



**India-Israel Strategic Alliance:  
Emerging Security Challenges & Policy Options for Pakistan**

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**Abstract:**

The deepening strategic partnership between India and Israel has reconfigured South Asia's security environment, with significant implications for Pakistan. Since 1992, expanding cooperation in defense technology, intelligence and cybersecurity largely supported by the United States has enhanced India's military capabilities and altered regional power asymmetries. This study adopts a qualitative, descriptive and analytical research design and utilizes both primary and secondary sources to examine the evolution and strategic implications of India-Israel relations, with particular emphasis on security cooperation and its regional impact. Drawing on structural realism, this study argues that the India-Israel alignment constitutes a balancing strategy vis-à-vis Pakistan and China, intensifying the regional security dilemma and contributing to strategic instability. Israel's growing diplomatic support for India on Kashmir further constrains Pakistan's security and diplomatic space. The paper contends that Pakistan faces declining deterrence credibility and technological marginalization, necessitating adaptive responses through alliance diversification, indigenous defense development and enhanced cyber-security capabilities. Without strategic adjustment, Pakistan's regional influence is likely to diminish amid the evolving power configuration.

**Keywords:** Pakistan, South Asia, India-Israel partnership, regional security, deterrence credibility, technological marginalization, cybersecurity

**INTRODUCTION**

Over the past three decades, the India-Israel strategic alliance has evolved into one of the most significant security partnerships in Asia, reshaping the geopolitical dynamics of South Asia and the Middle East. While India and Israel formally established full diplomatic relations in 1992, their defense cooperation predates this period, with covert intelligence and technological exchanges during the 1965 and 1971 Indo-Pak wars (Cohen, 2013). India's decision to engage with Israel was initially constrained by its pro-Arab policy and non-aligned movement (NAM) commitments during

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the Cold War. However, the post-Cold War unipolar environment, coupled with shifting global alliances and US influence, facilitated closer India-Israel ties. Today, this partnership spans defense, intelligence, agriculture, trade, cybersecurity and space technology, making Israel one of India's top three defense suppliers (Pant & Sahoo, 2019).

This evolving partnership, however, carries serious security implications for Pakistan. Israel's technological assistance and intelligence-sharing have strengthened India's military capabilities, particularly in Kashmir, where advanced surveillance technologies and drone systems are used to counter insurgency movements. The US strong backing of this alliance adds another layer of complexity, intensifying the security dilemma in South Asia and accelerating the regional arms race (Tellis, 2022). The India-Israel relationship is shaped by mutual strategic interests rather than cultural or historical ties. India's recognition of Israel in 1950 was limited to consular relations due to India's solidarity with Arab nations and its dependence on Middle Eastern oil. However, following the Madrid Peace Process (1991) and the end of the Cold War, India shifted its foreign policy orientation towards engaging with Israel more openly (Ganguly & Wagner, 2019).

By May 1992, both nations had established full diplomatic relations, paving the way for deeper cooperation in multiple sectors. Over the years, trade agreements, joint research projects, and defense deals have expanded significantly. One landmark was the 1993 Science and Technology Agreement, signed during Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres's visit to New Delhi, which laid the foundation for joint R&D projects and knowledge exchange in advanced technologies (Barzilai, 2020). Today, India relies heavily on Israel for high-end defense systems, including Phalcon AWACS, Barak-8 surface-to-air missiles, drones and satellite-based surveillance systems. Meanwhile, Israel views India as a reliable strategic partner to counterbalance Pakistan and China while expanding its defense exports in Asia (Kumar, 2021).

The growing India-Israel defense nexus presents a significant challenge for Pakistan's national security and regional stability. India's acquisition of advanced Israeli military technologies has widened the conventional military gap between India and Pakistan, potentially undermining Pakistan's deterrence capabilities. Moreover, Israel's increasing political alignment with India on issues such as Kashmir raises concerns for Pakistan's diplomatic and security strategies (Haqqani, 2021).

This study focuses on the following questions: What are the strategic drivers behind the India-Israel partnership? How does this alliance reshape Pakistan's security environment? What policy options are available for Pakistan to counter potential strategic disadvantages? This research is significant for understanding the shifting security dynamics in South Asia and their implications for Pakistan's defense strategy. By analyzing the India-Israel strategic convergence, this study contributes to broader debates on regional balance of power, security dilemmas and technological asymmetries in South Asia.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

During the Cold War, India's foreign policy toward Israel was significantly shaped by its close strategic alignment with the Soviet Union. As the Soviet Union emerged as the principal security patron of India and the perceived "natural ally" of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), Moscow's strong pro-Arab stance particularly after the 1967 Arab-Israeli War constrained New Delhi's

diplomatic engagement with Israel. The absence of Soviet-Israeli diplomatic relations and the USSR's role as India's largest defense supplier exerted a decisive influence on India's security calculations and diplomatic posture during this period (Cohen, 2013). The post-Cold War normalization of India-Israel relations has resulted in an expanding technological, intelligence, and defense partnership that enhances India's strategic autonomy while simultaneously extending Israel's influence in South Asia and the Indo-Pacific. Scholars argue that this convergence aligns closely with broader U.S. and Western strategic objectives, particularly in balancing China's regional assertiveness and countering transnational terrorism. Consequently, the India-Israel partnership has become embedded within a wider geostrategic framework that transcends bilateral interests (Ganguly & Wagner, 2019).

From Pakistan's perspective, this deepening cooperation generates acute strategic anxieties. Even contested reports concerning pre-emptive military planning have reinforced Pakistan's perceptions of vulnerability, particularly regarding the security of its nuclear infrastructure. Such narratives have contributed to the entrenchment of deterrence doctrines and force postures designed to mitigate the risks of surprise attacks, thereby intensifying regional insecurity (Levy & Scott-Clark, 2007). Cybersecurity has emerged as a critical pillar of India-Israel cooperation, with both states treating cyber defense as an essential component of national security. Their collaboration encompasses threat-intelligence sharing, protection of industrial control systems (ICS), and the development of public-private partnerships. Israeli firms have played a significant role in strengthening India's cyber resilience across financial, energy, and transportation sectors, facilitating the diffusion of advanced practices such as red-teaming, advanced persistent threat (APT) simulations, and security-by-design architectures (Kaura, 2018).

Counterterrorism cooperation further underscores the strategic depth of the bilateral relationship. Both states emphasize intelligence-driven integration of law enforcement and military capabilities to enable rapid disruption of terrorist networks. India has drawn extensively on Israeli operational experience in close-quarters battle (CQB), hostage rescue, and post-attack site exploitation, particularly for high-density urban environments similar to the 2008 Mumbai attacks. Training exchanges and doctrinal exposure have reinforced the importance of real-time intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR), human intelligence fusion, and adaptive after-action learning cycles (Kapoor, 2020; Pant & Sahoo, 2019). Beyond defense and intelligence, collaborative initiatives in remote sensing, secure communications, and space-based surveillance have further enhanced strategic situational awareness. These projects, combined with efforts to strengthen cybersecurity frameworks against hybrid and asymmetric warfare, reflect the increasingly multidimensional nature of India-Israel cooperation (Saran, 2021; Kapoor, 2020).

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

From a structural realist perspective, this partnership reflects India's attempts to balance against Pakistan, while, Israel seeks to enhance its geopolitical influence in South Asia. For Pakistan, the deepening India-Israel cooperation presents challenges related to technological isolation, security vulnerabilities and diplomatic marginalization. Therefore, Pakistan must adopt a pragmatic foreign policy approach to safeguard its security interests, strengthen regional alliances and avoid entanglement in a zero-sum game that could exacerbate its strategic disadvantages. This study will

be grounded on structural realism (Waltz, 1979) theory. In this theory states prioritize survival, security and power accumulation. India-Israel alliance as a balancing strategy against Pakistan.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This study adopts a qualitative, descriptive and analytical research design to examine the evolution and strategic implications of India-Israel relations, with particular emphasis on security cooperation and its regional impact. A qualitative approach is appropriate as the research seeks to interpret policy choices, strategic perceptions, and threat constructions rather than measure variables quantitatively. The study combines historical analysis with contemporary policy evaluation to capture both continuity and change in bilateral relations. The research employs a descriptive-analytical framework. The descriptive component traces the historical trajectory of India-Israel relations from the Cold War period to the present, contextualizing diplomatic, military and technological cooperation within broader geopolitical shifts. The analytical dimension critically assesses the motivations, strategic calculations, and security implications underlying this partnership, particularly in relation to regional power dynamics and Pakistan's security concerns.

The research relies extensively on secondary sources to establish theoretical grounding and contextual understanding. These include, scholarly books and peer-reviewed journal articles on India-Israel relations, South Asian security and Middle Eastern geopolitics. Policy papers and reports published by think tanks such as RAND, Brookings Institution, Carnegie Endowment. Secondary sources are used to synthesize existing debates, identify gaps in the literature, and situate the study within established academic scholarship.

To strengthen empirical rigor, the study incorporates primary sources, including, official government documents and statements, such as Indian Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) press releases, Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs statements, and parliamentary debates. Defense white papers and strategic doctrines, including Indian defense policy documents, Israeli security doctrine statements, and relevant national security strategies. Speeches and interviews of key policymakers, military officials, and diplomats from India and Israel, accessed through official archives and reputable media outlets. Joint statements, memoranda of understanding (MoUs), and bilateral agreements related to defense, intelligence, cybersecurity, and technological cooperation. Official data and reports from international organizations and regional security forums relevant to counterterrorism, cyber governance and strategic stability.

The study employs qualitative content analysis to examine policy documents, official statements, and strategic texts. This involves identifying recurring themes, narratives, and policy patterns related to security cooperation, threat perception, and regional strategy. A comparative temporal analysis is also used to contrast India's approach toward Israel before and after the establishment of full diplomatic relations in 1992. Additionally, the research utilizes interpretive analysis to assess how India-Israel cooperation is perceived by Pakistan's strategic community and how such perceptions influence deterrence postures and regional security dynamics.

## **INDIA-ISRAEL STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP**

The India-Israel strategic partnership has undergone significant transformation over the past three decades, culminating in a multifaceted relationship encompassing defense, technology, cybersecurity, agriculture, trade and cultural cooperation. In January 2018, Israeli Prime Minister

Benjamin Netanyahu and his wife Sara Netanyahu arrived in India on a six-day official visit, accompanied by a high-level delegation of more than 130 industrial leaders. This was the first Israeli PM visit to India in 15 years, following former PM Ariel Sharon's visit in 2003. The visit marked the 25th anniversary of the establishment of full diplomatic relations between the two nations in 1992 (India's Ministry of External Affairs, 2018). The significance of Netanyahu's visit was amplified by its timing, occurring shortly after India voted in favor of a UN General Assembly resolution that criticized the US recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital. Despite this divergence, both India and Israel emphasized that their partnership represents an "all-weather relationship" resilient enough to withstand political disagreements. Unlike the Cold War era, when India's foreign policy leaned heavily toward the Palestinian cause and avoided overt engagement with Israel, the last two decades have seen the two states move closer due to converging strategic and technological interests (Pant & Sahoo, 2019).

Israel has become one of India's top defense suppliers, exporting an estimated \$1 billion worth of military equipment annually (SIPRI, 2022). During Netanyahu's visit, India announced the purchase of 131 Barak surface-to-air missiles from Israel to be deployed on its first domestically produced aircraft carrier. Furthermore, under PM Narendra Modi's "Make in India" initiative, India has invited Israeli defense companies to collaborate with Indian firms to co-produce weapons and defense technologies, aiming to reduce reliance on foreign imports and stimulate domestic job creation (Roche, 2020). However, defense collaboration has not been without challenges. In 2017, India canceled a \$500 million deal with Israel's state-owned defense manufacturer Rafael Advanced Defense Systems for 8,000 Spike anti-tank guided missiles. The cancellation followed India's Defense Research and Development Organization (DRDO) offering to develop similar missile systems indigenously. Nonetheless, India continues to require Israeli expertise and technological innovations and reports suggest that negotiations to revive aspects of the canceled deal are ongoing (Basu, 2021).

Bilateral trade between India and Israel has grown remarkably, rising from \$200 million in 1992 to approximately \$5 billion by 2017 (India's Ministry of External Affairs, 2018). The India-Israel CEO Forum Meeting, organized during PM Netanyahu's visit, strengthened partnerships in critical sectors, including cybersecurity, energy, aviation, artificial intelligence and agricultural technology. Several agreements were signed to expand collaboration in space exploration, desalination, water management, biotechnology and film production. Israel is considered a global leader in water resource management, hydrology and desalination technologies, which are particularly relevant to India's water scarcity challenges (Kumar, 2021). Joint ventures have been initiated to develop advanced solutions in genetically modified organisms (GMOs), plant cloning, precision farming, and smart irrigation systems. Similarly, India's International Centre for Technology and Entrepreneurship (iCREATE) initiative, inaugurated during Netanyahu's visit, fosters R&D partnerships between Israeli and Indian startups in fields such as AI, electronics and defense technologies.

The visit also reflected the strengthening of cultural diplomacy. PM Netanyahu visited the Chabad House in Mumbai, the site of the 2008 terrorist attacks, where he met Moshe Holtzberg, a survivor who lost his parents in the incident. Additionally, Bollywood producers and actors attended networking events with the Israeli delegation, showcasing Israel as a global filming destination and

fostering collaboration in the entertainment industry (Basu, 2021). Beyond defense and economics, the symbolic gestures during Netanyahu's visit including paying homage at Mahatma Gandhi's Sabarmati Ashram alongside PM Modi underscored a shared commitment to deepening bilateral relations across diverse sectors.

India-Israel's partnership reflects a pragmatic convergence of interests rather than ideological alignment. While, India maintains its support for the Palestinian cause in international forums, its defense and technological dependence on Israel has grown significantly. Simultaneously, Israel views India as a key strategic partner in Asia, leveraging India's growing influence to counterbalance Pakistan and China (Ganguly & Wagner, 2019). Despite occasional policy divergences, the trajectory of India-Israel relations points toward sustained collaboration, driven by defense modernization, technological innovation and shared security concerns in a volatile geopolitical environment.

India formally recognized the State of Israel on 18 September 1950, just two years after gaining independence. However, the establishment of full diplomatic relations was delayed for several decades due to India's foreign policy priorities under PM Jawaharlal Nehru, who played a central role in shaping the country's early diplomatic orientation. PM Nehru's approach was grounded in the principles of anti-imperialism, anti-colonialism and support for national liberation movements, making the Palestinian issue a cornerstone of India's foreign policy during the early Cold War years (Ganguly & Wagner, 2019). At the time, India positioned itself as a leader of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), championing the causes of decolonization and sovereignty while attempting to maintain equidistance from the US and Soviet blocs. Within this framework, India's policies were shaped by solidarity with Arab states and their opposition to Israel, particularly in the context of the Palestinian struggle. Consequently, India restricted its engagement with Israel to consular relations rather than full-fledged diplomatic recognition until 1992 (Pant & Sahoo, 2019).

During the Cold War, India's strong ties with the Soviet Union also influenced its stance toward Israel. The Soviet Union, perceived as the "natural ally" of NAM, had no diplomatic relations with Israel after the 1967 Arab-Israeli War and strongly supported Arab states. As India's largest defense supplier during this period, Moscow played a decisive role in shaping New Delhi's security and foreign policy choices (Cohen, 2013). For India, maintaining strategic relations with the Soviet Union was essential to secure military hardware and ensure security against perceived threats from both Pakistan and China. Meanwhile, Israel sought to expand its diplomatic footprint in Asia and repeatedly attempted to normalize relations with India. However, India resisted these overtures, fearing backlash from Arab countries and potential threats to its oil supplies and remittance flows from the Gulf (Kaura, 2018).

Israeli PM Ariel Sharon's historic visit to India in September 2003 marked a watershed moment in bilateral relations. Sharon was the first Israeli PM to visit India, and the visit symbolized the transition from a cautious diplomatic engagement to a full-fledged strategic partnership. This period saw rapid expansion in defense cooperation, intelligence sharing, and counterterrorism coordination (Ganguly & Wagner, 2019). India viewed Israel as a reliable partner capable of supplying advanced defense technologies, while Israel saw India as a vast market for its military exports and a strategic counterweight to hostile actors in the Middle East and South Asia. This mutual recognition of shared interests set the foundation for long-term collaboration.

India and Israel share significant structural commonalities that have facilitated closer ties. Both nations operate vibrant parliamentary systems, which has created an environment of mutual political understanding. Their legal systems are grounded in British common law, enabling smoother cooperation on regulatory and contractual matters. Both societies value higher education, technological innovation and English as a functional language in science, business, and diplomacy (Kaura, 2018). Shared experiences under British colonialism created overlapping institutional frameworks that aid mutual collaboration. These institutional similarities have deepened trust and enabled smoother negotiations on strategic and economic partnerships.

India and Israel face persistent security threats from radical Islamist organizations and state-sponsored terrorism. India grapples with cross-border terrorism emanating primarily from Pakistan-based groups such as Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammed, while Israel faces threats from organizations like Hamas and Hezbollah (Kapoor, 2020). The September 11, 2001 (9/11) attacks in the US further accelerated India-Israel cooperation in counter-terrorism. Both nations increased intelligence sharing, joint training programs and defense coordination to mitigate risks from transnational terrorist networks. Their collaboration has also extended to cybersecurity, border surveillance and anti-insurgency operations (Pant & Sahoo, 2019).

Geographically, both India and Israel are situated in volatile regions characterized by chronic instability. India faces persistent challenges in South Asia, including tensions with Pakistan, security concerns in Afghanistan and rising influence of extremist networks. Similarly, Israel is situated in the Middle East, surrounded by states and non-state actors historically opposed to its existence. Despite these threats, both countries have emerged as “islands of stability” in regions marked by political turmoil, violent extremism and strategic rivalries. This parallel geopolitical reality has strengthened mutual perceptions of each other as natural security partners (Cohen, 2013).

### **Expanding Cooperation in Defense, Technology and Space**

Defense cooperation constitutes the cornerstone of the India-Israel strategic partnership, shaping bilateral relations since the early 1990s and intensifying after the Kargil War of 1999. Israel has consistently ranked among India's top three defense suppliers, providing advanced technologies that have significantly contributed to India's military modernization and strategic capabilities (Pant & Sahoo, 2019).

Israel provides India with state-of-the-art military systems that enhance its operational preparedness and technological sophistication. These includes surface-to-air missile systems such as the Barak-8, jointly developed by Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI) and India's Defence Research and Development Organization (DRDO), which is a critical component of India's naval defense strategy (Kaura, 2018). Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) like the Heron and Searcher series, extensively used by the Indian Armed Forces for surveillance and reconnaissance. Precision-guided munitions and electronic warfare systems, which have strengthened India's ability to conduct both defensive and offensive operations. Additionally, Israel has provided India with expertise in border surveillance technologies, anti-drone systems, and missile defense solutions capabilities that have significantly enhanced India's preparedness in high-conflict regions, including the India-Pakistan Line of Control (LoC) (Ganguly & Wagner, 2019).

Another critical dimension of bilateral defense cooperation is counterterrorism and intelligence coordination. Following the 9/11 attacks and subsequent regional security challenges, both nations deepened collaboration to address threats from transnational terrorist networks. Joint initiatives like, sharing real-time intelligence on terrorist organizations operating in South Asia and the Middle East. Training Special-Forces for urban counterterrorism operations. Strengthening cybersecurity frameworks to counter evolving hybrid warfare threats (Kapoor, 2020). This synergy has enabled India and Israel to counter common adversaries and develop a comprehensive security architecture focused on both conventional and asymmetric threats. Beyond defense, India and Israel have forged strong partnerships in cutting-edge technologies and high-value joint ventures;

- Information and Communication Technology (ICT): Israeli startups and Indian IT firms collaborate on innovations in software development, data analytics and cloud computing.
- Cybersecurity and Artificial Intelligence (AI): Israel's globally recognized cybersecurity ecosystem complements India's growing digital infrastructure, resulting in the creation of joint research centers and collaborative frameworks (Kaura, 2018).
- Biotechnology and Nanotechnology: Both countries cooperate on medical research, agricultural biotechnology, and nano-engineering, strengthening India's pharmaceutical and healthcare sectors.
- Renewable and Alternative Energy Solutions: Through joint ventures, they are developing technologies for solar energy, desalination systems and waste-to-energy conversion, which support India's energy security goals.

These collaborations highlight a shift from a defense-centric partnership to a comprehensive innovation-driven relationship focused on leveraging complementary strengths.

Space collaboration is an emerging pillar of the India-Israel relationship. India's Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) and Israel's Israel Space Agency (ISA) have jointly developed advanced satellite technologies, including:

- The launch of TecSAR and RISAT series satellites, enabling high-resolution imaging for defense and disaster management applications.
- Collaborative projects in remote sensing, communication systems and space-based surveillance to enhance strategic situational awareness (Saran, 2021).

These developments have expanded the scope of bilateral relations from terrestrial defense systems to outer-space technological integration, reinforcing India's capabilities in dual-use civilian-military applications.

The economic underpinnings of India-Israel cooperation have evolved significantly over the past two decades. Bilateral trade surged from \$200 million in 2001 to approximately \$4.7 billion by 2010 and surpassed \$7.8 billion by 2022, driven by defense imports, technological innovation and private-sector collaboration. In addition, Israeli defense firms including Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI), Rafael Advanced Defense Systems and Elbit Systems have established joint manufacturing hubs in India under the "Make in India" initiative. These ventures not only boost indigenous defense production but also foster technology transfer, job creation and R&D capabilities (Pant & Sahoo, 2019).

**Table-1** Major India-Israel Defence & Technology Deals / Collaborations (1992–2025)

Year(s)	Deal / Project	Type	Value (reported)	Indian partners / Notes
1992	Establishment of full diplomatic relations (context enabling later deals)	Diplomatic normalization (enabler)	n/a	Opened formal channel for overt defence & tech cooperation.
2002-2005 (early 2000s)	<b>IAI Heron &amp; Searcher UAVs (initial purchases)</b>	Sale / operational lease & purchases	US\$220M (reported early-order scale)	Indian Army / Air Force Heron MALE UAVs for ISR (procurements began c.2002–2005).
2004-2009	<b>Phalcon AWACS (EL/W-2090) on Russian platforms</b>	Tri-lateral purchase / integration (Israel tech mounted on Russian aircraft)	US\$1.1B (radar) + ~\$500M (IL-76 frames)	Indian Air Force; IAI/ELTA provided radar; Russia supplied Il-76 airframes; deliveries 2009–2011.
2006-2019 (development & orders)	<b>Barak-8 / MR-SAM joint development</b>	Co-development & production; systems supply	Development & supply contracts totaling US\$1.1B (2009) + multiple later orders (US\$630M, US\$777M, etc.)	DRDO + IAI + BEL + Kalyani (production kits). Deployed Navy/IAF; major Indian production under 'Make in India'.
2015-2017 (JV formation)	<b>Kalyani-Rafael Advanced Systems (KRAS)</b>	Joint venture (manufacturing & subsystems; transfer)	JV equity (reported local investments); later orders \$100M (production kits)	Kalyani Group (India) 51% : Rafael (Israel) 49%; manufacture of missile subsystems, ATGM components, Barak-8 kits.
2017 (May)	<b>IAI \$630M LRSAM / Barak-8 contract for Indian Navy (additional)</b>	Sale / supply contract	US\$630M (navy contract)	Israel Aerospace Industries → Bharat Electronics Ltd (BEL) to equip Visakhapatnam-class destroyers.
2017 (April-Nov)	<b>Cancellation (and later possible revival) of Rafael Spike ATGM order</b>	Proposed sale (cancelled) / political-industrial decision	Proposed ~US\$500M-1B (order for 8,000 Spike rounds) cancelled 2017	MOD cancelled to favour indigenisation/DRDO alternatives; discussions about revival reported later.
2018-2019	<b>IAI \$777M Barak-8 order (additional navy)</b>	Continued supply & local kit production	~\$777M (navy order); ~\$100M (KRAS Barak-8)	BEL, MDL, GRSE, KRAS involvement for production and

Year(s)	Deal / Project	Type	Value (reported)	Indian partners / Notes
	<b>frigates) &amp; KRAS \$100M production contract</b>		kits contract)	integration.
2019	<b>Reported Heron purchase 50 UAVs</b>	Major procurement UAV	Reported US\$500M (media reports)	Additional / follow-on Heron buys to enlarge ISR fleet; later Heron Mk2 orders (2020-2023) and upgrades.
2017-2023 (ongoing)	<b>Joint defence R&amp;D, co-production under 'Make in India'</b>	JV/Co-production (many smaller contracts)	Various (project-specific)	IAI, Elbit, Rafael, KRAS, BEL, BDL, Tata, L&T — local assembly, tech transfer, MRO, subsystems (missiles, drones, EW).
2018 onward	<b>Broad sectoral MOUs: cyber, agriculture, space, energy, R&amp;D, iCREATE links</b>	Technology & civilian collaboration (dual-use)	n/a (MOUs & project funding)	ISRO-ISA cooperation; iCREATE innovation campus; CEO Forum agreements (cyber, AI, water tech).
2020-2023	<b>Heron TP / Heron Mk2 emergency procurements &amp; upgrades</b>	Sale / upgrades / local integration	Various (emergency procurements reported)	IAF & Indian Army procured additional Heron variants (leased/bought), Project Cheetah upgrade plans with Israeli assistance.
2024 (Oct)	<b>Bharat Electronics-IAI joint venture (BEL IAI AeroSystems)</b>	JV for lifecycle support & technical maintenance	Not publicly discl. (JV announced)	BEL (India) + IAI (Israel) JV to provide support/maintenance for MR-SAM & aero systems (Make in India support).
2020s (ongoing through 2025)	<b>Cybersecurity, AI, water/irrigation &amp; agri-tech, space collaboration</b>	Technology cooperation (civil & dual-use)	Project-specific funding; private JV investments	Start-ups, iCREATE collaborations, ISRO-ISA contact, Israeli water tech firms working with Indian states.

Source: Compiled by the researcher

Since the mid-2010s many Israel firms have set up JVs/production lines (e.g., KRAS, BEL-IAI collaboration) consistent with India's indigenization goals. Several major missile/system contracts have local content and kit production clauses (Defense News/SPS Naval Forces). Some high-value proposals (e.g., Spike ATGM order) were publicly cancelled in 2017 in favour of indigenization; reporting indicates periodic talks of revival or local production under JV terms (KRAS) (Defense News; CAPSIndia) After 2010 the partnership broadened into cybersecurity, water tech,

agriculture, space, AI many agreements are MOUs and civilian but have dual-use strategic implications (surveillance, remote sensing).

### **India-Israel Nexus against Iran and Pakistan**

India and Israel's strategic alignment is shaped by overlapping threat perceptions and complementary capabilities, but it also reflects distinct geostrategic priorities vis-à-vis Iran and Pakistan. For Israel, countering Iran's regional influence and nuclear ambitions is the paramount security objective. For India, Pakistan remains the proximate conventional and sub-conventional challenger, while Iran is a complex partner historically important for energy security and connectivity (e.g., Chabahar Port) but constrained by US sanctions and evolving Middle East politics (Ganguly & Wagner, 2019; Pant & Sahoo, 2019).

Israel's doctrine centers on denying Iran advanced nuclear and missile capabilities and constraining its regional networks. India does not share Israel's threat hierarchy, yet, India's relations with Iran have tightened and loosened in reaction to sanction cycles, oil price volatility, and its need to cultivate ties with the Gulf monarchies and the United States (Kaura, 2018). Since the late 2010s, India's crude oil imports from Iran declined sharply under renewed US sanctions, narrowing room for strategic hedging. Within this context, India's defense-technology cooperation with Israel particularly air and missile defense, ISR (intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance), counter-UAV and cybersecurity indirectly supports India's ability to cope with an increasingly missile and drone-proliferated regional environment in which Iran is a key actor (Pant & Sahoo, 2019). Analysts note that trilateral political currents US-India-Israel have also facilitated technology access and policy coordination that align, in practice if not by design, with Israel's objective of constraining Iran's coercive leverage (Ganguly & Wagner, 2019).

India still seeks selective cooperation with Iran for continental access to Afghanistan and Central Asia and to preserve strategic autonomy. Thus, India manages a calibrated position, it deepens high-end defense and dual-use technology ties with Israel and the US while maintaining a political channel with Iran where feasible (Kaura, 2018). This calibrated approach reduces secondary-sanctions risk and sustains India's room to maneuver in West Asia's fluid alignment patterns.

### **Convergence on Pakistan**

India-Israel converges more explicitly on the challenge of Pakistan-based militant networks and on the utility of technology-enabled precision operations and homeland security hardening. Israel's provision (and co-development) of air defense systems (e.g., Barak-8), UAVs, electronic warfare, and C4ISR architectures has improved India's ability to defend critical infrastructure and conduct time-sensitive targeting capabilities directly relevant to crisis scenarios with Pakistan (Ganguly & Wagner, 2019; Kaura, 2018). From Israel's perspective, building India's capacity against cross-border terrorism and gray-zone threats also serves to constrain the operational space of groups that maintain ideological, financial or logistical linkages across the broader region.

The net effect is a tightening strategic triangle, Israel prioritizes Iran; India prioritizes Pakistan; the US enables technology flows and political cover. This generates a security dilemma for Pakistan, which perceives India-Israel enabled modernization as eroding conventional parity and complicating deterrence dynamics, especially in ISR dominance, air defense and cyber-enabled intelligence (Cohen, 2013). For India, the partnership raises the costs for state and non-state actors

contemplating cross-border coercion; for Israel, it embeds a like-minded Asian power in a technological ecosystem broadly consistent with its Iran-centric security goals (Pant & Sahoo, 2019).

While arms transfers and co-development projects are highly visible, the convergence in defense techniques concepts, doctrines and operational methods has been equally consequential. These convergences span counterterrorism, border security, urban warfare, precision strike, air- and missile-defense integration, intelligence fusion and cyber/homeland security.

### ***Intelligence-Driven Counterterrorism and Urban Operations***

Both states emphasize intelligence-led, law-enforcement-military fusion for rapid disruption of terror networks and short, high-precision raids. India has drawn on Israeli experience for close-quarters battle (CQB), hostage-rescue, and site-exploitation techniques suitable for dense urban terrain (e.g., Mumbai-type contingencies). Training exchanges and doctrine exposure have reinforced the centrality of real-time ISR, human intelligence integration and after-action innovation cycles (Kapoor, 2020; Pant & Sahoo, 2019).

### ***Border Security and Perimeter Technologies***

Together they face infiltration challenges and have adopted layered border systems that blend sensors, cameras, ground-surveillance radar, tethered aerostats, counter-tunnel measures and smart fencing, integrated through command-and-control nodes for rapid cueing of response units. India's modernization along sensitive frontiers reflects Israeli practices in sensor fusion, pattern-of-life analytics and automated alerts, aimed at deterring and interdicting small-team incursions (Ganguly & Wagner, 2019).

### ***Precision Strike and Time-Sensitive Targeting***

Israel's doctrinal focus on precision-guided munitions, networked UAVs and target system analysis resonates with India's requirement for carefully calibrated limited-objective operations under the nuclear shadow. The co-development and induction of systems like Barak-8, as well as the acquisition of UAVs and EW suites, enable India to compress the find-fix-finish cycle and to conduct counter-force and counter-leadership interdiction within politically manageable time windows (Kaura, 2018).

### ***Integrated Air and Missile Defense (IAMD)***

Mutually militaries prioritize layered air defense, linking surveillance radar, battle-management, electronic warfare and interceptors. India's naval and land-based air-defense upgrades supported by Israeli sensors, command systems and interceptors mirror Israeli IAMD practices designed to counter ballistic, cruise, and UAV threats, which are proliferating across West Asia and South Asia alike (Pant & Sahoo, 2019).

### ***C4ISR and Electronic Warfare Integration***

Israel's edge in electronic support measures (ESM), signals intelligence (SIGINT) and data-linking has informed India's push for network-centric warfare linking aircraft, ships, ground formations and special operations forces through secure communications for shared situational awareness and joint fires. This convergence enhances survivability, reduces fratricide risk and improves kill-chain efficiency (Ganguly & Wagner, 2019).

### ***Cybersecurity and Critical-Infrastructure Protection***

Together they treat cyber defense as integral to national security, blending threat-intelligence sharing, industrial-control-system (ICS) hardening, and public-private partnerships. Israeli firms' role in Indian financial, energy, and transport cyber-resilience projects has diffused techniques such as red-teaming, emulation of advanced persistent threats (APTs) and security-by-design architectures (Kaura, 2018).

### ***Doctrine for Escalation Control***

Given dense population centers and the presence of nuclear weapons (in South Asia), both states emphasize politically constrained, time-bounded operations that seek to punish or deter without uncontrolled horizontal or vertical escalation. The reliance on precision, ISR dominance and legal-policy oversight mechanisms reflects a shared understanding of modern limited war under domestic and international scrutiny (Cohen, 2013; Ganguly & Wagner, 2019). These technique-level convergences coupled with platform co-development do not make India a replica of Israel. Rather, they translate Israeli operational lessons to India's distinct geography, force structure, and escalation environment, producing a tailored Indian approach to counterterrorism, border management and conventional crisis deterrence that is more networked, precise and resilient.

The growing India-Israel technological and defense nexus enhances India's strategic autonomy while, strengthening Israel's influence in South Asia and the Indo-Pacific. This cooperation aligns with broader US and Western interests in balancing China and countering terrorism in the region, thereby embedding the partnership within a wider geostrategic framework (Ganguly & Wagner, 2019).

### **Implications for Pakistan**

Shortly after Israel's founding, Israel's first PM, David Ben-Gurion, attempted to open diplomatic contact with Pakistan; a telegram sent in 1947 went unanswered. Pakistan has never extended formal recognition to Israel and has long conditioned any normalization on a just settlement for the Palestinians. Pakistan's non-recognition is both a principled stance and a strategic posture shaped by domestic politics and solidarity with the wider Muslim world (Umbreen, 2014). The absence of formal ties constrains bilateral dialogue, complicates intelligence transparency and limits Pakistan's options for diplomatic hedging in a region where India and Israel increasingly cooperate.

Some historical accounts and investigative reports have suggested episodes of covert planning and contingency thinking among India and Israel regarding Pakistan's strategic infrastructure during the 1980s. Adrian Levy and Catherine Scott-Clark document claims reported in media and later discussed by other authors that Israeli planners once practiced mock attacks on facilities resembling Pakistan's nuclear sites and that an Anglo-Indian-Israeli nexus contemplated contingencies in the 1980s (Levy & Scott-Clark, 2007; "Israel planned to hit," 2007). Whether or not every detail of those reports is incontrovertible, they fed a perception in Pakistan of hostile intent and plausible worst-case scenarios. Even disputed reports of pre-emptive planning can generate enduring insecurity. Pakistan's strategic community treats such accounts as evidence of potential targeting of its nuclear infrastructure, reinforcing doctrines and force postures designed to deter or defend against surprise attacks (Levy & Scott-Clark, 2007).

The post-2001 regional environment and the US war in Afghanistan renewed anxiety in some international and policy circles about the security of Pakistan's nuclear arsenal in conditions of internal instability. Scholarly and policy literature has repeatedly examined the risks real and perceived of non-state access or of coercive attempts to neutralize Pakistan's deterrent during periods of acute instability (Arms Control Association, 2009). Although many experts conclude Pakistan has invested substantially in safeguarding its nuclear assets, the very specter of vulnerability has strategic and political implications. International concern about nuclear security can be weaponized politically to justify external pressure or contingency planning; Pakistan therefore invests in robust, layered security and command measures to reassure domestic and external audiences.

Pakistan's refusal to recognize Israel is tied to widespread domestic opinion and the political salience of the Palestinian issue. Although occasional elite debates (i.e. under President Pervez Musharraf) broached the idea of reconsideration, large-scale public and institutional resistance has ensured continuity in policy ("Pakistan defends talks," 2005; Umbreen, 2014). The diplomatic costs and benefits of recognition remain contested in Pakistan's strategic calculus. Any move toward recognition would need deft domestic management and would risk political backlash unless it is tied to clear, tangible gains for Pakistan and progress on Palestinian statehood.

Israel's sophisticated international lobbying networks and public diplomacy campaigns can shape perceptions abroad, sometimes portraying Palestinian or Islamist actors as the primary antagonists. For Pakistan, this complicates international messaging and coalition-building on Palestine and human rights issues; it also reduces the diplomatic space for Pakistan to make its case unambiguously in some Western forums (Ganguly & Wagner, 2019). Pakistan must broaden its diplomatic outreach, strengthen messaging on international platforms and cultivate ties with non-Western partners to counter narratives that could isolate it diplomatically.

Israel's principal regional concern has been Iran's nuclear and proxy capabilities; this focus is reinforced by the sizeable community of Iranian origin within Israel and by Iran's support for anti-Israel militant groups (Sternfeld, 2022; Iranica Online, 2017). Pakistani-origin Jewish communities are small and politically marginal in Israel, so Pakistan has not been a comparable priority in Israel's domestic politics (Jewish Virtual Library, n.d.; Sternfeld, 2022). Pakistan benefits in a narrow sense from relative Israeli prioritization of Iran, however, bilateral Israeli-Indian cooperation still tangibly affects Pakistan's security environment because India is an immediate competitor in South Asia.

Iranian Jews in Israel constitute a significant community with historical and political influence; their concerns feed into Israeli foreign-policy calculations toward Iran. By contrast, the Pakistani Jewish diaspora in Israel is small and lacks the political leverage that might elevate Pakistan on Israel's strategic agenda (Jewish Virtual Library; Iranica Online, 2017). Pakistan cannot count on diaspora leverage in Israel to shape Israel's policy; its security posture must therefore rely on state-to-state deterrence and diplomatic engagement elsewhere.

Several practical and logistical considerations constrain the prospect of direct Pakistan-Israel military confrontation. Geographic separation, lack of contiguous borders, limited air-to-air overflight rights across multiple states and Israeli conventional superiority in some domains make a large-scale direct military clash unlikely. Pakistan's long-range ballistic-missile inventory (e.g.,

Shaheen variants, Ababeel) gives it some stand-off strike capability, but range and payload limitations reduce operational flexibility at extreme distances. Likewise, naval options are constrained by the maritime geography and the unwillingness of third states to become belligerent transit corridors. While direct conventional war is improbable, asymmetric operations covert action, cyber operations and proxy dynamics remain plausible avenues of competition and must be planned for by Pakistan's security establishment.

The Indo-Israeli nexus strengthened by US strategic convergence contributes to a changing balance of power in South Asia. Pakistan therefore faces a strategic dilemma: how to avoid technological and diplomatic isolation while preserving deterrence and strategic autonomy. Policy options include deepening ties with China and other partners for defense and technology (e.g., CPEC and defense collaboration) accelerating indigenous R&D, strengthening nuclear and conventional survivability measures and pursuing diversified diplomacy that engages Gulf states, Turkey and Russia (Pant & Sahoo, 2019; Umbreen, 2014). Pakistan's response must be multi-dimensional both hard (defense modernization, dispersal, cyber resilience) and soft (diplomatic outreach, economic partnerships) to preserve strategic stability and avoid a debilitating zero-sum competition. Since mid-2025, several developments have further intensified the strategic alignment between India and Israel, with consequential implications for Pakistan:

### **Defense Institutionalization**

In July 2025, India and Israel formally agreed to strengthen their defense cooperation via a long-term institutional framework. During the meeting between India's Defense Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh and Major General Amir Baram (Director General of Israel's Ministry of Defense), both sides committed to expanding collaboration in areas such as joint research and development, technology transfer, defense manufacturing and training exchanges.

### ***Investment Protection Treaty***

In September 2025, India and Israel sealed a bilateral investment treaty aimed at boosting investment flows by reducing risks such as unfair treatment of investors and restricting capital transfer barriers. This move reflects deepening economic as well as strategic ties between the two countries.

### ***Pakistan-Saudi Arabia Strategic Mutual Defense Pact***

Also in September 2025, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia signed a "Strategic Mutual Defense Agreement," declaring that any aggression against one party would be considered aggression against both. Pakistan's Defense Minister indicated that under this pact, elements of Pakistan's nuclear deterrent might be extended to Saudi Arabia. This development appears to be, in part, a response to Israel's regional actions, particularly the strikes in Doha, which have elevated concerns about regional security among Muslim states.

### ***Public Diplomacy and Political Rebuttals***

On various platforms, Pakistan's political parties and foreign affairs circles have become more vocal in condemning what they perceive as an "India-Israel nexus," urging Muslim and international institutions like the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) to push back. These statements

underscore how India-Israel cooperation is not only affecting strategic balances but also shaping diplomatic and normative discourses.

The strategic alignment between India and Israel continues to expand across military, economic and diplomatic dimensions. The newly formalized defense cooperation framework and the investment protection treaty suggest that India's absorption of Israeli technology and systems is accelerating from transactional deals toward sustained institutional relationships (Pant & Bommakanti, 2022). These shifts heighten Pakistani threat perceptions, especially given Pakistan's economic constraints and slower pace of defense modernization (Khan, 2018). The Pakistan-Saudi defense pact further complicates the regional security geometry. By potentially extending nuclear deterrence to Saudi Arabia, this pact recalibrates the balance in the Middle East and South Asia simultaneously, signaling that Pakistan is seeking new strategic buffers. Meanwhile, India appears to view this development in light of Israel's aggressive posture in the region for example, its actions in Doha and is assessing how the shifting alliances may affect its own strategic interests (Business Standard, 2025; Reuters, 2025). The normative realm is not untouched: Pakistan's public diplomacy and its demand for institutional pushback from Muslim and international bodies reflect how alliances and alignments are increasingly being construed not just in military or technical terms but in moral-political ones.

## **CONCLUSION**

India and Israel's strategic alignment is no longer merely bilateral; it is evolving into a multifaceted, institutionalized partnership with military, economic and diplomatic dimensions. For Pakistan, this deepening alliance poses serious challenges: erosion of technological parity, diplomatic isolation and heightened strategic vulnerability. The recent Pakistan-Saudi mutual defense pact, coupled with India-Israel economic treaties and defense cooperation, underscores a rapidly shifting regional order in which states are seeking new alignments and buffers.

India's deepening strategic partnership with Israel has significantly transformed the security and technological architecture of South Asia, presenting new challenges for Pakistan's national security and foreign policy. The India-Israel defense nexus encompassing advanced military systems, intelligence-sharing and joint technological ventures has substantially enhanced India's military capabilities and strategic posture (Pant & Bommakanti, 2019). This evolving alignment is altering the regional balance of power, compelling Pakistan to reassess its diplomatic posture and security strategies in light of emerging geopolitical realities.

Historically, Pakistan has maintained a policy of non-recognition of Israel due to its unwavering support for the Palestinian cause. However, shifting dynamics in Middle Eastern politics particularly following the Abraham Accords of 2020 have created new diplomatic and economic opportunities. Several Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states, including the UAE and Bahrain, have normalized relations with Israel, while Saudi Arabia has moved toward closer engagement (Kaye, 2021; Miller, 2022). This evolving environment has increased pressure on Pakistan to recalibrate its approach to avoid strategic isolation and to ensure that its economic and security interests remain safeguarded.

In 2025, India and Israel formalized a defense cooperation framework, expanding collaboration in joint research, technology transfer, defense manufacturing, and military training. This move

represents a shift from transactional defense deals toward long-term institutional partnerships ("India, Israel to strengthen," 2025). The signing of a bilateral investment treaty in September 2025 further cemented economic ties between India and Israel, aiming to enhance investor protections and promote greater investment flows ("India-Israel ties," 2025). In the same year, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia signed a "Strategic Mutual Defense Agreement," committing to treat aggression against one as aggression against both. Reports suggested that this pact could potentially extend elements of Pakistan's nuclear deterrent to Saudi Arabia, a move that reshapes both Middle Eastern and South Asian security dynamics ("Pakistan and Saudi Arabia," 2025). Pakistan's political leadership and foreign policy community have increasingly highlighted the "India-Israel nexus" in public discourse, urging institutions like the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) to counterbalance the partnership and framing the issue as both a strategic and normative challenge ("PTI urges OIC," 2025).

### ***Policy Recommendations for Pakistan***

A pragmatic and forward-looking approach would involve exploring limited avenues of engagement with Israel without compromising Pakistan's principled stance on Palestine. Diplomatic recognition, even in partial or conditional form, could unlock opportunities in science, technology, cybersecurity, water management and agriculture sectors where Israel holds considerable expertise and where Pakistan faces growing challenges (Shaikh, 2022). Pakistan could draw lessons from the Turkish model, which has successfully balanced ties with Israel while maintaining strong advocacy for Palestinian rights. This approach would provide strategic flexibility without ideological compromise. Simultaneously, Pakistan must invest in public diplomacy to manage domestic sensitivities, leveraging media and educational platforms to foster informed debate and counter misinformation with evidence-based policy arguments.

On the security front, Pakistan must enhance deterrence credibility by modernizing both nuclear and conventional forces, investing in indigenous defense technologies and diversifying procurement through partnerships with China, Turkey, and other willing states. Economically, initiatives such as the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) should be leveraged to strengthen regional connectivity, trade integration, and technological advancement. The evolving India-Israel strategic partnership has introduced new complexities into South Asia's security and diplomatic landscape. For Pakistan, the challenge lies not only in countering India's growing military and technological advantage but also in avoiding strategic isolation amid shifting Middle Eastern dynamics. The Abraham Accords, normalization of Israel's ties with key Arab states, and the institutionalization of Indo-Israeli cooperation demand that Pakistan adopt a pragmatic, diversified and forward-looking foreign policy. Diplomatic diversification should balance Pakistan's traditional commitments particularly to the Palestinian cause with pragmatic measures to safeguard its national security and economic interests.

Pakistan should intensify its diplomatic, economic, and defense cooperation with Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states particularly Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Qatar many of which have already deepened their ties with Israel in fields such as technology, intelligence and trade (Ulrich Sen, 2021). By positioning itself as a key partner in regional trade and connectivity projects, Pakistan can ensure it remains relevant in the emerging regional security and economic order. The 2025 Pakistan-Saudi Arabia Strategic Defense Pact, which declared that aggression against one would be

treated as aggression against both, provides Pakistan with new leverage (“Pakistan and Saudi Arabia,” 2025). Pakistan should capitalize on this agreement by aligning defense cooperation with broader economic initiatives under the China–Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and Saudi Vision 2030, thereby ensuring a mutually reinforcing strategic partnership.

While full normalization may remain politically contentious, Pakistan can discreetly explore low-profile backchannel engagement with Israel. This would serve multiple purposes; reducing hostility, gaining situational awareness of Indo-Israeli cooperation and opening pathways for limited collaboration in areas such as climate adaptation, renewable energy, agriculture and water management (Inbar, 2020). In particular, Israel’s expertise in precision agriculture and water desalination could help Pakistan address chronic food insecurity and water scarcity. Such collaboration, conducted indirectly or through regional partners, would also minimize domestic political backlash.

Pakistan could use trusted intermediaries such as Turkey, Qatar and the US to facilitate informal or issue-specific dialogues with Israel. Turkey has maintained full diplomatic ties with Israel while continuing to advocate for Palestinian rights, thereby retaining flexibility without abandoning its ideological stance (Shaikh, 2022). Similarly, Qatar which has simultaneously hosted Hamas leaders and mediated humanitarian arrangements with Israel demonstrates the potential for nuanced diplomacy that balances domestic sensitivities with pragmatic engagement. Pakistan could employ such channels to manage its diplomatic posture while reducing isolation.

Maintaining the current policy of non-recognition sustains Pakistan’s principled stance on Palestine and aligns with the strong domestic consensus. This approach preserves Islamabad’s credibility within the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and the broader Muslim world. However, the risks of this policy are growing. Arab states such as the UAE, Bahrain and Morocco have normalized relations with Israel, while Saudi Arabia is exploring similar possibilities (Miller, 2022). Pakistan’s rigid adherence to non-recognition could lead to diplomatic irrelevance and reinforce India’s monopoly over Israel’s defense and technological benefits.

A middle-ground option is partial engagement, in which Pakistan would seek access to Israeli innovations in sectors such as cybersecurity, health technology, agriculture, and artificial intelligence without full diplomatic recognition. This could be achieved indirectly through third-party mediators such as the UAE or Turkey, who already cooperate with both Pakistan and Israel (Kaye, 2021). Such engagement would allow Pakistan to benefit from Israeli expertise while minimizing political risks. However, the strategy carries inherent limitations: dependence on intermediaries, reduced influence in bilateral negotiations, and potential domestic backlash if exposed.

Comprehensive normalization would provide Pakistan with access to cutting-edge defense systems, missile defense technologies, space capabilities and artificial intelligence applications, significantly boosting its deterrence posture against India. Economic opportunities could be substantial, with bilateral trade potential estimated at over \$5 billion annually (Belhaj et. al., 2022). Moreover, normalization could enhance Pakistan’s standing with the US and Western partners, reducing its over-dependence on China. However, this option remains politically sensitive, carrying the risk of alienating domestic constituencies and undermining Pakistan’s longstanding support for Palestine.

Therefore, any such shift would require incremental, low-visibility engagement in technological and economic fields before public diplomatic recognition.

Pakistan should consolidate its defense and economic ties with GCC states to retain leverage in a region where Israel's influence is expanding rapidly. Joint defense production, intelligence sharing, and economic connectivity projects under the Pakistan-GCC framework can help Islamabad position itself as a critical security partner in the Middle East, counterbalancing India's growing clout.

Pakistan must institutionalize the study of Indo-Israeli cooperation through dedicated analytical frameworks within its security and intelligence institutions. By systematically tracking developments in areas such as missile defense, drone technology, and cyber warfare, Pakistan can better anticipate threats and adjust its deterrence posture accordingly (Tellis, 2020). Finally, Pakistan must reduce its dependence on external suppliers by investing heavily in indigenous research and development (R&D) in critical domains such as cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, UAVs and missile defense. This would ensure greater autonomy and resilience against technological denial regimes, while helping Pakistan close the growing gap with India's Israeli-acquired systems.

Pakistan's response to the Indo-Israeli strategic alignment must be comprehensive, pragmatic, and forward-looking. A rigid policy of non-engagement risks long-term marginalization, while premature normalization could provoke domestic and regional backlash. The optimal path forward is a calibrated, multi-layered approach. By pursuing such a strategy, Pakistan can safeguard its national security, adapt to shifting regional dynamics, and retain diplomatic flexibility without abandoning its principled commitment to Palestine. India's expanding strategic partnership with Israel has reshaped South Asia's balance of power, narrowing Pakistan's strategic maneuvering space. The institutionalization of defense and economic ties between India and Israel highlights the urgency for Islamabad to adapt. At the same time, Pakistan's alignment with Saudi Arabia through the 2025 defense pact signals a search for new security buffers and broader strategic hedging. Going forward, Pakistan should pursue a flexible, multidimensional foreign policy built on three pillars:

Security Modernization – Safeguard deterrent capabilities and accelerate indigenous defense innovation.

Diplomatic Diversification – Cultivate strategic partnerships across the Muslim world, China, and multilateral forums to offset isolation.

Pragmatic Engagement – Explore selective cooperation with Israel in non-political domains, while maintaining a principled stance on Palestine, thereby ensuring strategic adaptability without ideological capitulation.

By adopting this balanced approach, Pakistan can safeguard its security, preserve its diplomatic relevance and adapt pragmatically to a rapidly shifting geopolitical landscape.

To respond effectively without provoking escalation, Pakistan should consider a comprehensive policy response. Pakistan must ensure that both its nuclear and conventional forces are credible, secure and resilient. This includes continued investment in second-strike capabilities, early warning, command and control systems and safeguarding against technological obsolescence. To avoid lagging further behind, Pakistan should intensify its indigenous defense R&D and work

closely with strategic partners willing to engage in technology transfer. Partnerships could include states outside the India-Israel axis, as well as non-state actors and defense industries in friendly countries.

Cultivate new strategic partnerships and strengthen existing ones. The Pakistan-Saudi defense pact is a step in this direction. Pakistan should also engage multilaterally in the OIC, Non-Aligned Movement and within UN frameworks to build normative legitimacy and counterbalance India-Israel alignments. While solidarity with Palestine remains a core value, Pakistan might re-evaluate its policy of non-recognition of Israel in light of evolving regional norms (e.g. the Abraham Accords) to avoid diplomatic isolation and to enable more flexible foreign policy options. Pakistan should strive to de-escalate where possible through dialogue, confidence-building measures and crisis management mechanisms. At the same time, clear red-lines should be communicated and military readiness maintained.

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