BEYOND CONVENTIONAL DIPLOMACY: CULTURAL NATIONALISM, TECHNOLOGY AS STATECRAFT AND GEOECONOMIC CONVERGENCE IN INDIA-ISRAEL RELATIONS

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Abstract:

The discourse on India–Israel relations has remained constrained by a security centred paradigm in which defence cooperation and diplomatic pragmatism are treated as the partnership's principal markers. Recent scholarship, however, indicates that this framing no longer captures the wider ideational, technological and geoeconomic forces shaping the relationship in the twenty first century. A more textured account emerges when cultural nationalism, technology as statecraft and geoeconomic convergence are approached as interconnected domains that recast how each state understands and pursues strategic alignment. These domains reveal a form of strategic behaviour shaped by the demands of technological competition, economic fragmentation and shifting regional orders. By tracing how ideas, infrastructures and economic strategies intersect within this bilateral relationship, the analysis contributes to wider debates on strategic culture and the transformation of statecraft in the contemporary global landscape.

Keywords: India–Israel relations, cultural nationalism, technology as statecraft, geoeconomic convergence, strategic culture, atypical democracies

Titulo en Español: Más allá de la diplomacia convencional: Nacionalismo cultural, tecnología como arte de gobernar y convergencia geoeconómica en las relaciones entre India e Israel

Resumen:

El discurso sobre las relaciones entre la India e Israel ha seguido estando limitado por un paradigma centrado en la seguridad, en el que la cooperación en materia de defensa y el pragmatismo diplomático se consideran los principales indicadores de la asociación. Sin embargo, estudios recientes indican que este marco ya no refleja las fuerzas ideológicas, tecnológicas y geoeconómicas más amplias que configuran la relación en el siglo XXI. Se obtiene una visión más matizada cuando se aborda el nacionalismo cultural, la tecnología como arte de gobernar y la convergencia geoeconómica como ámbitos interconectados que reformulan la forma en que cada Estado entiende y persigue la alineación estratégica. Estos ámbitos revelan un tipo de comportamiento estratégico moldeado por las exigencias de la competencia tecnológica, la fragmentación económica y los cambios en los órdenes regionales. Al rastrear cómo se entrecruzan las ideas, las infraestructuras y las estrategias económicas en esta relación bilateral, el análisis contribuye a debates más amplios sobre la cultura estratégica y la transformación del arte de gobernar en el panorama mundial contemporáneo.

Palabras Clave: *Relaciones entre India e Israel, nacionalismo cultural, tecnología como arte de gobernar, convergencia geoeconómica, cultura estratégica, democracias atípicas*.

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1. Introduction

For much of the post–Cold War era, analyses of India–Israel relations have been framed by a distinctly circumscribed emphasis on defence collaboration, arms sales, and episodic tactical convergence. Conventional accounts highlight the formalisation of diplomatic ties in 1992 and Israel's subsequent emergence as a prominent provider of sophisticated military technology to India. They often treat the relationship as a largely transactional security partnership anchored in counterterrorism and weapons acquisition.[2] While this literature has yielded valuable insights into the strategic and operational dimensions of the partnership, it has also produced what might be termed a unidimensional narrative. By privileging "hard" cooperation, existing analyses risk marginalising the ideational, technological, and geoeconomic dimensions that have come to redefine the bilateral relationship in the twenty-first century.[3] As a result, important questions remain insufficiently addressed. To what degree has collaboration in innovation, digital technologies, and agrotechnology recast the strategic profile of the partnership, shifting it beyond its earlier defence-centred frame. Relatedly, how do civilisational imaginaries and overlapping geoeconomic priorities reinforce the bilateral relationship, and in what respects might they constrain or complicate its political trajectory.

This study engages with existing strategic analyses,[4] and advances an interpretive framework organised around three interrelated thematic dimensions: cultural nationalism, technology as statecraft, and geoeconomic convergence. The central claim advanced here is that the intensification and resilience of the India–Israel relationship are best understood through the interaction of these three dimensions, rather than through material security considerations alone. Within this framework, cultural nationalism, conceived as the articulation of nationhood through historically grounded and majority centred narratives, functions as a key ideational vector. It generates a degree of identity based proximity between majoritarian (Hindu) nationalism in India and Zionism in Israel, thereby lowering the normative and political costs associated with deepening bilateral engagement.[5] In this sense, cultural nationalism operates not merely as a domestic discourse but as a constitutive element of foreign policy behaviour, shaping the interpretive frames through which political elites in both states assess opportunities for cooperation and assign meaning to the partnership.[6] Technology as statecraft refers to the ways in which both states employ innovation, defence research and development and dual use technologies as instruments of influence and strategic autonomy. In this perspective, collaborative high technology initiatives become a significant arena of foreign policy practice rather than a secondary adjunct to conventional security cooperation.[7] Geoeconomic convergence denotes the alignment of trade, investment and connectivity

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[2] Kumaraswamy, P. R. (2010): *India's Israel Policy,* New York, Columbia University Press; Blarel Nicolas (2014): *The Evolution of India's Israel Policy: Continuity, Change, and Compromise*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.

[3] See, for example, Blarel Nicolas (2014): *The Evolution of India's Israel Policy: Continuity, Change, and Compromise,* Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2014, Ch. 6.

[4] Kumaraswamy, *India's Israel Policy*, *op. cit*., Blarel, *Evolution of India's Israel Policy*, *op.cit.*

[5] The terms "Hindu nationalism" and "Zionism" are used here as heuristic categories rather than as unified ideological formations. Both encompass divergent, often conflicting intellectual, ritual, and political strands. On the internal plurality of Hindu traditions, see Fisher, Elaine M. (2017): *Hindu Pluralism: Religion and the Public Sphere in Early Modern South India*. Oakland: University of California Press; Doniger, Wendy and Martha C. Nussbaum (eds.) (2015): Pluralism and Democracy in India. New Delhi, Oxford University Press. For Zionism's heterogeneity, see Kimmerling, Baruch (2001): *The Invention and Decline of Israeliness: State, Society, and the Military,* Berkeley: University of California Press; Singh, Priya (2025): *Contesting the Monolith: Intersectionality and Interfaces in the Jewish State of Israel,* Abingdon, Routledge.

[6] Anderson, Benedict (2006): *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, rev. ed. London, Verso; Smith, Anthony D. (1998): *Nationalism and Modernism* Abingdon, Routledge.

[7] Hu, Zichen; Zhang, Chang; and Galligan, Denis: "Technology as Statecraft: Remaking Sovereignty, Security, and Leadership in a Multipolar Age", *Politics and Governance* Vol. 13 (2025), Article 11743, at https://doi.org/10.17645/pag.11743

strategies designed to advance geopolitical objectives through economic instruments, as suggested in the broader literature on geoeconomics.[8] Viewed in conjunction, these dimensions suggest that the bilateral relationship is driven by forms of strategic behaviour that reach beyond hard power considerations and are situated within broader patterns of technological and economic statecraft.

The theoretical rationale for this approach draws judiciously on constructivist, strategic culture and geoeconomic perspectives, allowing these insights to guide the analysis without determining it. Constructivist scholarship has long emphasised that interests and preferences are shaped by intersubjective identities and historical narratives, rather than given exogenously.[9] The notion of strategic culture, elaborated in debates on how domestic norms and historical experience condition security behaviour, provides a useful lens for understanding why both polities attach importance to self-reliance, the cultivation of hard power and sustained vigilance in the face of perceived existential threats. It also helps explain why their security establishments have proved particularly receptive to one another's operational practices and technological innovations.[10] At the same time, geoeconomic analyses draw attention to the extent to which economic instruments, including trade agreements, technological collaboration and infrastructure projects, have acquired renewed significance as instruments of statecraft in an era marked by heightened strategic competition and growing interdependence.[11] By bringing these strands together, the study posits India–Israel cooperation as a site in which ideas, technologies and economic strategies intersect, rather than as a phenomenon that can be understood solely as a derivative outcome of wider systemic power balances. Recent scholarship corroborates this shift in emphasis, documenting India's movement from an earlier, relatively constrained pro-Palestinian orientation toward a partnership with Israel increasingly shaped by reciprocal strategic and material interests.[12]

This study is structured in the following way. The next section reviews the existing scholarship on India and Israel relations and situates the study's contribution within wider debates in foreign policy analysis and international relations theory. From this point, the analysis advances a coherent account of how cultural nationalism, technology as statecraft and geoeconomic convergence together shape the contours of the bilateral relationship. It develops the argument across three conceptual domains. The first considers the evolution of cultural nationalism in both settings and traces how civilisational narratives, majority centred visions of the nation and discourses of democratic exceptionalism have been mobilised by political elites to recast one another as ideologically congenial partners, drawing on comparative scholarship on nationalism and civilisational identity to illuminate how such ideas inform foreign policy framing. The second examines technology as statecraft through an exploration of concrete domains of Indian and Israeli cooperation in defence innovation, cyber and digital technologies, agrotechnology and water management, demonstrating, with reference to work in science and technology studies and international political economy, how collaborative innovation serves developmental as well as strategic purposes and reinforces claims to strategic autonomy within an increasingly multipolar order. The third considers geoeconomic convergence by analysing

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[8] Luttwak, Edward N.: "From Geopolitics to Geo-Economics: Logic of Conflict, Grammar of Commerce," *The National Interest,* nº 20 (1990), pp. 17–23; Blackwill, Robert D. Blackwill and Jennifer M. Harris (2016): *War by Other Means: Geoeconomics and Statecraft,* Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press.

[9] Wendt, Alexander: "Anarchy is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics," *International Organization* Vol. 46, nº 2 (1992), pp. 391–425.

[10] Katzernstein, Peter J.(ed.) (1996): *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics,* New York, Columbia University Press

[11] Luttwak, "From Geopolitics to Geo-Economics", *op. cit*.; Blackwill and Harris, *War by Other Means*, *op.cit.*

[12] Shah, Mumtaz Ahmad: "India's Israel–palestine Policy: from solidarity with palestinian to reciprocity with Israel", *Asian Journal of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies,* 11 September 2025.

how trade, investment and connectivity initiatives link the two states in pursuit of shared strategic objectives and embed the partnership within broader regional and global architectures. The conclusion draws together the central insights and reflects on their implications not only for understanding India and Israel relations, but also for the wider question of how non-Western democracies conceive, articulate and sustain strategic partnerships that extend beyond conventional diplomatic templates.

2. Literature Review

Scholarship on India–Israel relations has grown steadily since the formal establishment of diplomatic ties in 1992, yet it remains marked by a durable tendency to privilege hard security and diplomatic pragmatism as the primary lenses through which the partnership is understood. Early accounts, written in the wake of normalisation, framed the relationship primarily in terms of convergent threat perceptions and counterterrorism collaboration. Harsh V. Pant's influential article on the "India–Israel partnership" is emblematic in this regard, depicting the relationship as a product of shared security concerns and arms cooperation, constrained by India's dependence on Arab oil, domestic sensitivities over Palestine and the need to sustain relations with Iran.[13] This work anticipated several subsequent developments in the bilateral relationship and remains a touchstone for understanding its strategic logic.

A relatively recent contribution to the field is the 2020 volume *India and Israel: The Making of a Strategic Partnership*, which brings together the most comprehensive assessment of the defence centred readings that have long shaped interpretations of the bilateral relationship.[14] The work charts the consolidation of military cooperation, the gradual thickening of institutional contacts and the evolution of arms transfers that together underpin what is often described as the strategic core of the partnership.[15] It also situates this trajectory within wider regional and systemic developments, including the changing political landscape of West Asia following the Abraham Accords and the continuing influence of the United States in determining the boundaries of policy choice available to both the states.[16] A complementary strand of analysis highlights that India's pursuit of genuine defence self-reliance requires more coherent procurement policies and sustained co development and co production arrangements with partners such as Israel, rather than periodic acquisition driven engagement.[17]

More recent Indian scholarship has documented the diversification and resilience of the relationship in the twenty-first century. Deeksha Singh et.al trace the evolution of India–Israel relations from early diplomatic distance to a multi-sectoral partnership centred on defence, a continuity mechanism even during periods of limited political contact, while agricultural and water initiatives have emerged as principal tools for expanding engagement beyond central

[13] Pant, Harsh V.: "India–Israel Partnership: Convergence and Constraints", *Middle East Review of International Affairs* Vol 8, nº 4 (2004), pp 60–73.

[14] Prasad, Jayant Prasad and Rajiv, S. Samuel C. (eds.) (2020): *India and Israel: The Making of a Strategic Partnership*, Abingdon, Routledge.

[15] Browne, N. A. K.: "A Perspective on India–Israel Defence and Security Ties"; Deb, Alok, "India–Israel Defence Engagement: Land Forces' Cooperation"; Gopal, Prakash "India–Israel Defence Engagement: A Naval Perspective," and Inbar, Efraim (2020): "Israel and India: Looking Back and Ahead," in *India and Israel: The Making of a Strategic Partnership*, ed. Prasad and Rajiv, Abingdon, Routledge.

[16] Blarel, Nicolas: "Assessing United States Influence over India and Israel Relations: A Difficult Equation to Balance", in Jayant Prasad and S. Samuel C. Rajiv (eds.) (2020*): India and Israel: The Making of a Strategic Partnership,* Abingdon, Routledge; Singh, Sanjay: "India Israel: The View from West Asia", *Strategic Analysis* Vol. 41, nº 4 (2017), pp. 348-354.

[17] Cowshish, Amit : "India Israel Defence Trade: Issues and Challenges", *Strategic Analysis,* Vol. 41, nº 4 (2017), pp. 401–12; Behera, Laxman Kumar (2020): *India's Defence Economy: Planning, Budgeting, Industry and Procurement* , Abingdon, Routledge India, at https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003105305

elites.[18][19] Ningthoujam's account of India–Israel relations "scaling newer heights" adds detail on the widening agenda, documenting cooperation in innovation, renewable energy, agriculture and nascent minilateral formats involving the United Arab Emirates, while also noting the ideological convergence between the Bharatiya Janata Party and right-leaning coalitions in Israel and the role this has played in bringing the relationship "out of the closet."[20] These studies reaffirm the breadth and durability of the partnership, but they tend to conceptualise multidimensionality in descriptive terms, as an expanding list of cooperative sectors, rather than as an analytically integrated configuration.

At the same time, a small but significant body of work has begun to foreground the ideational and affective dimensions of the relationship. Mira Ben-Josef Hirsch and Miriam Fendius Miller's comparative study of Israel–Germany, India–Russia and India–Israel introduces the notion of "otherness and resilience" to explain how bilateral relationships with historical or cultural "others" can nonetheless develop dense and durable forms of cooperation.[21] Their relational constructivist approach shows how patterns of ambivalence, historical memory and perceived difference coexist with strategic convergence to produce what they term resilient bilateralism. In the India–Israel case, they highlight the coexistence of ideological distance, normative ambivalence and pragmatic cooperation. Critical and decolonial interventions push the debate in a different direction by foregrounding the normative implications of the tightening alliance. Azad Essa's *Hostile Homelands* reads the India–Israel partnership as part of a broader transnational assemblage of Islamophobic, securitised and capitalist power, arguing that Hindutva and Zionism have coalesced into a mutually reinforcing project of majoritarian rule, militarised development and surveillance capitalism.[22] Essa's work draws attention to the racialised and carceral dimensions of arms trade, border technologies and counterterrorism narratives that circulate between India and Israel, placing the alliance within a global political economy of control.

A further layer of context is provided by the literature on Israel's ties with Asia and on the emerging global order. Studies of Israel's "turn to Asia" underline how the search for new markets, technological partners and diplomatic diversification has drawn Israel closer to Asian powers, with India singled out as a central interlocutor in political, defence–industrial and economic spheres.[23] Recent scholarship, including the volume *Israel Asia Relations in the Twenty First Century*,[24] highlights the extent to which Israel has sought to reposition itself within Asia's strategic and technological landscape and identifies India as an increasingly important partner within this eastward orientation. Alexander Krylov and Arman Mikaelian, for instance, place India at the heart of Israel's attempts to navigate what they term a "new bipolarity," arguing that Israel seeks to reconcile its structural alignment with the United States with a growing web of strategic partnerships in Asia, among which India is particularly

[18] Singh, Deeksha, and Singh Dinesh: "India–Israel Relations in the Twenty-First Century: A Politico-Strategic Study", *International Journal for Multidisciplinary Research*, Vol. 7, nº 2 (March-April 2025).

[19] Kumaraswamy, P. R. (2010): *India's Israel Policy,* New York, Columbia University Press; Kumaraswamy, P. R. (2020): "Redefining 'Strategic' Cooperation: India and Israel", in Prasad and Rajiv (ed.) (2020): *India and Israel: The Making of a Strategic Partnership*, Abingdon, Routledge.

[20] Ningthoujam, Alvite Singh: "India–Israel Relations: Scaling Newer Heights", *Indian Foreign Affairs Journal* Vol.16, nº 3 (2021), pp. 227–41.

[21] Hirsch, Mira Ben-Josef and Miller, Manjari Chatterjee: "Otherness and Resilience in Bilateral Relations: The Cases of Israel–Germany, India–Russia, and India–Israel", *Journal of International Relations and Development* Vol. 24, nº 2 (2021), pp. 356–380.

[22] Essa, Azad (2023): *Hostile Homelands: The New Alliance Between India and Israel*, London, Pluto Press.

[23] For example, see discussions of Israel's Asia policy in recent work on Israel–Asia relations and Israel's diversification strategies.

[24] Yoram Evron and Rotem Kowner (eds.) (2023): *Israel Asia Relations in the Twenty First Century*, Abingdon, Routledge.

significant.[25] Such analyses help situate the bilateral partnership within broader patterns of geoeconomic diversification and strategic hedging.

The literature to date reconstructs the movement of India and Israel relations from hesitant post-Cold War engagement to a durable and diversified partnership. They have documented in considerable empirical detail the defence and security core of the relationship, its sectoral diversification into agriculture, water management, innovation and trade, its embedding in shifting regional orders and global alignments. Yet conceptual limitations remain. Much of the literature continues to privilege security and defence cooperation as the primary explanatory axis, treating technological and economic collaboration as functional adjuncts rather than as central modalities of statecraft. The present study builds on these contributions but departs from them by positing cultural nationalism, technology as statecraft and geoeconomic convergence as interlocking analytical categories. The intensification and resilience of India–Israel relations in the twenty-first century are best understood not simply as a function of shared threats or pragmatic adjustment, but as the outcome of the structured interaction of these three dimensions.

3. Cultural Nationalism

Cultural nationalism may be understood as a mode of political imagination that conceptualises the nation as a civilisational and morally infused community rather than a voluntary association of equal citizens. It draws authority from inherited myths, memories, ritual practices and symbolic repertoires that precede the juridical state and continually shape its self-understanding.[26] In both India and Israel, cultural nationalism furnishes a normative vocabulary through which belonging and hierarchy are simultaneously articulated. The fiction of homogeneity, however, sits uneasily atop complex internal heterogeneity. Israel's population includes historically stratified Jewish communities such as Ashkenazim, Mizrahim, Ethiopian Jews and Russian immigrants, whose divergent cultural inheritances and relations to the state belie narratives of unity, while the Arab Palestinian citizens of Israel add further linguistic, cultural and historical complexity that resists assimilation into a singular national story.[27] Indian civilisational nationalism similarly subsumes caste, linguistic, regional and religious differences into an imagined unity, narrating a revivalist trajectory that links contemporary political claims to ancient cultural lineages.[28] These repertoires are not only discursive. They embed themselves in the institutional order. Israeli land and planning regimes have long produced spatial hierarchies, visible in the forced sedentarisation, demolition and relocation of Bedouin communities in the Negev and in discriminatory planning structures in mixed cities inhabited by Palestinian citizens. Studies document how such policies generate enclave existence, infrastructural deprivation and the enclosure of mobility.[29] India exhibits parallel tendencies in the consolidation of majoritarian cultural norms as the implicit foundation of

[25]Krylov, Alexander V. and Mikaelian Arman A.: "Israel in the Context of the 'New Bipolarity'", *Vestnik RUDN. International Relations*, Vol. 24, nº 1 (2024), pp. 23–39.

[26] Anderson, Benedict (2006): *Imagined Communities*, London, Vers); Smith, Anthony D. (1986): *The Ethnic Origins of Nations,* Oxford, Blackwell; Hutchinson, John (1999): *Re Interpreting Cultural Nationalism*, London, Palgrave.

[27] Kimmerling, Baruch (2001): *The Invention and Decline of Israeliness,* Berkeley: University of California Press; Smooha, Sammy: "Ethnic Democracy", *Israel Studies* Vol.2, nº 2 (1997), pp. 198–241; Yiftachel, Oren (2006): *Ethnocracy*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press; Singh, Priya (2025): *Contesting the Monolith,* Abingdon, Routledge.

[28] Jaffrelot, Sheila (2007): *Hindu Nationalism,* Princeton, Princeton University Press; Nandy, Ashis (1983): *The Intimate Enemy,* Delhi, Oxford University Press; Kaviraj, Sudipta (2010): *The Imaginary Institution of India,* Ranikhet, Permanent Black.

[29] Singh, Priya (2025): *Contesting the Monolith: Intersectionality and Interfaces in the Jewish State of Israel*, Abingdon, Routledge.

citizenship. The Citizenship Amendment Act introduces religiously delimited naturalisation pathways, signalling a shift from territorial to genealogical belonging, while proposed identification and documentation regimes place uneven burdens upon communities whose cultural legitimacy is publicly contested.[30]

These institutional expressions of cultural nationalism intersect with sovereign power. Agamben's conceptualisation of the state of exception illuminates how sovereignty determines whose life is protected and whose is exposed to conditionality, especially when cultural proximity to the majoritarian ideal becomes a criterion for recognition.[31] In Israel, the interplay of emergency regulations, differentiated residency categories, security-based administrative controls and the recent erosion of judicial oversight has produced a layered citizenship regime in which degrees of vulnerability map onto ethnic, territorial and linguistic distinctions, reflecting a broader shift from liberal democracy toward an increasingly majoritarian electoral order.[32] India's identity regimes, likewise, generate differentiated exposure to administrative precarity, especially for those whose documentary or ancestral claims are subject to scrutiny, a pattern well documented in scholarship on citizenship, caste and bureaucratic governance.[33] Cultural nationalism also takes embodied form. Mahmood's insights into ethical self-cultivation reveal how national subjects are shaped through ritualised gestures, commemorations, affective solidarities and ethical grammars that delineate legitimate belonging.[34] In Israel, military service, national memorial practices and public cultural rituals construct an ethos of collective duty that binds some communities while producing ambivalence or exclusion for others. In India, mass patriotic performances, symbolic renaming of cities and the selective elevation of civilisational figures cultivate a moralised vision of national subjecthood aligned with majoritarian cultural identity.[35] These embodied practices become acutely visible during

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[30] The Citizenship Amendment Act (2019) introduces religion as a basis for expedited naturalisation for non-Muslim migrants from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan. See legal and political commentary on the CAA and NRC; Jayal, Niraja Gopal (2013): *Citizenship and Its Discontents* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press)

[31] Agamben, Giorgio (2005): *State of Exception*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press.

[32] Analyses of Israel's layered citizenship and exclusionary residency structures draw on David Sibley's account of the purification of space and the socio-spatial reproduction of marginality (*Geographies of Exclusion*, 1995); Derek Gregory's discussion of "spaces of exclusion" in Israeli territorial and military practices (*The Colonial Present*, 2004); and Trudeau and McMorran's work on marginalisation as an everyday socio-spatial process. Giorgio Agamben's theorisation of the normalisation of emergency further illuminates how exceptional measures render minority communities' objects of sovereign power (*State of Exception*, 2005). Theoretical models of Israel's political order, including Sammy Smooha's ethnic democracy and Oren Yiftachel's ethnocracy, demonstrate how state institutions structurally privilege the dominant ethnonational group. For a detailed synthesis of these layers of spatial control, institutional design and ideological formation, see Singh, *Contesting the Monolith*. Recent democratic assessments, notably the V-Dem *Democracy Report* (2024), mark Israel's shift from liberal to electoral democracy following the 2023 judicial overhaul restricting Supreme Court review. These developments, and the consolidation of majoritarian tendencies within Israel's political system, are examined in Singh, Priya: "Deconstructing Electoral Democracy: Israel as a Case Study", in Jhumpa Mukherjee, Singh Priya and Sengupta Anita (eds) (2025): *Electoral Politics in Asia: Transnational Dynamics*, London, Palgrave Macmillan, pp.333-360).

[33] See Jayal, Niraja Gopal (2013): Jayal, *Citizenship and Its Discontents: An Indian History,* Cambridge, Harvard University Press, on the evolution of documentary citizenship and exclusion; Sen, Uditi (2018): *Citizen Refugee: Forging the Indian Nation After Partition,* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, on the historical burdens of proof imposed on marginal communities; Rao, Anupama (2009): *The Caste Question: Dalits and the Politics of Modern India*, Berkele, University of California Press, on caste, identity and state classification; Chatterjee, Partha (2004): *The Politics of the Governed,* New York, Columbia University Press, on documentary regimes and the governance of the poor; and Sundar, Nandini (2016): *The Burning Forest: India's War in Bastar,* Delhi, Juggernaut, on the administrative precarity experienced by Adivasi communities under security-state scrutiny. See also Viswanath, Rupa (2014): *The Pariah Problem: Caste, Religion, and the Social in Modern India,* New York, Columbia University Press, for the deep historical entanglement of caste, bureaucracy and exclusion.

[34] Mahamood, Saba (2005): *Politics of Piet,* (Princeton, Princeton University Press.

[35] Works on symbolic politics and civilisational pedagogy in India including Jaffrelot, Kaviraj and Nandy.

national crises. Following 7 October, Israeli discourse intensified its mobilisation of historical trauma, civilisational threat and moral endurance, even as socioeconomic and ethnic fissures persisted beneath the surface.[36] India likewise mobilises civilisational narratives during communal tension or geopolitical confrontation, framing political action as the duty of a civilisation under renewal.[37]

The implications of cultural nationalism extend beyond domestic politics. It structures the conceptual horizon within which foreign policy acquires meaning and legitimacy. India and Israel increasingly describe each other as "ancient civilisations with modern capacities", bound by shared experiences of endurance, technological aspiration and democratic exceptionalism.[38] Such framings derive legitimacy from symbolic grammars of cultural nationalism, which elevate bilateral ties into the realm of civilisational diplomacy. At the same time, cultural nationalism narrows political possibilities by codifying normative hierarchies. The Basic Law: Israel as the Nation State of the Jewish People (2018) formalises Jewish self-determination, elevates Hebrew as the exclusive national language and prioritises Jewish settlement, thereby institutionalising the cultural logic of the majority.[39] In India, civilisational nationalism shapes interpretations of constitutionalism, public memory and educational reform, privileging majoritarian cultural identity as the normative core of the polity.[40] When placed in comparative perspective, these tendencies reveal a structural logic: cultural nationalism in both states reconciles diversity and unity through hierarchisation, moralises sovereignty, embeds exclusion within statecraft and transforms foreign policy into a form of civilisational alignment. It is precisely because cultural nationalism both expands and constrains political imagination that it forms the conceptual foundation upon which subsequent dimensions such as technological collaboration and geoeconomic synergy acquire meaning in the India–Israel relationship.

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[36] See demographic and inequality data for Arab citizens of Israel including Central Bureau of Statistics, National Insurance Institute reports, and related socio-economic studies, contemporary analyses of Israeli crisis rhetoric.

[37] See scholarship on political communication and civilisational rhetoric in Indian crises; Jaffrelot, Christophe (2021): *Modi's India: Hindu Nationalism and the Rise of Ethnic Democracy*, Princeton, Princeton University Press; Nandy, Ashis (1983): *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self Under Colonialism*, Delhi, Oxford University Press.

[38] For an example of civilisational diplomacy, see the official statements during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 2017 visit to Israel, in which Modi described India and Israel as "natural partners in a long civilisational journey" and emphasised shared values rooted in ancient traditions; see "Prime Minister's Remarks at the Israeli Knesset Reception", 5 July 2017, Government of India, Ministry of External Affairs. Benjamin Netanyahu likewise characterised India and Israel as "ancient peoples with modern capacities", framing the partnership in civilisational rather than solely geopolitical terms; see "Prime Minister Netanyahu's Remarks with Prime Minister Modi", 5 July 2017, Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs. For scholarly discussions of "civilisational diplomacy," see Acharya, Amitav (2011): *Civilizations in World Politics: Plural and Pluriversal Perspectives,* Abingdon, Routledge; Katzenstein, Peter (2009): *Civilizations in World Politics,* Abingdon, Routledge; and Smith, Anthony D. (2008): *The Cultural Foundations of Nations,* Oxford, Blackwell.

[39] On the legal ramifications of the Basic Law: Israel as the Nation State of the Jewish People (2018), see Bell, Abraham: "The Counter-Revolutionary Nation-State Law", *Israel Studies,* Vol. 25, nº 3 (2020), pp. 240–55, which argues that the Basic Law constitutes a constitutional reorientation that entrenches Jewish collective self-determination and reconfigures the balance between democratic norms and ethnonational identity. See also Gross, Aeyal (2017): *The Writing on the Wall: Rethinking the International Law of Occupation,* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, and his subsequent scholarship on how the Basic Law entrenches hierarchical citizenship and weakens equality protections.

[40] See Jaffrelot, Christophe, Chatterjee, Angana P and Hansen, Thomas Blom (eds.) (2019): *Majoritarian State: How Hindu Nationalism is Transforming India,* New Delhi, Oxford University Press; Bhat, M Mohsin Alam: "The Rules of Law in Majoritarian India", *Social & Legal Studies,* Vol. 33, nº 5 (2024), at https://doi.org/10.1177/09646639241238427; and Fuchs, Sandhya: "'Spectacles of Whataboutery': Hindutva Regimes and the Politics of Historical Consciousness in Post-Liberal India", *History and Anthropology*, Vol. 35, nº 5 (2025), at https://doi.org/10.1080/02757206.2025.2562804.

4. Technolgy as Statecraft[41]

Technology as statecraft refers to the strategic deployment of scientific capability, digital infrastructures and innovation ecosystems as instruments through which states produce sovereign authority, extend coercive and developmental power and recast the horizons of geopolitical possibility. No longer a subsidiary adjunct of conventional diplomacy or military procurement, technology now constitutes the material and epistemic substrate through which governance, security and strategic autonomy are enacted. Scholars in science and technology studies have long argued that infrastructures do not merely support political order; they shape the ontologies and epistemologies through which states know, classify and act upon the world.[42] Within this conceptual frame, Indo-Israeli cooperation acquires analytical significance not simply as a defence partnership but as an arena in which technological assemblages generate new forms of state capacity and political imagination that exceed conventional materialist explanations. Israel's innovation architecture, underpinned by research and development expenditure exceeding 5.6 per cent of GDP in 2024,[43] sustains a hybrid civil military ecosystem where elite technological units and global research clusters intersect. India's aspirations for technological self-reliance under Atmanirbhar Bharat converge with this ecosystem in a manner that produces both complementarity and asymmetry.[44] India requires high end technological inputs to strengthen its defence and digital infrastructures, while Israel benefits from India's market scale, manufacturing capability and expanding innovation base. Yet these synergies simultaneously expose the politics of dependence, technological hierarchy and contested standard setting in an increasingly fragmented global order.

These structural dynamics become especially visible when examining sectoral developments that have reconfigured the bilateral relationship over the past decade. Between 2020 and 2024, India accounted for roughly 45 per cent of Israel's defence exports, with annual trade averaging 1.5 billion United States dollars.[45] However, this quantitative profile obscures a deeper shift from procurement to co-development and long-term institutional integration. The Barak 8 air and missile defence system, co-produced by India's Defence Research and Development Organisation and Israel Aerospace Industries, now deployed across naval and land forces and supported by production sites in Visakhapatnam and Hyderabad,[46] encapsulates how joint innovation embeds itself within India's wider defence industrial transformation. Similarly, India's upgraded Heron unmanned aerial systems, fitted with Israeli electro optical payloads, synthetic aperture radars and AI enabled target recognition, are now embedded within India's developing sensor fusion and battle management networks. These infrastructures generate interoperable operational logics that anchor the relationship below the level of formal alliances. Civilian technological domains reproduce this pattern of entanglement. The Indo–

[41] The term "technology as statecraft" is most explicitly articulated by Zichen Hu, Chang Zhang and Denis Galligan in their 2025 formulation of technology as a core instrument of contemporary sovereignty and geopolitical influence.

[42] Jasanoff, Sheila (2012): *Science and Public Reason,* Abingdon*,* Routledge; Mitchell, Timothy (2002): *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity,* Berkeley, University of California Press.

[43] "Research and Development Expenditure Report*",* Israel Central Bureau of Statistics, Jerusalem, 2024.

[44] For policy frameworks outlining technological self-reliance under Atmanirbhar Bharat, see "Strategy for New India@75*",* NITI Aayog, New Delhi, Government of India, 2018 and "Make in India and Defence Industrial Corridors: Policy Overview*",* Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), New Delhi, Government of India, 2021. For analyses of defence indigenisation and the structural dynamics of India's technological dependence, see Laxman Kumar Behera (2020): *India's Defence Economy: Planning, Budgeting, Industry and Procurement,* Abingdon, Routledge; and Cowshish, Amit: "Defence Indigenisation and Atmanirbhar Bharat", 2022, IDSA Comment, Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses

[45] SIPRI's annual database and yearbooks record that India has been among the top recipients of Israeli defence exports, often accounting for 40–50 per cent depending on the year.

[46] "Annual Report 2023–24", Ministry of Defence, Government of India,

Israeli Agricultural Project and its Centres of Excellence, which in recent years have trained well over one hundred thousand farmers annually and distributed tens of millions of high-quality vegetable seedlings and fruit saplings,[47] creating developmental constituencies that internalise the partnership as part of everyday livelihood and agrarian modernisation. Israeli drip-irrigation systems, desalination technologies and wastewater-reuse models have been incorporated into India's evolving water-security strategies, including government-to-government collaborations on desalination projects and treated-water reuse initiatives, underlining the deepening infrastructural and policy linkages shaping bilateral cooperation,[48] reinforcing what Jasanoff terms the embedding of normative visions of progress and authority within technological systems.[49] The cyber domain adds further complexity. Israel, which accounts for approximately 10 per cent of global cyber security exports,[50] has cultivated deep cooperative frameworks with India through CERT India and the Israel National Cyber Directorate since 2021, expanded in 2023.[51] These arrangements encompass real-time threat exchange, capacity building and collaborative research in critical infrastructure protection. As Hu, Zhang and Galligan argue, digital infrastructures now shape the territorial, regulatory and normative contours of sovereignty itself.[52] Indo-Israeli cyber cooperation thus generates forms of digital interdependence that challenge conventional understandings of autonomy.

At the conceptual level, technology as statecraft foregrounds unresolved tensions concerning power, dependence and inequality within innovation ecosystems. Israel's advantage in high end technologies and AI driven systems contrasts with India's strengths in industrial scale and production capability. More than twenty joint ventures, including Kalyani Rafael, Adani Elbit and Tata Advanced Systems Israel Aerospace Industries,[53] reflect an institutionalised architecture of co-development that allows India to internalise segments of the technological value chain while enabling Israel to diversify markets and mitigate geopolitical risk. Yet this architecture simultaneously reproduces hierarchical innovation patterns, raising the question of whether co development strengthens strategic autonomy or generates new forms of embedded dependence. These tensions are magnified by the diffusion of AI assisted surveillance, biometric identification and predictive policing technologies. Israel's experience with Pegasus and other cyber surveillance platforms has sharpened debates on regulation and

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[47] "Indo-Israel Agricultural Project: Three-Year Work Programme 2021–2023", Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare, Government of India, Press Information Bureau, 2023; and "Mashav, The Indo-Israeli Agricultural Cooperation Overview", 2023, Tel Aviv, Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which together record that IIAP Centres of Excellence trained more than one hundred thousand farmers and distributed millions of seedlings in the 2023 cycle.

[48] Sengupta, Seema: "India–Israel Strategic Collaboration in the Realm of Water Security", *Diplomatist*, 15 July 2024.

[49] Sheila, Jasanoff and Kim, Sang-Hyun (eds.) (2015): *Dreamscapes of Modernity: Sociotechnical Imaginaries and the Fabrication of Power*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press

[50] "Annual Cyber Sector Report 2024", Israel National Cyber Directorate (INCD) Tel Aviv, Government of Israel, 2024 Annual Cyber Sector Report.

[51] CERT-IN and Israel National Cyber Directorate, *MOU Between India and Israel Concerning Operational Collaboration on Cyber Security*, signed New Delhi/Tel Aviv, 15 July 2020, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, at https://www.mea.gov.in/Portal/LegalTreatiesDoc/IS20B3705.pdf

[52] Hu, Zichen, Zhang; Chang and Galligan, Denis: "Technology as Statecraft: Remaking Sovereignty, Security and Leadership in a Multipolar Age, *"Politics and Governance",* Vol.13 (2025).

[53] For Indo–Israeli defence joint ventures, see Pal, Sameer: "Inserting India into U.S.–Israel Defence Technology Cooperation", Gateway House, 2021, at https://www.gatewayhouse.in/inserting-india-into-us-israel-defence-technology-cooperation/; "Kalyani Rafael Advanced Systems Inaugurates Its State-of-the-Art Facility at Hyderabad", Kalyani Strategic Systems Ltd., Press Release, 3 August 2017, at https://www.kssl.in/press_releases_details_3rd_Aug_2017; and "Adani–Elbit Advanced Systems India Limited Expands Its Presence", *Vayu Aerospace & Defence Review*, 13 February 2020, at https://www.vayuaerospace.in/article.aspx?d=448&n=defexpo-2020-adani-elbit-jv-further-steps-up-their-presence-in-the-international-markets

export ethics,[54] while in India concerns around Aadhaar based authentication, data protection and algorithmic opacity persist.[55] Such developments reveal that technological systems do not merely augment statecraft; they recalibrate citizenship, recode subjectivity and produce new modalities of legibility and exclusion. Agamben's theorisation of the state of exception is instructive here, suggesting that technologies can extend the state's capacity to classify, differentiate and suspend rights, thereby creating zones of uneven vulnerability. [56] These concerns intersect with geoeconomic configurations such as the I2U2 grouping, which mobilises a two billion United States dollar integrated food corridor anchored in Israeli precision agriculture, Emirati capital and Indian production zones,[57] and the India Middle East Europe Economic Corridor announced in 2023,[58] which positions technological connectivity as a mechanism of regional power redistribution. Yet global supply chain fragility, United States export controls, semiconductor dependencies and the politicisation of technological standards reveal the paradox that defines technological statecraft: the pursuit of autonomy generates new entanglements, embedding states within regulatory, infrastructural and geopolitical hierarchies that they do not fully control. [59] Indo–Israeli technological cooperation therefore reveals a delicate balance between consolidation and exposure, binding the partnership to robust technological infrastructures even as it renders both states susceptible to the wider volatilities that accompany global technological and geoeconomic systems. This tension, woven into the architecture of their collaboration, gestures toward political–economic dynamics that begin to take shape as attention shifts to the geoeconomic patterns that increasingly frame the partnership.

5. Geoeconomic Convergence

Geoeconomic convergence in India–Israel relations entails the strategic alignment of economic instruments such as trade, investment, connectivity and infrastructure to advance geopolitical objectives. The concept builds on Luttwak's insight that post–Cold War competition would shift "from military to economic instruments"[60] and has since been elaborated by scholars who examine how states deploy tools like trade policy, finance, and technology to advance power-political goals.[61] Crucially, contemporary geoeconomic perspectives go beyond state-centric or purely security-driven views. Blackwill and Harris emphasise economic statecraft as "war by other means,"[62] yet others argue geoeconomics must account for the systemic interplay of

[54] "Pegasus Project: Israeli Spyware Used Against Activists and Journalists", *The Guardian*, July 2021, at https://www.theguardian.com/news/series/pegasus-project

[55] Internet Freedom Foundation, "Aadhaar and the Crisis of Algorithmic Governance in India", *IFF Briefing*, 2023, at https://internetfreedom.in; and "Data Protection in India: Issues and Challenges", PRS Legislative Research, 2023, at https://prsindia.org

[56] Agamben, Giorgio (2005): *State of Exception*. Translated by Kevin Attell, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, at https://press.uchicago.edu/ucp/books/book/chicago/S/bo3534021.html

[57] "I2U2 summit: UAE to invest 2 billion to develop integrated food parks across India", *The Hindu*, 14 July 2022, at https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/i2u2-summit-uae-to-invest-2-billion-to-develop-integrated-food-parks-across-india/article65639247.ece.

[58] "India-Saudi Arabia to re-energise ties on the sideline of G20 Summit", *The Hindu,* 6 September 2023, at https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/india-saudi-arabia-to-re-energise-ties-on-the-sideline-of-g20-summit/article67287910.ece

[59] Huq, Aziz Z.: "The Geopolitics of Digital Regulation", *University of Chicago Law Review,* Vol. 92, nº 3 (2025), pp. 833–899.

[60] Luttwak, Edward N.: "From Geopolitics to Geo-Economics: Logic of Conflict, Grammar of Commerce," *The National Interest*, nº 20 (1990), pp. 17–23.

[61] Blackwill, Robert D. and Harris, Jennifer M. (2016): *War by Other Means: Geoeconomics and Statecraft,* Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press.

[62] *Ibid.*

markets, technology and geography.[63] Economists, too, have renewed interest in theorising economic coercion as a deliberate instrument of statecraft. Matteo Maggiori and colleagues, for instance, advance a formal framework illustrating how states mobilise financial networks, trade asymmetries and the limitations of contractual enforcement to secure alignment from firms and governments. Drawing on contemporary cases such as China's Belt and Road Initiative and United States-led pressure on 5G infrastructure, their analysis reconceptualises geoeconomics not merely as a policy discourse but as a quantifiable mechanism of influence operating across global finance, development lending, taxation and trade.[64] Babić et al., for example, advocate a broader lens that recognizes how non-state actors, from multinational firms to sovereign wealth funds, and cooperative dynamics also shape geoeconomic outcomes.[65]

Within this conceptual frame, India and Israel exhibit a growing geoeconomic synergy. Bilateral trade has risen dramatically since the 1990s, alongside joint ventures in technology, infrastructure projects and innovation funds. India's quest for advanced agricultural and water technologies neatly complements Israel's export specialisations in these niches, just as Israel's firms benefit from India's vast market, digitalisation agenda and expanding industrial base. High-level discourse explicitly casts this partnership in complementary terms: India is portrayed as a "growing economic powerhouse" with a large market and talent pool, and Israel as a "world leader in high technology and innovation," together able to devise affordable solutions in agriculture, water, health and other priority fields.[66] As Modi and Netanyahu jointly put it in 2017, the fusion of Indian and Israeli ingenuity can "sow seeds of miracles for [the] betterment of [the] world" by developing technologies for critical global challenges and addressing water scarcity across developing nations.[67] Even so, convergence has its limits, for instance, in the homeland security sector, India has remained somewhat reticent about fully embracing Israeli models, reflecting a calibrated approach to sensitive domains.[68]

Recent years have yielded concrete evidence of India and Israel deploying economic instruments to advance strategic objectives. In 2025, the two countries concluded a long-negotiated Bilateral Investment Treaty aimed at protecting investors and facilitating reciprocal capital flows in sectors such as innovation, infrastructure and financial services.[69] This agreement, the first bilateral investment treaty India has concluded with an OECD member, signals a mutual commitment to institutionalising market integration in the face of prevailing global volatility. Negotiations toward a comprehensive Free Trade Agreement have also been reactivated, reflecting a shared ambition to formalise trade liberalisation through institutional mechanisms. Concurrently, efforts are underway to establish a cyber-financial linkage between India's Unified Payments Interface (UPI) and Israel's financial infrastructure, with the aim of

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[63] Lee, James: "Geoeconomics as Theory.", in Mikael Wigell, Mika Aaltola and Sören Scholvin (eds.) (2021): *The Routledge Handbook of Geoeconomics,* Abingdon, Routledge, 21–34.

[64] Crawford, Krysten: "The Power of 'Geoeconomics' to Make Sense of a Turbulent World", Stanford Institute for Economic Policy Research, 22 February 2024, at https://siepr.stanford.edu/news/power-geoeconomics-make-sense-turbulent-world

[65] Babić, Milan, Adam D. Dixon, and Imogen T. Liu. "Geoeconomics in a Changing Global Order" in Milan Babić, Adam D. Dixon and Imogen T. Liu (eds) (2022): *The Political Economy of Geoeconomics: Europe in a Changing World,* Cham, Palgrave Macmillan, pp.1–27.

[66] "India–Israel Joint Statement", Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, 5 July 2017.

[67] *Ibid.*

[68] Machold Rhys (2024): *Fabricating Homeland Security: Police Entanglements across India and Palestine/Israel,* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press. Machold examines the transnationalisation of homeland security practices, focusing on how Israel's post-9/11 security model has been marketed to India in the wake of the 2008 Mumbai attacks. Drawing on science and technology studies as well as decolonial and postcolonial theory, the book argues that homeland security is not merely a set of tools or doctrines but a universalising political project, shaping governance and surveillance infrastructures through claims to global expertise.

[69] "India, Israel Sign Bilateral Investment Treaty", *The Times of Israel*, 8 September 2025.

enabling cross-border transactions in local currencies.[70] Expected to become operational by early 2026, the mechanism is designed to enable Indian travellers and businesses to make payments in rupees within Israel, and reciprocally for Israeli users in India, thereby integrating the two countries' fintech ecosystems.

In the domain of infrastructure and connectivity, bilateral collaboration has acquired a distinctly strategic dimension. A notable example is the Adani Group's $1.2 billion acquisition of Haifa Port in 2023, marking India's entry into a critical Israeli maritime hub on the Mediterranean. Prime Minister Netanyahu described the privatisation as a significant milestone that would enhance connectivity between India and Israel and position Haifa as a pivotal node in emerging trade corridors linking Asia and Europe.[71] By securing a stake in Israel's port infrastructure, India, through one of its leading private conglomerates, has effectively extended its logistical reach westward, aligning with New Delhi's broader connectivity ambitions.[72] This vision took formal shape with the announcement of the India–Middle East–Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) in 2023, envisaged as a trans-regional network of shipping and rail links connecting the Indian subcontinent with the Middle East and Europe via Israel.[73] Israel's incorporation into the corridor reflected the geoeconomic logic underpinning the partnership, wherein infrastructure and supply chain integration are employed to reconfigure strategic geographies. While the onset of regional conflict in late 2023 has delayed IMEC's implementation and muted the pace of coordination, its long-term rationale continues to inform preparatory discussions among stakeholders. [74]

A similar geoeconomic rationale shapes the I2U2 grouping (India, Israel, the United Arab Emirates and the United States), inaugurated in 2022 with a focus on development-led cooperation in areas such as food security, renewable energy, water and technology.[75] Among its early initiatives was the UAE's pledge of $2 billion to establish integrated food parks in India, drawing on Israeli agricultural technologies and American and Israeli private sector expertise. [76]Although regional instability has complicated multilateral engagement under I2U2, particularly Israel's operational participation, [77] progress on the food parks initiative has continued through bilateral channels.[78] India and the UAE have reaffirmed their commitment to the project and begun advancing implementation on the ground, indicating that the broader

[70] UPI–Israel Payment Link Expected by 2026", *Rediff Money*, April 2025.

[71] Adani Group Completes $1.2 Billion Haifa Port Deal", *NDTV*, January 2023.

[72]"Adani Group Completes Haifa Port Deal, Netanyahu Hails Milestone", *The Times of India*, 31 January 2023, at https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/business/india-business/adani-group-completes-haifa-port-deal-netanyahu-hails-milestone/articleshow/97489941.cms

[73] "Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment (PGII): India–Middle East–Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC)", Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, Press Release, 9 September 2023, at https://www.mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/37091/Partnership_for_Global_Infrastructure_and_Investment_PGII__IndiaMiddle_EastEurope_Economic_Corridor_IMEC

[74] Calabrese, John : "War Delays but Likely Will Not Fully Derail IMEC Plans," *Middle East Institute*, 5 December 2023, at https://www.mei.edu/publications/war-delays-likely-will-not-fully-derail-imec-plans

[75] "Joint Statement of the Leaders of India, Israel, United Arab Emirates and the United States (I2U2)", 14 July 2022, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, at https://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/35492/Joint_Statement_of_the_Leaders_of_India_Israel_United_Arab_Emirates_and_the_United_States_I2U2

[76] Maayan Lubell and Nidhi Verma: "UAE invests $2 bln in hi-tech Indian crop-growing 'food parks' to ease shortages", *Reuters*, 14 July 2022.

[77] Mishra, Asit Ranjan: "Israel-Hamas war may impact future I2U2 project collaboration efforts," *Business Standard*, 1 January 2024, at https://www.business-standard.com/india-news/israel-hamas-war-may-impact-future-i2u2-project-collaboration-efforts-124010100839_1.html

[78] "India, UAE ink key deals to strengthen I2U2 bloc", *Hindustan Times*, 10 January 2024, at https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/india-uae-ink-key-deals-to-strengthen-i2u2-bloc-101704824309178.html

geoeconomic agenda remains intact, if pragmatically recalibrated in light of prevailing geopolitical constraints.**[79]** The outcome is a multi-country geoeconomic initiative addressing the strategic challenge of food insecurity by harnessing complementary economic capabilities rather than relying on conventional aid or security-driven frameworks.

In parallel, Israel's development agency and private firms have expanded their presence across India through agricultural technology centres and water management projects, ranging from drip irrigation centres of excellence in Karnataka to proposed desalination facilities in Gujarat. These initiatives cater to domestic developmental priorities while simultaneously advancing diplomatic objectives. Notably, Indian policymakers have identified Israel's expertise in seawater desalination as a potentially transformative solution to the country's growing water scarcity, particularly in coastal regions.[80] Drawing on Israel's model, Indian policymakers hope to adapt desalination technology to address critical water shortages in coastal states, blending economic cooperation with a solution to a vital resource challenge.[81] In this context, material linkages are gradually contributing to a more durable and multifaceted bilateral alignment.

This shift toward geoeconomics marks a substantive expansion of the India–Israel strategic agenda, reflecting bilateral complementarities. The partnership now operates across multiple scales of agency: Indian state governments increasingly host Israeli agricultural and water technology initiatives; major corporate actors such as Adani, Tata and leading Israeli water and cyber firms anchor commercial ties; and hybrid public and private platforms facilitate sectoral collaboration. These proliferating networks linking cities, firms, research ecosystems and innovation communities reinforce and deepen the interdependence underpinning the relationship. As a result, the strategic rationale for engagement has moved beyond defence cooperation or ideological affinity to encompass longer term developmental and technological transformation objectives. Geoeconomic convergence has embedded the partnership within a wider architecture of mutual dependencies that elevate its strategic stakes and profile. For both countries, economic alignment functions simultaneously as a driver of growth and as a means of maintaining strategic autonomy and hedging in an era of great power rivalry and global economic fragmentation; studies increasingly suggest that connector states such as India accrue tangible advantages by remaining nonaligned amid the emergence of competing trade blocs.[82] The geoeconomic partnership with Israel fits into India's broader strategy of diversifying partnerships to mitigate over-reliance on any single bloc, while accessing niche capabilities (Israel's tech) that bolster its domestic modernization. For Israel, intensifying economic ties with India helps counterbalance uncertainties in its traditional Western markets and political pressures in its region. Some analysts posit that Israel views India as central to navigating a

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[79] White House, "Joint Statement of the Leaders of India, Israel, the United Arab Emirates, and the United States (I2U2)," 14 July 2022, https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/07/14/joint-statement-of-the-leaders-of-india-israel-united-arab-emirates-and-the-united-states-i2u2/; Observer Research Foundation (ORF), "The I2U2: Where Geography and Economics Meet", 6 February 2023, https://www.orfonline.org/research/the-i2u2-where-geography-and-economics-meet/
[80] "What India Can Learn from Israel's Desalination and Water-Management Technologies", *The Print*, 22 September 2025, at https://theprint.in/world/what-india-can-learn-from-israels-desalination-and-water-management-technologies/2748476/
[81] "Strengthening India–Israel Collaboration in the Water Sector", ITrade.gov.il, 29 October 2025; and "India looks to Israel for water-management inspiration", *Desalination News*, 24 September 2025.
[82] "Israel: A Growing Key Economic Partner for India", Vivekananda International Foundation, 16 June 2025, https://www.vifindia.org/article/2025/june/16/Israel-A-Growing-Key-Economic-Partner-for-India

"new bipolarity" in world affairs, reconciling its longstanding US alignment with a parallel pivot to Asia.[83]

Through geoeconomics, Israel can secure footholds in the emerging Asian growth story (India's huge market and talent pool) without abandoning ties to the West. In system-level terms, India and Israel are together demonstrating how markets, technology and geography interact to produce new patterns of alignment. Their cooperation in areas like digital infrastructure, supply chains for critical technologies, and regional transport links speaks to a world where connectivity and economic integration are wielded as tools of power. Such dynamics mirror broader shifts in the international system, where economic fragmentation and strategic competition have elevated connectivity, supply chains and technological networks to instruments of geopolitical influence. [84] Nevertheless, the India–Israel case powerfully illustrates the shift in statecraft towards economic leverage and collaborative development. The geoeconomic convergence between India and Israel thus stands as both a product of, and a response to, the evolving international landscape wherein the lines between markets and security have increasingly blurred.[85]

6. Conclusion

This study has argued that cultural nationalism, the use of technology as statecraft and geoeconomic convergence together provide a productive framework for understanding the intensification of India and Israel relations. Although each dimension can be analytically distinguished, their explanatory force lies in how they overlap, reinforce and subtly reshape one another. This interaction raises wider conceptual and empirical questions about how identity, innovation and economic strategy intersect within the foreign policies of non-Western democracies in an unsettled global landscape. Cultural nationalism helps explain why particular forms of cooperation appear legitimate and intelligible, yet uncertainty persists over whether it simply offers a permissive setting for foreign policy choices or actively shapes state preferences and acceptable strategic behaviour. Its future resonance across political transitions, ideological shifts and generational change also remains unclear, and civilisational narratives that draw the two states closer may equally narrow the interpretive space for alternative strategic possibilities.

The technological and geoeconomic dimensions introduce further indeterminacies. Technology has become an infrastructure of sovereignty, vulnerability and influence, yet the durability of Indo Israeli technological linkages is uncertain in an era of politicised supply chains, contested standards and heightened concern over data governance and cyber security. Questions remain about whether technological co development strengthens strategic autonomy or generates new dependencies, and whether India's scale and innovation capabilities can produce more symmetrical forms of cooperation. Geoeconomic convergence raises similar issues. Although trade, investment and connectivity initiatives indicate a growing alignment of

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[83] On how emerging great-power rivalry is producing what some analysts term a "new bipolarity," and how this is reshaping Israel's external partnerships, see Khaduri, Marina Bas: "Israel in the Context of the New Bipolarity", *RUDN Journal of International Relations* Vol. 24, nº 3 (2024), pp. 523–537. For a contemporary Israeli perspective that situates India within Israel's strategic diversification toward Asia, see "Why Israel Is Deepening Its Strategic Bet on India", *The Jerusalem Post*, 3 March 2025, at https://www.jpost.com/defense-and-tech/article-879141

[84] Posen, Adam S.: "The End of Globalization? The Risks of Economic Fragmentation", *Foreign Affairs*, 17 March 2022, which analyses how post-Ukraine economic fragmentation has transformed cross-border connectivity, technology networks and supply-chain systems into tools of state power, a pattern that also underpins the geoeconomic dimensions of India–Israel cooperation.

[85] On how global economic fragmentation, strategic interdependence and the weaponisation of supply chains have reshaped statecraft and blurred the boundaries between markets and security, see Roloff, Ralf: "Goodbye Globalization? Hello 'Fragmentegration'! The World Economy and Strategic Competition", *Connections: The Quarterly Journal,* Vol. 23, nº 2 (2024), pp. 191–202.

strategic purpose, their stability is untested in a global context marked by fragmentation, resource competition and regional volatility. Projects such as the I2U2 initiative and the India Middle East Europe corridor suggest new possibilities, yet they remain vulnerable to geopolitical shocks, domestic constraints and shifting calculations by external powers.

When considered together, these three dimensions prompt broader reflection on the nature of strategic partnership among non-Western democracies. The interaction of cultural narratives, technological infrastructures and economic strategies may produce a distinctive form of alignment that challenges conventional categories such as alliances, soft balancing or issue specific cooperation. At the same time, the partnership may remain shaped by specific historical trajectories and domestic political conditions that limit wider applicability. Methodologically, the analysis reaffirms the need for conceptual approaches that capture the interplay of identity, innovation and economic strategy without collapsing one register into another. The triad proposed here is best understood as a set of generative questions rather than a definitive explanatory model. The India-Israel partnership demonstrates how strategic cooperation in the contemporary era is constituted through entangled domains whose coherence is contingent and evolving. Its durability cannot be assumed, and the questions it raises about national identity, technological governance and geoeconomic transformation point to avenues for further research. The study situates itself within wider debates on how atypical democracies negotiate an international landscape in which the boundaries between ideas, infrastructures and economies have become increasingly porous and contested.

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