened the focus to seven [6].

Defence stayed central. India signed a deal in March 2004 for three Phalcon airborne warning and control systems worth USD 1.1 billion, and the aircraft were delivered in May 2009, March 2010 and mid-2011 [10]. ORF puts Israeli defence sales to India at about USD 11 billion for 1999-2011, which made Israel the second largest defence supplier to India, and it adds that much of the procurement came through inter-government arrangements [6]. The Mumbai attacks of November 2008, in which Jews were specifically targeted by Pakistani terrorists, are described in the same report as bringing the two countries even closer [6]. Yet the approach in these years was still careful. Rajiv notes that the term strategic partner was missing from major documents

such as the 2003 joint statement and that senior Indian ministers stressed the need not to advertise the defence and security relationship [10].

B. Strategic Upgrade, 2014 to 2024

Visibility rose after 2014. Three security-related agreements were signed in February 2014. Prime Ministers Modi and Netanyahu met at the UN General Assembly in September 2014 and Home Minister Rajnath Singh visited Israel in November 2014. The 2014 Union Budget also raised the cap on foreign direct investment in defence from 26% to 49% [6]. Rajiv adds that the September 2014 meeting was only the second between the two Prime Ministers in eleven years, that it followed a parliamentary debate in which the government resisted opposition demands for a resolution critical of Israel, and that the cap was raised again to 74% in August 2020 [10]. Israeli Defence Minister Moshe Yaalon visited India in February 2015, the first such visit, and President Pranab Mukherjee visited both Israel and Palestine in October 2015 [10]. President Reuven Rivlin made a state visit to India in November 2016 [1].

The key step came in July 2017. Narendra Modi made the first visit to Israel by an Indian Prime Minister on 4 to 6 July, and the joint statement raised the relationship to a strategic partnership. The two leaders also agreed to set up a Strategic Partnership in Water and Agriculture steered by a Joint Working Group [16]. Netanyahu returned the visit from 14 to 19 January 2018 [1], and Sajjanhar notes that it was a six-day visit, unusually long for a head of government [9]. Suri and Sethi observe that Modi did not include the Palestinian Authority in the 2017 trip and visited Palestine separately in 2018 [8]. Rajiv confirms that this stand-alone visit to Ramallah took place in February 2018 [10].

Wider groupings and crisis contacts followed. On 14 July 2022 the Prime Minister took part virtually in the first leaders' summit of I2U2 with Israel, the United Arab Emirates and the United States, and the thirtieth anniversary of full relations was marked in 2022-23 [1]. After the attacks of 7 October 2023 the two Prime Ministers spoke on 10 October and again on 19 December about the regional situation and the safety of maritime traffic. India launched Operation Ajay on 12 October and more than 1,300 Indian nationals returned on six special flights by 22 October. National Security Advisor Ajit Doval visited Israel on 11 and 12 March 2024 [1]. Table II lists the main milestones.

Table 2. Key Milestones In India-Israel Relations

Year	Event	Source
1950	India announces recognition of Israel (17 September)	[1]
1992	Full diplomatic relations established and embassies opened	[1]
1999	Israel supplies artillery munitions during the Kargil conflict	[6]
2002	Joint Committee on Defence Cooperation meets for the first time (September)	[10]
2003	Prime Minister Ariel Sharon visits India (September); Delhi Statement signed	[1], [10]
2004	Deal for three Phalcon airborne warning systems worth USD 1.1 billion (March)	[10]
2006	Agriculture work plan signed (10 May)	[1]
2014	Three security agreements (February); Rajnath Singh visits Israel (November)	[6]
2017	Modi visits Israel (4-6 July); ties upgraded to strategic partnership	[1], [16]
2018	Netanyahu visits India (14-19 January)	[1]
2020	Foreign direct investment cap in defence raised to 74% (August)	[10]
2022	First I2U2 leaders' summit (14 July)	[1]
2023	Netanyahu calls Modi after the 7 October attacks (10 October); Operation Ajay launched (12 October)	[1]

V. COUNTERTERRORISM AND MIDDLE EAST DRIVERS

A. Counterterrorism and Defence Cooperation

Terrorism is the most direct link in the evidence. Kumar states that both countries face terrorism from global jihadi groups as well as state-sponsored proxies, and that India and Israel remain, besides the United States, prime targets of terrorist groups [6]. The report reads the security agreements of February 2014 as following from these shared challenges [6]. India's reaction to Operation Protective Edge in July 2014 shows this thinking in practice. The Indian statement expressed concern about civilian deaths in Gaza but also mentioned cross-border provocations resulting from rocket attacks on Israel, and the report reads this as India drawing a parallel with its own struggle against cross-border terrorism from Pakistan [6]. Rajiv adds that leaders of the ruling party have often praised Israel's counter-terrorism and national security policies and that the two countries have set up significant mechanisms in border and internal security [10]. Training is one example. Indian Air Force Garud commandos joined the Blue Flag exercise in Israel in 2017 on a C-130J aircraft, a choice that allowed them to learn counter-terrorism practices from Israeli experience [10]. MEA now lists counter-terrorism among the sectors with bilateral consultation mechanisms, next to water, agriculture and defence [1].

Arms data show how deep the defence link has become. SIPRI reports that India took 37% of Israel's major arms exports in 2019-23, while the Philippines

took 12% and the United States 8.7% (Table III) [4]. Rajiv reports from earlier SIPRI editions that the Indian share was 43% in 2016-20 and 37% in 2017-21 [10]. India is therefore Israel's largest arms customer by a wide margin. The reverse is not true. SIPRI shows that Russia, not Israel, remained India's main supplier in 2019-23 with 36% of its imports [4]. Rajiv reports that Israel supplied 13% of India's arms imports in 2016-20 [10], and press reports of the following SIPRI edition give the same 13% for 2020-24, behind Russia at 36% and France at 33% [19].

Table 3. Israel as an Arms Exporter (Sipri)

Indicator	Value
Israel's rank among arms exporters, 2019-23	9th
Share of global arms exports, 2019-23	2.4%
Share of global arms exports, 2014-18	3.1%
Change in Israel's arms exports between the two periods	-25%
India's share of Israel's arms exports, 2019-23	37%
Philippines' share of Israel's arms exports, 2019-23	12%
United States' share of Israel's arms exports, 2019-23	8.7%

Source: SIPRI Fact Sheet, March 2024 [4].

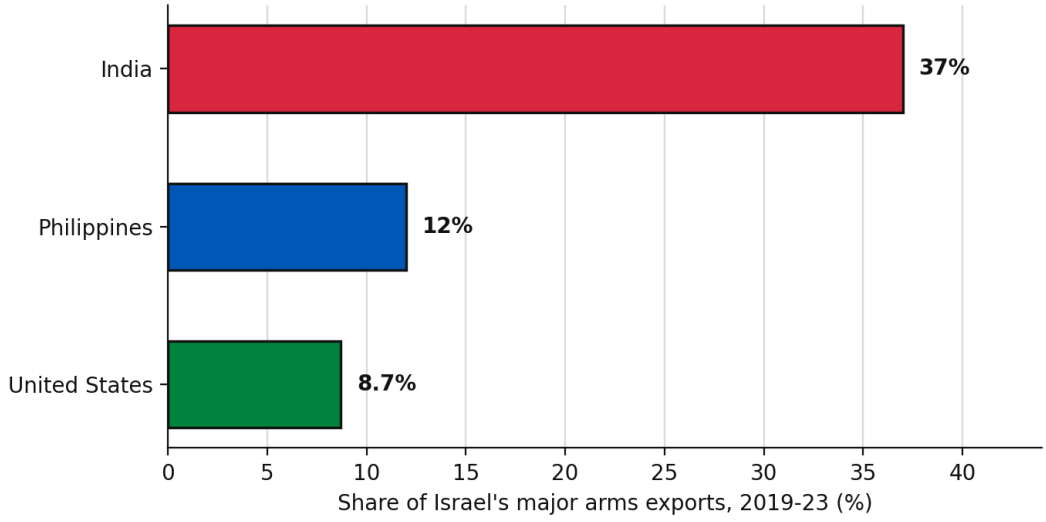


Fig. 2. Main recipients of Israeli major arms exports, 2019-23 (SIPRI [SP]).

These data also show a procurement motive that is separate from counterterrorism. According to Kumar, Israel provided India with weapons which it was unable to purchase from other countries due to various international regimes and sanctions. Rajiv provides rationales. India was ready to supply niche equipment without the restrictions that its ally the United States imposes on some such transfers, and Indian industry was unable to fulfill some of the requirements, so India turned to Israel for supplies like the Barak point defence system, when the indigenous Trishul failed in user trials [10].

B. Middle East Politics and Dehyphenation

The second driver is the way India handles the Middle East. Kumar explains that India's closeness to Arab states was meant to create leverage over Pakistan, but that the Arab states made no attempt to support India's position on Kashmir and on terrorism sponsored by Pakistan. This led to disillusionment in New Delhi, and some analysts link the change in policy to the lack of returns from the pro-Arab approach [6]. India did not give up Palestine. The report states that there was no significant change in India's stand on Palestine, yet the relationship with Israel grew so much that it overshadowed earlier Indian efforts to champion the Palestinian cause, while Palestine was kept distinct from the Israel relationship [6]. Abadi describes Delhi's response to Operation Protective Edge as restrained and notes that Indian governments have kept expressing sympathy for the Palestinian cause [5]. In the Rajya Sabha debate of July 2014 the foreign minister said the government continued to support the Palestinian cause at international forums while condemning rocket attacks on Israeli civilians [10].

Suri and Sethi describe this as dehyphenation. They report that India supported UN Human Rights Council resolutions critical of Israel on Gaza and Palestinian rights in 2014, 2015 and 2021 even as bilateral ties grew [8]. Sajjanhar adds that India's vote at the United Nations on the status of Jerusalem was seen by some as unfriendly to Israel, but Netanyahu said that one negative vote would not affect the relationship [9]. The ORF report also notes that the two states differ on Palestine, Iran and Syria and that they agreed to remain disagreed without letting these differences hold the relationship hostage

[6]. This caution is due to India's interests in the area. India is heavily dependent of the Middle East for energy and a significant number of Indian workers reside there, and remittances from the Gulf contribute to the foreign exchange reserves in India [6]. The regional change reduced the price of 'closeness. Rajiv observes that Indian fighters have participated in Israeli exercises to a limited extent due to clearance from the Gulf countries which do not have military ties with Israel and this is further reduced since the Abraham Accords in September 2020 [10]. In 2022, I2U2 was formed between India and Israel, on the one hand, and the UAE and USA on the other [1]; Rajiv calls it a geo-economic initiative [7]. This regional change in the context of the partnership made it easier to defend.

C. Economic and Technological Cooperation

Trade and technology give the partnership its everyday substance. ORF reports that total trade rose from USD 3,030.30 million in 2007-08 to USD 6,618.21 million in 2011-12, an increase of about 118% (Table IV) [6]. MEA data show that it reached about USD 10.77 billion in 2022-23, with Indian exports at about USD 8.45 billion, and then fell to USD 6.53 billion in 2023-24 (Table V) [1]. The base was small. From around USD 200 million in 1992, made up mainly of diamonds, trade diversified, but MEA also states that it is still dominated by diamonds, petroleum products and chemicals, with recent growth in electronic machinery, high-tech products, communications systems and medical equipment [1]. Rajiv makes the same point in another way. He reports that precious stones and related goods made up 36.7% of total trade over the five years before 2022, or USD 9.5 billion out of USD 25.8 billion, and that the relationship is often summed up as diamonds and defence [10].

Table 4. India-Israel Bilateral Trade, 2007-08 to 2011-12 (USD Million)

Year	Export	Import	Total trade
2007-08	1,604.36	1,425.94	3,030.30
2008-09	1,458.55	2,090.41	3,548.95
2009-10	1,968.59	1,885.06	3,853.66
2010-11	2,919.78	2,253.51	5,173.28
2011-12	4,040.52	2,577.69	6,618.21

Source: ORF special report, December 2014 [6]. Column labels are as given in the source. Totals are reproduced exactly as published; for 2008-09, 2009-10 and 2010-11 they differ by USD 0.01 million from the sum of the export and import columns, which appears to be rounding in the original table.

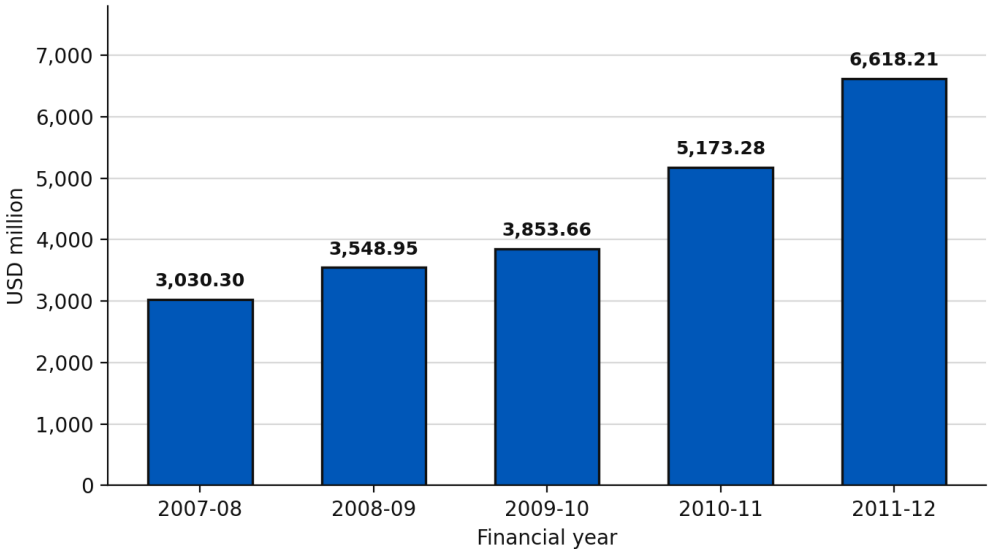


Fig. 3. Total India-Israel trade, 2007-08 to 2011-12 (ORF [KU]).

Table 5. India-Israel Merchandise Trade Excluding Defence (USD Billion)

Indicator	2022-23	2023-24	Change (calculated)
Total trade	10.77	6.53	-39.4%
Indian exports to Israel	8.45	4.52	-46.5%
Israeli exports to India	Not stated	2.00	Not calculated

Source: MEA brief, July 2024 [1]. Trade was around USD 0.20 billion in 1992 [1]. Percentage changes were calculated by the author from the published values.

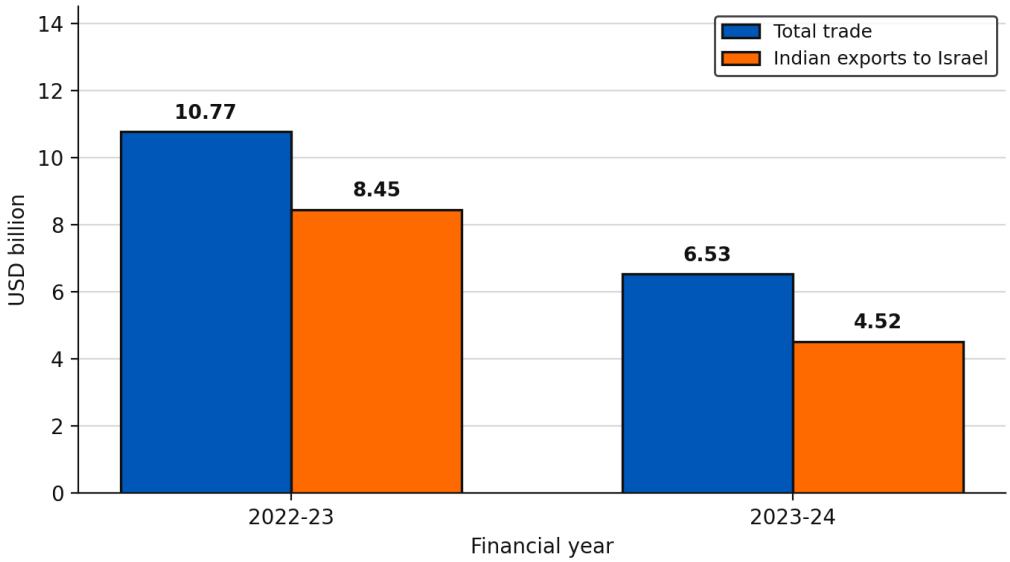


Fig. 4. India-Israel trade excluding defence, 2022-23 and 2023-24 (MEA [MEA]).

Official voices now call this level too low. In February 2025 the Indian Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal described trade of about USD 6.5 billion as sub-optimal and said both countries should aim for a tenfold rise over the next 12 to 13 years [20]. Investment is smaller than trade. From April 2000 to April 2024 Indian overseas direct investment in Israel was about USD 396 million, and direct FDI from Israel to India from April 2000 to March 2024 was about USD 314.87 million [1]. The largest single investment named by MEA is the 2022 purchase of Haifa Port by a consortium led by Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone Ltd for USD 1.18 billion [1]. Technology links are also formal. Under the India-Israel Industrial R&D and Innovation Fund (I4F), each side committed USD 20 million over 2018-2022 and renewed the fund for 2023-27, and by mid-2024 it had funded thirty R&D projects [1]. In agriculture, 31 Centres of Excellence have been set up in 13 Indian states, and water cooperation rests on an MoU of November 2016 [1]. Table VI collects these indicators.

Table 6. Selected Cooperation Indicators (Mea, July 2024)

Indicator	Value
Indian overseas direct investment in Israel, April 2000 to April 2024	About USD 396 million
Direct FDI from Israel to India, April 2000 to March 2024	About USD 314.87 million
Haifa Port acquisition by an Adani-led consortium, 2022	USD 1.18 billion
I4F contribution by each side, 2018-2022	USD 20 million
R&D projects funded under I4F by mid-2024	Thirty
Agriculture Centres of Excellence	31 in 13 Indian states

Source: MEA brief, July 2024 [1].

VI. DISCUSSION: TESTING THE HYPOTHESIS

A. Does the Evidence Support the Hypothesis?

The hypothesis stated that shared counterterrorism concerns and evolving Middle East interests became the primary driver of the relationship and often overshadowed historical sensitivities. The evidence supports it in three ways. First, the ORF report places terrorism at the centre of the closer ties and links the security agreements of 2014 to shared threats [6], and MEA lists counter-terrorism among its consultation mechanisms [1]. Second, India's disappointment with the Arab states and its decision to keep Palestine separate made a closer Israel policy possible without a formal break [6], [8], [5]. Third, the relationship grew so much that it overshadowed earlier Indian efforts on Palestine [6].

Even so, the evidence does not allow us to call these two factors the primary driver. ORF lists other reasons for Indian interest, including Israel's reliability during sanctions, its defence technology, and its progress in water and farming [6]. Rajiv calls defence and security the mainstays and links recent momentum to the visit of 2017 [7], [10]. Blarel warns against a single cause by showing that policy came from long debates inside India [3]. SIPRI shows that Israel is not India's main supplier [4], and Israel itself depends heavily on India as a customer while its global arms export share fell from 3.1% to 2.4% between the two periods [4]. Both sides also have commercial concerns other than terror. But historical sensitivities were not eradicated, they were handled. India continued to vote for Palestinian causes in the UN votes [8] and the policy of India in Palestine remains unchanged [7]. The bottom line is

that counterterrorism and change in the region created the space for proximity, and defence procurement and technology maintained proximity.

B. Challenges and Constraints

Several limits remain. One of these is a decline in trade in the year 2023-24. However, the commercial connections can shrink rapidly as evidenced by a decrease of approximately 39% in one year [1]. The MEA brief does not explain, and the fall comes in the wake of attacks during October 2023, so this study can only observe the timing and not the cause. The second is that differences on Palestine, Iran and Syria are unbridgeable, in ORF's view, even if they wish to live with them [6]. The Palestine question is likely to remain on the agenda, as an independent Palestinian state is a distant possibility in the near to medium-term, Rajiv adds [7].

The third relates to defence. According to ORF the relationship is basically one of buyer and seller, and Israeli companies were not comfortable with the Indian partners having the management control [6]. Rajiv argues that India's indigenisation effort would mean that there would be lesser imports from Israel. If indigenisation goes well, imports of such items from Israeli companies may drop by at least Rs 9,000 million, or USD 120 million. He considers this small today, but believes impact will increase in medium to long-term (10year) period [10]. He also observes that there are no figures published on the value of defence trade, which allows critics to doubt the relationship [10]. It is uncertain how these pressures will work out.

VII. CONCLUSION

This study examined how counterterrorism cooperation and changing Middle East politics shaped India-Israel relations between 2000 and 2024. The evidence indicates that there was trust and a concrete motivation for cooperation based on common exposure to terrorism. By maintaining its separate policy on Israel and Palestine, India was able to pursue that cooperation, while still maintaining its Arab and Palestinian relationships. Security doors were opened and the regional environment enabled India to enter through the door. Also, the hypothesis only partially holds true. The partnership was extended to defence procurement, access to technology and trade. Although India is Israel's biggest buyer of major arms, accounting for 37% of the total in 2019-23, it is still Russia's top buyer, meaning that terrorism is not solely responsible for the defence connection. Instead, historical sensitivities were managed and India maintained its stance on Palestine even as relations continued to grow. The decrease in trade from USD 10.77 billion in 2022-23 to USD 6.53 billion in 2023-24 indicates that the dynamics are dependent on the state of regional peace. All of these elements indicate that the alliance is based not on identity but on shared interests, and that its future will rely on the ability of both states to deal with regional conflicts. There are limitations to the study. It doesn't use interviews; rather, it uses documents, and the official data only run through mid-2024. Future research can focus on the defence co-production deals in detail, India's Israel policy in comparison to its Gulf policy, and the trade dynamics following 2024. Interviews with former officials might also be used to test the motives which this paper could only infer.

REFERENCES

[1] Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, “Brief on India-Israel bilateral relations,” New Delhi, India, Jul. 2024. https://www.mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/India-Israel-July.pdf

[2] P. R. Kumaraswamy, *India's Israel Policy*. New York, NY, USA: Columbia Univ. Press, 2010.

[3] N. Blarel, *The Evolution of India's Israel Policy: Continuity, Change, and Compromise since 1922*. New Delhi, India: Oxford Univ. Press, 2015.

[4] P. D. Wezeman, K. Djokic, M. George, Z. Hussain, and S. T. Wezeman, “Trends in international arms transfers, 2023,” SIPRI Fact Sheet, Stockholm Int. Peace Res. Inst., Stockholm, Sweden, Mar. 2024. https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2024-03/fs_2403_at_2023.pdf

[5] J. Abadi, “India's national security imperatives and Indo-Israeli strategic cooperation,” Middle East Institute, Washington, DC, USA, Sep. 18, 2014. https://mei.edu/publication/indias-national-security-imperatives-and-indo-israeli-strategic-cooperation/

[6] T. Kumar, “India and Israel: Reinforcing the partnership,” ORF Special Rep., no. 7, Observer Research Foundation, New Delhi, India, Dec. 2014. https://www.orfonline.org/research/india-and-israel-reinforcing-the-partnership

[7] S. S. C. Rajiv, *The India-Israel Strategic Partnership: Contours, Opportunities and Challenges*. New Delhi, India: Pentagon Press, 2023.

[8] N. Suri and H. Sethi, “30 years of bilateral ties: What Indo-Israeli relations look like,” Observer Research Foundation, New Delhi, India, Sep. 12, 2022. https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/30-years-of-bilateral-ties-what-indo-israeli-relations-look-like

[9] A. Sajjanhar, “India-Israel relations: A burgeoning partnership,” Observer Research Foundation, New Delhi, India, Jan. 25, 2018. https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/india-israel-relations-a-burgeoning-partnership

[10] S. S. C. Rajiv, “The India-Israel defence and security partnership at 30,” MP-IDSA Monograph Ser., no. 75, Manohar Parrikar Inst. Defence Studies Anal., New Delhi, India, Jun. 2022. https://www.idsa.in/system/files/monograph/monograph75.pdf

[11] R. O. Keohane and J. S. Nye, Jr., "Power and interdependence," *Survival*, vol. 15, no. 4, pp. 158–165, 1973, doi: 10.1080/00396337308441409.

[12] A. Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1999.

[13] S. Harnisch, C. Frank, and H. W. Maull, Eds., *Role Theory in International Relations*. London, U.K.: Routledge, 2011.

[14] J. W. Creswell and J. D. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 5th ed. Thousand Oaks, CA, USA: Sage, 2018.

[15] A. Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, 5th ed. Oxford, U.K.: Oxford Univ. Press, 2016.

[16] "India and Israel joint statement," Embassy of Israel in India, New Delhi, India, Jul. 5, 2017.

[17] G. A. Bowen, "Document analysis as a qualitative research method," *Qual. Res. J.*, vol. 9, no. 2, pp. 27–40, 2009.

[18] V. Braun and V. Clarke, "Using thematic analysis in psychology," *Qual. Res. Psychol.*, vol. 3, no. 2, pp. 77–101, 2008, doi: 10.1191/1478088706qp063oa.

[19] K. Ray, "Ukraine dislodges India as leading arms importer," *Deccan Herald*, Mar. 10, 2025. https://www.deccanherald.com/amp/story/india%2Fukraine-dislodges-india-as-leading-arms-importer-3440500

[20] "India, Israel should look at increasing bilateral trade 10 times: Goyal," Press Trust of India, *Deccan Herald*, Feb. 2025. https://www.deccanherald.com/amp/story/india%2Findia-israel-should-look-at-increasing-bilateral-trade-10-times-piyush-goyal-3400898