

Modi visits Israel to strengthen India-Israeli strategic axis, as Washington and Tel Aviv prepare assault on Iran

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Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi made a two-day visit to Israel this week, choosing to further elevate India's "strategic partnership" with Israel at the very point that Washington and Tel Aviv are poised to launch a criminal, unprovoked war on Iran.

With the US having deployed greater firepower to the Middle East than any time since it invaded Iraq in 2003, such a war will have catastrophic consequences for the people of Iran and risks setting the entire Middle East ablaze.

Israel's military has been on high alert for weeks, only awaiting Washington's greenlight to join a war on Iran. Twice in the past two months, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu—upon whom Modi lavished praise and hugs—has met with America's president and would-be führer Donald Trump at the White House to plot regime-change war against Iran. By all reports, Netanyahu has been pressing Trump to make good on his threats to rain devastation on Iran on a scale far greater than that inflicted during last June's 12-day US-Israeli bombardment.

Meanwhile, Netanyahu and his fascist regime continue their genocidal assault on the people of Gaza, the supposed Trump-brokered truce notwithstanding, and they have intensified their drive to ethnically cleanse the West Bank in furtherance of their plans to establish a Greater Israel.

None of this caused Modi the slightest pause.

He went out of his way to solidarize himself and India with Israel's crimes. He denounced the October 7, 2023 Hamas uprising in language that was music to the ears of the entire Zionist political establishment including the far right; hailed Trump's "peace plan" to transform Gaza into a neo-colonial protectorate under his personal supervision; and breathed not a word about Israel's campaign of terror and mass murder against the people of Gaza. Modi excoriated Hamas "terrorism" and lauded the strength of India and Israel's "shared democratic values." But he passed over in silence the deaths of more than 70,000 Gaza Palestinians from Israeli bombardment, the systematic starving of the enclave's entire population and the destruction of most of its infrastructure and dwellings.

In 2017 Modi became the first Indian prime minister to ever visit Israel. On Wednesday, the first day of his two-day visit, he became the first Indian prime minister to address the Knesset. He was greeted with a standing ovation, a grotesque salute from a regime of war criminals to a Hindu supremacist who first came to national prominence in India when in 2002, as the chief minister of Gujarat, he instigated an anti-Muslim pogrom that left some 2,000 dead and hundreds of thousands homeless.

Modi branded the Hamas uprising, which was sparked by years of a punishing Israeli blockade, "a barbaric terrorist attack." "We feel your pain," he continued. "We share your grief. India stands with Israel, firmly, with full conviction, in this moment, and beyond.

"No cause can justify the murder of civilians. Nothing can justify terrorism."

In so far as Modi referenced Gaza in his speech, it was from the standpoint of Trump's "peace plan," which he cynically claimed, "holds the promise of a just and durable peace."

In keeping with this Orwellian portrayal, Modi painted Netanyahu and the Israeli garrison state as veritable peacemakers. He lauded the Trump-brokered 2020 Abraham Accords, which were designed to give Israel a free hand in imposing its "final solution" to the Palestinian question, saying India "applauded your courage and vision."

Turning to Indo-Israeli relations, he declared that the "strong partnership" between Washington's foremost partner in South Asia and its Middle East attack-dog, "serves national interests but also contributes to global stability and prosperity."

The *Jerusalem Post* was ecstatic. Speaking of Modi's presentation of the now two-and-a-half-year-long war that Israel has waged on the people of Gaza in the name of fighting "terrorism," it declared: "No equivocation. No contextualization. No 'on the one hand.' No reference to 'root causes.' No 'balancing' intended to dilute the condemnation."

Netanyahu, not surprisingly, was effusive in his praise for Modi. He thanked India for "standing by" Israel, then declared India's Hindu supremacist prime minister "more than a friend, a brother."

At the conclusion of Modi's visit, the two countries signed sixteen Memorandums of Understanding and elevated their partnership to what they are now calling a "Special Strategic Partnership for Peace, Innovation & Prosperity."

The MoUs covered everything from cooperation in Artificial Intelligence, and cybersecurity, to education, commerce and agriculture. They included a deal to bring 50,000 Indian workers to Israel to make up for labour shortages caused by the post-October 2023 restrictions on Palestinian labour.

Netanyahu and Modi also signed a landmark defense MoU, which focuses on co-development and co-production of advanced missile defenses like the Arrow, David's Sling, Iron Dome (short-range rockets), and Iron Beam (laser-based). It builds on a prior MoU for broader collaboration in military training, R&D, cybersecurity and counterterrorism.

No new weapons deals were announced during the visit, but the Indo-Israeli arms trade has massively expanded in recent years.

New Delhi is now by far the biggest purchaser of Israeli weapons, accounting for one-third of all Israel's foreign arms sales from 2020 to 2024. India's military exports to Israel have also grown rapidly in recent years. Since the beginning of the Gaza slaughter, India has co-produced Israeli armaments and supplied combat drones, missiles, and explosives to Israel. The AI weaponry system used in Gaza was jointly developed by Indian and Israeli companies.

Over the past year, the two countries have sealed military transactions worth a staggering \$8.6 billion.

During Modi's visit, New Delhi and Tel Aviv recommitted to trying to reach a free trade agreement to boost bilateral trade. Last September, when Israeli Finance Minister and staunch Greater Israel settler-fascist Bezalel Smotrich travelled to India, the two countries signed their first ever Bilateral Investment Agreement (BIA).

The shocks from an US-Israeli war on Iran would reverberate globally, exacerbating geopolitical tensions, stoking war, and roiling the world economy. India, which imports more than 80 percent of its oil, could face a major run up in oil prices, even as remittances from the Middle East plunge.

Iran is also a longtime ally of India. New Delhi has invested both financial and political capital in developing Iran's Chabahar Port to provide it with an economic corridor to Afghanistan and all Central Asia.

New Delhi no doubt is apprehensive about the consequences of a US-Israeli war on Iran, but certainly not enough to in anyway stop it expanding its economic and military-security ties with Israel and, even more importantly, Washington. Moreover, it views their violations of international law as providing license for India's own predatory actions and great-power appetites.

Israel, it should be noted, stood virtually alone in declaring its unequivocal support for India's unprovoked and patently illegal attack on Pakistan last May. The assault led to four days of air and artillery clashes and brought South Asia's rival nuclear powers to the brink of all-out war.

Over the past quarter-century, New Delhi, under BJP and Congress Party governments alike, has repeatedly sacrificed relations with Tehran in pursuit of its anti-China "global strategic partnership" with US imperialism. This includes scuttling a natural gas pipeline from Iran to India via Pakistan that was supposed to underpin a rapprochement between South Asia's historic strategic rivals; and lining up with the US at the International Atomic Energy Agency in the late 2000s in designating Iran's civil nuclear program a threat.

India also ultimately hopes to gain from the expansion of US influence in the Middle East through aggression, war and genocide and specifically Washington's promotion of an India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC). This infrastructure initiative was launched at the 2023 G20 Summit in New Delhi with US backing and participation from Saudi Arabia and the UAE as a means of countering China's Belt and Road Initiative. The IMEC aims to establish a multi-modal trade and transport route linking India and Europe, promising a 40 percent reduction in transport times and potentially positioning Israel and its Haifa Port as a key hub.

Not coincidentally, the Adani Group, led by Gautam Adani—one of the world's richest men and a close Modi ally—holds a 70 percent stake in Israel's Haifa Port. But the Adani Group's role in India-Israel ties goes well beyond this. It has partnerships with Israeli-based companies in technology and infrastructure, and collaborates with

Israeli defense firms like Elbit Systems, producing drones and weapons for the Israel Defense Forces.

The camaraderie on display between Modi and Netanyahu during the Indian prime minister's visit also has ideological roots. There is a deep and longstanding affinity between Zionism and Hindu supremacism, fueled by religious nationalism and a common antipathy to the Muslim "other." This was well-recognized in the 1930s by the founding ideologue of Hindutva, V.D. Savarkar. He urged support for Zionism even as he exhorted the "Hindu nation" to treat India's Muslims as Hitler was treating Germany's Jews.

As would be expected, Iran has sharply criticized Modi's visit to Israel. A Foreign Ministry spokesperson criticized India for ignoring "the suffering of the Palestinian people," with Modi visiting at a time when Israel is conducting "war crimes" in Gaza. While it did not directly raise Israel's role in the impending war on Iran, the spokesperson said Tehran "expected India, as an historic friend" to "restrain the Zionist regime, not reward it."

Apart from the Stalinist parliamentary parties, there was little criticism from within the political establishment and corporate media of Modi's visit to Israel and the enhancing of Indo-Israeli strategic ties. What criticism there was centered on its potential to damage relations with the Arab Gulf States—not India's implicit support for genocide and the impending criminal war on Iran.

A spokesperson for the official opposition Congress Party, Jairam Ramesh, chastised Modi for visiting as Israel's "dispossession and displacement of thousands of Palestinians in the occupied West Bank has intensified ... Israel's attacks on civilians in Gaza continue mercilessly (and) Israel and the US are planning air assaults on Iran." But this was no more than a cynical attempt to curry popular support by appealing to the mass revulsion against Israel's genocide in Gaza, especially among the minority Muslim population, and latent but powerful anti-imperialist traditions among working people. The Congress Party is fully on board with the Indo-US alliance and systematically obscures Washington's role, first under Biden and then Trump, in arming, funding, and politically supporting Israel, as it has rampaged across the Middle East since October 2023.



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