



המכון למדיניות העם היהודי (מיסודה של הסוכנות היהודית לא"י) בע"מ (חל"צ)

The Jewish People Policy Institute (Established by the Jewish Agency for Israel) Ltd. (CC)



With a Foreword by H.E. President Reuven Rivlin

Shalom Salomon Wald
and Arielle Kandel

Emerging Super Powers of non-Biblical Traditions No. 2

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INDIA, ISRAEL, AND THE JEWISH PEOPLE

Looking Ahead, Looking Back 25 Years after Normalization

With a Foreword by
H.E. President Reuven Rivlin

Shalom Salomon Wald
and Arielle Kandel

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FOREWORD

By H.E. Reuven Rivlin

It is a pleasure for me to add my introduction to this book on the relationship of the State of Israel and the Jewish People with the huge sub-continent of India, with its vast ethnic, religious, political, linguistic and economic diversity. Despite the links and parallels between our two nations that can be traced back through the centuries into far distant history, much of our individual cultures, histories and current lives remain totally unfamiliar to the members of the other nation.

Over the past twelve months, the President of India, H.E. Shri Pranab Mukherjee, made a historic state visit to Jerusalem, while I had the pleasure and the honour of visiting India, together with a delegation of leading figures in Israeli academia, business, industry and defence. These visits and the agreements signed between us regarding the development of collaboration in a wide variety of fields are witness to the rapidly growing cooperation and friendship between the tiny State of Israel and the huge sub-continent of India. As President Mukherjee mentioned during his visit to Jerusalem, India and Israel are both young democratic countries set up by very ancient nations that each represent a great civilization. Although diplomatic relations between our countries were established twenty five years ago, the ties between our two nations can be traced far into the past.

We have found inspiration in the Indian nation, and that inspiration, also, is both ancient and new.

Some two thousand years ago when the Jewish nation was engaged in a losing struggle against the great Roman Empire, a small group of Jewish soldiers were fighting a hopeless battle against the Roman armies on Massada, the last enclave of Jewish resistance in the Judean desert.

When it became clear they could hold out no longer, those Jewish fighters gathered together to discuss whether to surrender and to live as slaves, or to fight, and to die as free men.

The commander of that group of fighters, Elazar ben Ya'ir, made a very moving speech calling on that group of men to choose liberty, and this speech has become a universal symbol of the longing for freedom.

The story of Massada is well known. What is less well known is that during his final speech, as reported by the contemporary historian Josephus, Elazar ben Ya'ir presented his people the role model of the wise men of India – who did not fear death, but cherished liberty even more than life itself.

As a child, I was raised on the heroic story of the siege of Massada, and on the supreme value of liberty. Yet for me, growing up under the British Mandate, it was the liberation of India, which gained its independence in 1947, that paved the path for us to our own independence, just one year later, in 1948. Today, too, we find inspiration in the power, strength, and energy, of that great nation in admiration for their most impressive developments that are enabling millions to escape poverty and take a greater share in the nation's growing prosperity. Today, modern India and modern Israel are signing academic, economic and trade agreements that will carry the cooperation between our two countries to a new stage, enhancing and developing the existing cooperation in trade, technology, security and agriculture.

This book covers many areas of the relations between our two countries together with proposals for possible areas of action to improve, develop and expand those relations. These range from political ties, through tourism and ways to enhance and develop relations between organizations of the Jewish and Indian diasporas around the world, including of course, the strategic, academic, and economic ties.

I welcome this contribution to ways to enhance and carry forward the vibrant relations between Israel and India.

Reuven (Ruvi) Rivlin

President of the State of Israel

PREFACE

By Avinoam Bar-Yosef

The last three years, following the success of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the relationship between India and Israel has turned more friendly and transparent. Narendra Modi, the Prime Minister elected in 2014, who heads the BJP, has never hidden his sympathy toward the Jewish state and has moved the relationship from cold and distant to a policy of warm cooperation.

Shalom Salomon Wald and Arielle Kandel's strategy paper was conceived years ago as part of JPPI's ongoing project on emerging superpowers without a Biblical tradition and no history of anti-Semitism. It follows a similar work completed by Dr. Wald, *China and the Jewish People—Old Civilizations in a New Era*, which was published more than ten years ago; it was translated into Mandarin Chinese and published by Elephant Press in 2014.

India, Israel, and the Jewish People looks back in history to better analyze and understand current developments. The leaders of the Zionist movement and especially David Ben-Gurion invested many efforts in nurturing the relationship with Asia, particularly the old civilizations with the potential to become the great powers of the future. India with its population of 1.3 billion with an average age of 27, and economic growth of seven percent a year is transforming this vision into reality.

For many years, India's relations with Israel were in the shadow of Arab and Muslim pressure, but this year will mark the 25th anniversary of official diplomatic ties. Exchanges of state visits at the highest ranks culminated with the President of India Shri Pranab Mukherjee in Jerusalem and President Reuven Rivlin's visit to New Delhi in the fall of 2016. This shows that the new Indian leadership is not intimidated by its major interests in Iran and in other Middle Eastern energy exporters, or by its own large Muslim minority.

Cooperation in science, technology, defense, and counter terrorism is at a very high level, but a truly flourishing relationship requires stepped up cultural, intellectual, and people-to-people encounters. Wald and Kandel emphasize these points while also focusing on the important role that Jews from around the world and American Jewish organizations have played in laying the ground for emerging relationships.

This comprehensive work integrates a strategic approach and prioritizes agenda setting and offers a wide selection of action-oriented policy recommendations.

I would like to acknowledge Dr. Shalom Salomon Wald and Arielle Kandel for their deep and thoughtful analysis of the evolving relationship between the State of Israel and the Jewish People and the Republic of India. Dr. Wald has been a JPPI Senior Fellow since its founding. He studied economics, sociology, and history at the University of Basle, Switzerland. After completing his PhD he joined the OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development), where he headed the Biotechnology Unit. At JPPI, Wald published *Rise and Decline of Civilizations, Lessons for the Jewish People* (Academic Studies Press, 2014) and many other policy papers.

Arielle Kandel, a past Fellow of JPPI holds a Master's Degree in Law from the University of Aix-Marseille III (France) with a specialization in Humanitarian Action and International Law as well as an MA from Ben-Gurion University in Middle East Studies. As a young student, she volunteered for several months in northern India and immersed herself in Indian culture and politics. Together, they created a great team and following visits to India and extensive interviews with a long list of experts they created this volume.

I would like to thank JPPI's Chairmen Ambassador Stuart Eizenstat and Ambassador Dennis Ross for their guidance and support. Special thanks go to Ambassador Mark Sofer, former Israeli Ambassador to India, whose advice and professional contribution were invaluable to the project.

The foreword written by President Reuven Rivlin shows at the highest echelons the deep understanding of the strategic importance of the relationship between the people of India, world Jewry and Israel at its core. President Rivlin chose to make India one of his first official visits, which illustrates the desire for a continuing thriving relationship. We very much look forward to welcoming Prime Minister Modi in Israel in the near future.

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India, Israel and the Jewish People – Looking Forward, Looking Back: 25 Years after Normalization is primarily a book of geopolitics and strategy that offers policy makers a number of recommendations. However, the current political issues can only be understood against the background of India's and the Jewish People's major upheavals in the 20th century. This is why the book examines recent history with particular attention, but it does more. It shows that there was a relationship between India and the Jewish people that is as old as history itself. By putting current issues for the first time, into this broader, long-term historic and cultural framework, the book hopes to remind its readers that improving current relations means also continuing and renewing old history.

India, Israel and the Jewish People draws its sources from literature (see Bibliography), but more so from approximately 120 interviews conducted in India, Israel and the United States (see Interviewee List). Some of these were short and fleeting, others extensive and repeated. Most were personal but a few were by written communication. Thus, the book owes a lot to a lot of people. A few of them deserve particular thanks here. First, we would like to thank President Reuven Rivlin for contributing the Foreword. This book could not have been started or completed without the support of JPPI President Avinoam Bar-Yosef, Projects Coordinator Ita Alcalay and the tireless editor, Barry Geltman. Many JPPI colleagues have helped with knowledge and advice, even if not all can be mentioned. Avi Gil's critical assistance for the formulation of the policy recommendations, Rami Tal's and Dan Feferman's balanced judgment and Antony Korenstein's extensive personal knowledge of India helped to enrich the text and eliminate more than one error. Last but not least, Noah Slepkov reviewed and updated the book's numerous statistical data.

Outside the JPPI, a lot of good advice was received in the countries mentioned above. At the risk of not being just to all interviewees, there are a few who must be thanked specifically: First of all fm, Ambassador Marc Sofer who read the text with particular care, then Alexander Cherniak, Ophira Gamliel, Antoine Halff, P.R. Kumaraswamy, Shimon Lev, Ken Robbins, Yitzchak Shichor, Sara

Sofer and fm. Ambassador Yegar. India's Embassy in Israel, Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, particularly Mr. Shimon Mercer, and Israel's diplomats in India replied to questions whenever asked but never tried to influence the authors in one direction or another. Thanks are also due to Einat Wilf, fm. Member of the Knesseth (Israel's Parliament) who organised in 2012 for the first time, a large Knesseth Sub-Committee Session on India, Israel and the Jewish People.

It goes without saying that the evaluations and conclusions of the book, but also whatever errors might have remained, are the responsibility of the authors alone.

Shalom Salomon Wald and Arielle Kandel, June 2017

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ISRAELI AND JEWISH POLICY MAKERS: A TEN-YEAR PLAN

India's May 2014 parliamentary elections resulted in the victory of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) under Narendra Modi. Known to be sympathetic to Israel and Jews, Prime Minister Modi's election is an auspicious development in Indo-Israeli relations. This does not appear to be a temporary, easily reversible blip in the relations between the two countries, but rather a reflection of deeper socio-economic trends: the rise of a more Western-oriented young middle class indifferent to the Third World, and, also, a certain Hindu nationalist resurgence. The period from mid-2014 to mid-2017 saw Indo-Israeli relations improving in many sectors, demonstrated publicly in October 2015 with the first-ever state visit of an Indian president to Israel, and almost exactly one year later with Israeli President Reuven Rivlin's visit to India. Yet many policy issues and challenges remain. For the Jewish people, which has spent the last 2000 years almost entirely under Christian and Muslim rule, and for Israel, the ultimate challenge is how to connect to and seek the friendship of a country where the great majority has not been touched by Biblical religions. There are other challenges: for example, a substantial advancement of the peace process with the Palestinians would greatly reinforce and stabilize India-Israel relations. Irrespective of whether there is progress on this issue or not, addressing the remaining issues and challenges becomes even more desirable as Israel's opportunities are, for the time being, growing by the day.

The Indian institution that knows Israel best, appreciates it most, and has the strongest links with it is its military. India's academia and some of its intellectual elites know and appreciate Israel less well and have very few established links with it. Indo-Israeli economic relations fall somewhere in between. They are growing, but still relatively small. The following policy recommendations are aimed at optimizing the Indo-Israeli relationship.

The list is comprehensive and ambitious. It represents a long-term endeavor. It will be difficult to carry out all recommendations completely even over a ten year-period. Also, some are almost cost-free but demand political will (e.g. 1, 2, 4) while others could be expensive (e.g. 13). These recommendations indicate the directions that Israel will have to pursue if it wants its relationship with India to become a solid, permanent, and future-supporting pillar.

Political and Strategic Ties

1. The political and diplomatic value of India's new, friendly attitude toward Israel cannot be overstated, particularly as Israel and Zionism are under attack in Europe and on university campuses in many countries. Unsurprisingly, the international media have taken notice of India's policy change. It behooves Israeli and also Jewish policy makers, who have been an important factor in improving relations with India, to reflect not only on what India can do for Israel, but also on what Israel and the Jewish people can do for India – politically and diplomatically.

As the Indo-Israeli relationship, as well as the political and diplomatic interests of both countries are evolving, it may currently not be useful to make specific policy proposals. Israel should look out for opportunities to offer political and diplomatic support for Indian interests, be it in international fora (for example by maintaining Israel's support for India's quest for a permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council), or through Israel's relations with third countries, as long as such support is consistent with Israel's own interests. India's security challenges and its position in international organizations, amongst others, might offer such opportunities.

2. India is a very large, diverse republic -- politically, ethnically, and religiously. Israel tends to target top federal decision-makers and does not always pay sufficient attention to other actors.

- **Focus Israel's efforts to strengthen links with India not only on the Central Government in Delhi, but also on the chief ministers of India's state governments, several of whom are friendly to Israel.**

- **In addition, improve links with all major political parties, including at the local level.**
- **Strengthen contact with the *Lokh Sabah*, the lower house of the Indian parliament and try to involve it in the growing relationship between India and Israel.**

3. Individual Jews since 1900, and Jewish Diaspora organizations since India's independence in 1947, have played a crucial role in building bridges between India, the Jewish people, and Israel. These individuals included Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore's Jewish friends. The organizations have been mainly those of American Jewry, which spent more than 40 years prodding India to establish relations with Israel. It would be a mistake to assume that the Jewish Diaspora no longer has a policy role because India's government is now friendlier to Israel. India's strong internal and external links with the Islamic world could act as a brake on further Indo-Israeli rapprochement. Let the wider Jewish world put its weight into the balance to support India's friendship with Israel. In addition, the rising socio-economic status and political influence of Indian Diaspora communities (estimated worldwide to comprise 30 million people) offers the Jewish Diaspora new opportunities for cooperation and outreach.

- **Encourage Jewish Diaspora organizations currently engaged with Indian communities in their respective countries to continue and expand their outreach efforts. Relations and cooperation between the two communities are excellent in the United States and should be a model for Jewish communities in Australia, Canada, South Africa, the United Kingdom and others.**
- **In all countries with sizable Jewish and Indian Diasporas identify common interests between the two communities. Foster political, social and other links between the two Diasporas, which could also create positive response in India.**
- **Provide Jewish institutional advice and support for the establishment of policy and social research institutes to serve Indian Diaspora communities.**

- **Mobilize Diaspora sponsorship to supplement Israel’s woefully inadequate budget for cultural outreach to India and for Tikkun Olam projects (see Recommendations 13 and 18).**
- **Reach out to India’s Muslims through Jewish Diaspora communities. Sometimes world Jewry can do what Israel alone cannot do (see Recommendation 7).**

4. Some of the delays and obstacles in Indo-Israeli relations are due to Israel’s inadequately coordinated bureaucracy.

- **Following a government resolution emphasizing India’s importance to Israel, set up an inter-ministerial steering committee to coordinate Israeli policies vis-à-vis India.**
- **Take a comprehensive strategic view of Israel’s relations with Asia. In particular, a steering committee should evaluate Israel’s relations with China and India in view of the complex dynamics and possible tension between the two Asian giants. It should also reflect on the implications of Israel’s growing relations with India on its links with the United States and various Middle Eastern and Asian countries.**

5. India has high expectations in regard to Israel’s S&T and innovation. If Israel does not continue to rise to these expectations, disappointment could set in.

India has sought and received Israeli cooperation in three priority areas: a) Water; b) Agriculture; and c) Homeland Security. That said, there is enormous room for growth.

6. India’s economic and political links with the Middle East have grown faster than its research on this region in India’s academia and think tanks. Indian experts have noted that India has few professional Arabists, and that in their view, the analytic capacity of its severely understaffed Foreign Service lags behind that of all other large countries involved in the Middle East.

- **Initiate a regular Indo-Israeli strategic dialogue between Israeli, Jewish, and senior Indian policy experts and former government officials on world affairs including the wider Middle East (in professional jargon, a “Track 1.5 dialogue”).**

- **Israeli defense and other companies trading with India should be invited to help fund this dialogue, as a long-term investment in their business interests. In many Western countries large companies help funding professional colloquia, research, and publications in their fields of interest without asking for a direct return and without interfering.**

7. Until the 2014 elections, the true or alleged hostility of India's Muslims (at least 15 percent of the population) as well as the traditional "Third World" hostility against Israel were India's main rationales for keeping political links with Israel to a minimum. As it turns out, the Middle East conflict is not a priority for the overwhelming majority of Indian Muslims. Many of them are moderate. A few years ago, Muslim leaders accepted invitations to visit Israel. Israel's Embassy in Delhi has set up an Urdu-language website, the primary language of Indian Muslims.

In addition to the proposed links between the Jewish Diaspora and India's Muslims (Recommendation 3), Israel should seek and increase contacts with India's Muslims by using all appropriate means of communication, personal meetings and invitations to visit Israel.

8. The geographic distribution of Israel's diplomatic representatives across the world appears to represent yesterday's reality, not the world of tomorrow. Israel is pivoting toward Asia with its 4.73 billion inhabitants (as for example 410 million in South America). Trade with Asia represents 24 percent of Israel's total trade (as compared to trade with South America which represents approximately 4 percent). Bi-lateral relations with most Asian countries are good or excellent if one excludes UN voting patterns, which have no real effect on actual relations. However, the number of Israeli officials dealing with Asia falls short of the needs generated by Israel's Asia pivot.

Substantially increase the number of Israel's diplomatic, economic, and cultural representatives in India and elsewhere in Asia, as well as the India and Asia personnel working in the various government ministries.

9. Both Indian and Israeli sources have reported that Indians have been subject to onerous security checks at Ben Gurion International Airport. This could dissuade Indians from visiting Israel. Virtually all important Indian businesspeople have visa stamps from Arab and other Muslim countries in their passports.

Train Israel's security personnel to be more sensitive to Indian visitors at Ben Gurion International Airport and reduce the overly intrusive procedures and searches of such visitors, including sometimes high-level persons.

Economic and Technological Ties

10. Economic and trade relations between India and Israel are growing, but are still far from reaching their full potential. Indo-Israeli trade represents approximately 3 percent of India's trade with the Middle East. The two countries have been discussing a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) since 2010, without yet reaching a positive conclusion. India could offer Israel a huge market because there is considerable compatibility between India's development needs and Israel's scientific, technological, and innovative capacities. But Israeli businesspeople often have difficulties gaining a foothold in India, and prominent Indian businesspeople have, until recently, not visited Israel and have not invested there. This may be changing now. But even if it is, bureaucratic hurdles remain, such as Israel's reluctance to grant multi-entry visas to Indian businesspeople. There are also significant differences in the two countries' business cultures, which can raise important obstacles to increased trade.

- **Create and fund new mechanisms and initiatives to stimulate Indo-Israeli trade, investment, and technology links, with the aim of tripling Indo-Israeli trade from approximately \$5 billion in 2014 to \$15 billion over the next 10 to 15 years.**
- **Continue and accelerate discussions toward the signing of a FTA between India and Israel, and address bureaucratic obstacles that might delay a positive conclusion.**

- **Expand assistance to facilitate the successful entry of Israeli entrepreneurs into the Indian market by doubling the number of economic attachés in Israel’s embassy and consulates.**
- **Open an India information center to centralize assistance to Israeli small- and medium-sized companies.**
- **Invite half of India’s small but important economic elite, approximately 2500 of 5000 persons, to visit Israel in the next ten years.**
- **Use Israel’s start-up and innovation potential to attract Indian investments and form significantly more joint ventures.**
- **To achieve these aims, use bi-annual conferences and workshops, match-making services between Israeli start-ups and Indian large-scale manufacturers and cooperation with Indian technology institutes. The large investment of the Indian conglomerate TATA in Tel Aviv University (2013) to generate technology transfer is a model to be emulated.**
- **Offer cultural training programs for Israeli entrepreneurs interested in the Indian market, in order to address cultural misunderstandings and differences that have already impeded Indo-Israeli business ties.**

11. Indian tourism to Israel is small, but could be much larger thereby increasing Israel’s tourism revenue, broadening people-to-people contacts, and making Israel better known in India. Israeli government efforts to stimulate Indian tourism have been insufficient.

- **Triple the number of Indian tourists to Israel from 40,000 to 120,000 in the next five to ten years.**
- **Launch a tourism campaign to reach India’s growing middle class, showing Israel’s attractions, from ancient historical and religious sites to nature reserves and beaches, and its varied cultural life.**
- **Create particular incentives for India’s estimated 25 million Christians to visit Israel as pilgrims. Today, Christians constitute the majority of Indian tourists coming to Israel.**

12. India's energy needs continue to draw it into the Middle East. The Gulf states provide most of India's oil and gas, which is their largest market after China. Israel cannot change the interdependence between India and the Gulf states, including Iran, but it could make a contribution to decreasing India's dependence.

- **Explore whether and how India might benefit from Israel's new gas resources earmarked for export.**
- **Invite India to participate in Israel's numerous research efforts in solar and other non-conventional energy sectors. In the conventional energy sector, offer India technological cooperation to develop clean coal technologies (coal is India's main energy source).**

Cultural and Media Ties

13. Many Hindu Indians express friendship for Israel, but there is also a large part of the Indian population that has never heard of Jews, Judaism, the Holocaust, or Israel. Some who have heard of Israel regard it as an uninteresting and undemocratic country permanently embroiled in war. Others are ill informed about Israel's origin and its creation. Israel and Judaism should become better known in India. To enhance Israel and the Jewish people's long-term relationship with India, initiate an Indo-Jewish "Dialogue of Civilizations" and emphasize the Jewish contribution to the cultures of the world. The 3000-year history of contacts between the Indians and Jews is likely to stir fascination among Indians. In regard to media-links, no Israeli journalist is posted in India (or in China, for that matter). Israel's media rarely covers news from India, and when they do it is generally related to developments directly involving or affecting Israel.

- **Enlarge the scope of the Israeli narrative beyond the Israel-Palestinian conflict. Emphasize Israel's history, its pluralistic culture, its dynamic civil society, its democratic institutions, and its arts and literature.**
- **Toward this end, develop a comprehensive cultural outreach strategy, targeting many sub-groups of the Indian population, particularly those with influence on policy-making.**

- Set up a Jewish-Israeli cultural institute in New Delhi or Mumbai, on the model of the German Goethe Institutes. This institute should offer programs on Jewish and Israeli religion, history, and culture. This should include lectures and movies about the Holocaust, which is largely unknown in India, and about the contributions Indian Jews have made to India and to Israel. The institute should organize Jewish and Israeli events, such as book fairs and film and food festivals. It should also offer Hebrew language instruction.
- Donate books about Judaism, Jewish history, and Israel to Indian public libraries, and seek resources in both the Jewish and Indian world for the translation of Jewish and Israeli works into Indian languages.
- Use entertainment and media, mainly television and online social media, to reach the Indian population, particularly the young and the growing middle class. For example:
- Strongly support – in Israel, Hollywood, and Mumbai – the development of Indo-Israeli co-productions of Bollywood movies set in Israel, starring India’s famous actors. Such films have the potential to be seen by dozens of millions in and outside of India. The resulting increased Indian tourism in Israel would likely generate highly remunerative returns on investment
- Produce for broadcast on Indian television, Indian language programming on Jewish and Israeli history and religion. (This could be modeled on the 12-part documentary series, *The Road to Jewish Civilization*, produced in 2011 by China Central Television (CCTV) in cooperation with the Embassy of Israel in Beijing.)
- Produce Indian language audio and video clips on Judaism and Israel, particularly Israeli agricultural, water, and other innovations, to be broadcast on the Internet (YouTube), social media, and on community radio stations in Indian villages.
- Organize an Israel visit for some of India’s best-known bloggers.
- Mobilize the American and other Jewish communities to help fund some of these activities (see Recommendation 3).

- **Encourage Israel’s media to maintain at least a part-time reporter in India and offer more news on events in India.**

Academic, Educational, and Religious Ties

14. Research and teaching about Judaism and Israel is weaker in Indian academia than in any other large country not hostile to Israel. There are two or three university faculty members in all of India dealing at least partly with Judaism or Israel; in China there are more than five times as many. There is no mention at all of such subjects at lower levels of education.

- **Look for ways and means to increase and fund the teaching of Jewish and Israeli studies in Indian universities, and bring more Indian scholars and students to Israel.**
- **Promote the establishment of Jewish or Israeli study centers and/or curricula in India.**
- **Increase the number of scholarships and financial aid for Indian MA and doctoral students studying Jewish subjects in Israel, and grant visas allowing part-time work similar to the F1 US visa.**
- **Invite promising Indian graduate and post-graduate students to Israel, and set up meetings with their Israeli counterparts.**

15. A few Israeli universities teach Indian languages, history or culture, more of ancient than of contemporary India. This is insufficient in view of India’s growing importance for the world and for Israel.

- **Strengthen Israeli education and research about India, and increase links with Indian institutions of higher education.**
- **Offer more courses on modern Indian history, politics, and economics in Israeli universities.**
- **Develop Indian study partnerships between Indian and Israeli universities, including faculty and student exchange programs.**
- **Israeli MBA programs should include a track pairing Israeli and Indian MBA students and faculty, and include in this track consultations with an Indian or Israeli company.**

16. Jewish-Hindu Dialogue: India is a secular republic, but its people are deeply religious. Educated Hindus are showing interest in Judaism, a religion that -- in contrast to others -- never sought to invade or convert India. As a result of this interest, three Hindu-Jewish summit meetings (Delhi 2007, Jerusalem 2008, Washington 2009) were held. They were attended by Hindu religious and spiritual leaders and members of Israel's Chief Rabbinate, among others. The meetings had a wide, positive echo in India, but almost none in the Jewish world.

Continue a regular dialogue between Hindu and Jewish religious scholars (not leaders), in line with similar meetings that are taking place in various countries between Christians and Jews, and Muslims and Jews. Jewish and Israeli NGOs, not governments, should take the lead.

Ties with India's Intellectual Elites

17. Apart from militant Indian Muslims and the increasingly irrelevant communist/Marxist parties, the most persistent and outspoken hostility to Israel can be found among some of India's intellectual elites, including artists and writers. It expresses itself in BDS activism, protests against links with Israel, etc. While this hostility has little impact on India's Israel policies and does not affect India's Jews, it permeates some of India's intellectual sphere.

- **Do not ignore the hostility of Indian writers and intellectuals, but try to understand its roots and open a series of dialogues with the intellectual elite of the country. In contrast to Europe, hostility to Israel among Indians has no old roots. There has never been indigenous anti-Semitism in India.**
- **Invite to Israel a delegation of Indian women activists who are political and social leaders, and organize meetings with, among others, their Israeli counterparts.**
- **Organize conferences in Israeli or Indian universities to discuss similarities and differences between the Israeli and Indian**

experience in the 20th century. For example, how do Israel and India cope with national traumas, of the Holocaust in the case of Israel, of partition and its massacres in the case of India? Or, what should be the relationship between religion and state in democracies with very old historical roots, such as Israel and India?

- Invite some of the most popular Indian writers of the young generation (e.g. Aravind Adiga, Chetan Bhagat) to Israel, for example to participate in the Jerusalem International Book Fair.

Israeli Tourists and Tikkun Olam in India

18. India is the most popular destination for Israel's young backpackers. The inappropriate behavior of some of them has led to local complaints, perhaps tarnishing Israel's image among some Indians. Existing Jewish and Israeli Tikkun Olam projects have provided some Indians with a more positive image of Jews and Israel than that conveyed by some tourists.

- As many young Israelis travel to India after their military service, army training should include a seminar on the impact of inappropriate Israeli behavior in foreign countries, including India. Similar lectures could be introduced in Israeli schools.
- Support and expand Tikkun Olam projects to help improve living conditions, public health, and education in many places throughout India.
- Increase opportunities and NGO funding for young Jewish travelers to take part in Tikkun Olam projects in local Indian communities ("voluntourism").
- Increase support for MASHAV projects in India (Israel's Agency for International Development Cooperation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs). This would allow young Israelis to volunteer for development projects across India for stints of 6 to 12 months.

CHAPTER ONE

Why India?

The Rise of Asia

Narendra Modi's Election Victory in 2014: a watershed in Indo-Israeli relations

India, Israel, and the Jewish People: Looking Ahead, Looking Back -- 25 Years after Normalization follows the Jewish People Policy Institute's strategy paper, *China and the Jewish People: Old Civilizations in a New Era*, which was published in 2004 in English, 2005 in Hebrew, and 2014 in Chinese. That report has been widely read in Israel, the United States and China and has had an ongoing influence on Jewish and Israeli policies in regard to China.

The new book on *India, Israel, and the Jewish People* appears at a moment when a significant event in one of the two Asian giants has made headlines in the Israeli and Jewish media. In fact a new period in the relations between India and Israel began on May 16, 2014, when Narendra Modi, leader of the center-right Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), was swept into power. It was a "landmark" victory. Modi, the first Indian prime minister born after independence (1947), is also the first in 30 years to enjoy an absolute parliamentary majority that does not depend on smaller Muslim or left-wing parties. Modi had been considered a friend of Israel before the elections. As soon as he took power, he indicated in word and deed that he planned to change the nature of India's public stance toward Israel from one of critical reserve to one of friendship. So far (as of 2017), he has kept his word.

Why Israeli and Jewish outreach to India and China started late and, until recently, lagged behind other countries

JPPI's India and China reports address one of the main geopolitical shifts of our time, namely the shift of global power from West to East – the "Rise

of Asia.” This rise is changing the context of all international dynamics. Asia’s growing economic clout is already translating into greater political and military strength. Many Western politicians and commentators have acknowledged the importance of this shift over the last decade. The forthcoming realignments of regional and global power, and particularly the rise of Asia, will affect the future of the Middle East and the State of Israel in major ways, and thus, also the future of the Jewish people. A country’s future position in the evolving international system will depend to no small degree on the speed with which it can anticipate and benefit from the coming changes. This is why many countries are currently turning toward Asia. Jews and Israelis have taken longer to grasp the importance of the ongoing shift for their own future, and even today, Israel’s outreach to Asia still lags behind that of other modern countries. Since the Six-Day War, Israel has regarded America’s support as the only realistic and sufficient external guarantor of its future. A leading Israeli Asia expert added other reasons for Israel’s lagging behind.¹ Jews traditionally remember their long past in which the great centers of Asian civilization beyond the wider Middle East played an insignificant role. Moreover, the great Jewish world historians from the 19th to the mid-20th century were nearly all Europeans, by birth and mentality. They were Eurocentric and paid no or very little attention to the Jews of India or China and their old, interesting history. Few Jews resided in Asia, and during the two centuries when much of Asia was occupied or dominated and restrained by Western powers, the continent had little impact on world events, apart from Japan of course. Therefore, Asia had no influence on the main Jewish population centers in America, Europe, and the Muslim world – and this is precisely what is changing now. Of course, China and India’s solidarity with the Arab and Muslim world prior to 1991, and their hostility to Israel, was another reason many Israelis paid little attention to these two countries. Arab pressure has prevented Israel from joining Asian cultural and other forums. This did not enhance the Israeli public’s interest in Asia, nor did it allow Israel to benefit in Asia from such regional forum’s greater goal of building friendship among nations. Although the Asian continent played no significant role in Jewish history, religion, or literature, a few

forward-looking Israeli politicians and diplomats and other intermediaries attempted to establish contacts even during the early decades of the Jewish state. Israel's defense establishment supplied India and China with military equipment long before there were any official relations, and, in general, was looking for new Asian markets. The reasons were primarily economic, but there were also geopolitical considerations. Some members of the defense establishment understood that Asia's two main powers would play a growing role in world affairs. In 1992, when both China and India established diplomatic relations with Israel, everything changed at the political level.

Is India important? The significance of India's unity

Today, Israel has begun to turn to Asia. The two Asian countries that have attracted Israelis, in different arenas, are China and India. In the wake of Modi's victory, India has been in the spotlight. Why India? Is India important? It is not that Israelis do not know or like India. Forty thousand or more of them visit India every year, most of them young backpackers. Most Israelis, who love foreign travel, keep India on their list of countries not to be missed. Facets of Indian culture, for example food or music, can often be found in Israel. One of the best books of Israel's famous novelist A.B. Yehoshua is set in India, has the Hebrew title *Ha-Shiva MeHodu (Return from India)* (1994) and was adapted into a successful 2002 film (*Open Heart*). What then do Israelis see in India? Most see an exotic, colorful, mysterious country – an alluring riddle, a land of contradictions. The young discover a place where they can forget, for a short while, all the tensions of Israel because the country is so different from their own. Some are fascinated by its Eastern spirituality. India also fascinates because it defies common understanding, although it can also horrify visitors. They see unpaved streets, cows blocking traffic, skeletal humans sleeping on the sidewalks, and chaos at the airports. Many, including Israelis, draw hasty conclusions from this about India's future. They may have heard of India's software sector, but few know that Lakshmi Mittal founded an Indian steel company, which after its acquisition of Arcelor in 2006 is today the largest high-quality steel-maker in the world. Not

so long ago, large-scale steel production was considered a safe indicator of great power status. Others ask why they seldom see “Made in India” imprinted products. India’s growth continues to be much less based on exports than China’s, and most Indian manufacturers have such a giant inland market, they do not have to look abroad. Nevertheless, India is today the world’s third largest pharmaceuticals producer, with around 15 billion dollars worth of pharmaceutical exports in 2014, of which nearly 40 percent went to the United States.²

But these and other specific economic achievements pale in the face of India’s greatest achievement: its enduring national unity under conditions that have preserved enormous and vibrant diversity. In 2012, observers in and outside India lamented the country’s apparent political disarray and economic slowdown. Such analysts of current events take a short-term view. Most people have already forgotten India’s greatest and most unexpected achievement and regard it as normal though it is not: Indians of many different languages, religions, geographic origins, and subcultures have succeeded in building, after centuries of disunity and foreign rule, a functioning nation-state of nearly 1.3 billion inhabitants (2015). An equally impressive achievement is that India has remained, with a short interruption known as “The Emergency” from 1975-77, a basically democratic country. Its democracy and its unity go hand-in-hand. Today, the survival of a unified India and its growing international weight is not in doubt despite remaining problems with Kashmir (where less than one percent of India’s people live), concerns about the delicate balance between Hindus and Muslims, and the danger of a small part of the Muslims distancing themselves from the Indian nation. However, from the day India gained its independence in 1947 until the 1980s, the cohesion of India looked weak and ephemeral. Various parts of India demanded, or toyed with the hope of independence, and many experts predicted their secession. India’s success is unparalleled in modern history.³ The 20th century’s largest multi-ethnic empire, the Soviet Union, collapsed in 1991; the vaunted political unity of the Arab world turned out to be a chimera in the late 1960s; and the modern world’s

most extolled unification experiment, that is the European Union, has made no progress since the late 20th century while the European public's "Euro-scepticism" seems to be growing by the day.

There are both differences and similarities in India and Israel's efforts to build cohesion and manage diversity. It is worthwhile to reflect on how both countries have coped with their enormous internal problems, and what they could learn from each other.

More than 2,000 years of contacts call for renewing and strengthening the links between the Indian and Jewish civilizations

Today, the links between India and Israel are mainly military, economic, and technological, based on the current material interests of both sides. But some of these links have come under attack by Israel's enemies in and outside India. In the long term, the Indo-Israeli relationship will have a better chance to thrive and expand if it has a deeper and broader public basis. Thus, the following chapters do not focus only on today's military and economic links, they take a broader historical view. Old history provides a favorable framework for growing links between the Indian and Jewish civilizations. Relations between the two are among the oldest continuous links between any living civilizations, although these links were often modest and not much in evidence. Biblical sources trace trade and other contacts back to the First Temple period three thousand years ago, and later sources show that relations continued until modern times. Jewish and Israeli endeavors to forge new bonds with India, particularly since 1992 when India and Israel established full diplomatic relations, constitute a new beginning based on old history. Few Jews or Indians know this background. A larger Indian and Jewish audience should be made aware of their past links, which today are mostly known only in limited academic circles.

India is older than written history. The roots of Indian languages, religious literature and rituals, art and patterns of behavior go back three and four thousand years. Indian civilization, Hinduism and other old Indian

religions endured while Indian states, kingdoms, and empires were rising and falling. Few others have such a long history. China is one case, and the Jewish people and Judaism is another. During all these three thousand years, there has never been a conflict between India and Jews in or outside India, although Jewish history was conflict-ridden from its beginnings. Do civilizational similarities create affinities that influence national interests and government policies? Samuel Huntington wrote that “global politics is the politics of civilizations” – this was his prediction for the 21st century.⁴

Many geopolitical thinkers dismiss this proposition as pure romanticism, but Israel’s founding fathers did not, and apparently India’s Prime Minister Modi does not either

India in the foresight of Israel’s founding fathers and the interest in civilizational affinities

Interestingly enough, the visionaries who created the State of Israel – “geopoliticians” of living history if there ever were any – had ideas about India that differed from those of current geopolitical strategists. India was very important to them, although not primarily as an economic or military partner as it is today. They saw India as one of Asia’s great civilizations and wanted to link up with it at a unique, historic turning point when the Jewish people was returning to Asia after a long exile. Already in the 1930s, Moshe Shertok, head of the political department of the Jewish Agency and later, as Moshe Sharett, Israel’s first foreign minister and later prime minister, was deeply concerned about India’s perception of Zionism. He wrote in 1936: “Our political future as a nation returning to its home in Asia must ultimately depend in a large measure on the amount of goodwill and solidarity which we shall succeed in evoking on the part of the great Asiatic civilizations.”⁵ Note the term “ultimately.” Among Israel’s founders, few sought peace and accommodation with the Palestinians and the wider Arab world more persistently than Sharett, but even he sensed that Israel’s long-term survival depended “ultimately” on wider geopolitical factors as well.

David Ben-Gurion, who would become the main founding father of Israel, predicted the rise of Asia long before others in the West, applauded India's struggle for independence, and recommended in 1931 Asia's "ancient cultural and spiritual treasures that maybe one day may enlighten all humanity." For many years before the creation of Israel in 1948 he was more interested in India than in China, but after 1948 he exhorted Israel and the Jewish people to reach out to both civilizations because (written in 1963) "the two Asian states – China and India – would become the greatest powers in the world."⁶ A small number of diplomats participated in their leaders' quest for recognition by Asia, particularly David Ha-Cohen who became in 1953 Israel's first envoy to Burma. Were Sharett and Ben-Gurion only romantics or also visionaries?

It is easy to find Indians who are interested in Jewish-Israeli culture and religion and would like to find similarities with their own traditions. For a long time their interest did not translate into Indian government policy, which in relation to Israel was exclusively pragmatic, driven by geopolitical considerations. This has changed. Prime Minister Modi is the first acting Indian statesman since independence who has publicly demonstrated an affinity for the Jewish people beyond India's geopolitical needs, for example when he congratulated the Jewish people in Hebrew on the occasion of the Hanukah holiday in 2014. It is no coincidence that Modi was a life-long adherent of one of India's best known spiritual teachers, his guru Swami Dayananda Saraswati. Swami Dayananda was the Indian driving force behind the first important Jewish-Hindu encounter in Delhi in 2007 where religious leaders of both sides agreed on common principles. Modi was surely aware of this meeting.⁷

One should add that Indian representatives do not hesitate to use "romantic," civilizational arguments in other contexts. For example, when defending their country's bonds of friendship with Iran, they emphasize that these bonds transcend pragmatic geopolitical needs and respect for India's Shiites; these bonds, so they claim, result from the deep influence that Iran has had on Indian civilization.

Why Israel and the Jewish People Must Engage India

India is developing the world's third-largest economy, which will have to support the world's largest population

In sheer numbers, India is impressive. In 2015, India's population stood at 1.28 billion, with a very young median age (27 years). China's population was 1.4 billion, with a median age 36.7 years. In 20 years (from 2015), India's projected population will exceed China's (1.5 billion versus 1.45 billion). India's GDP in 2014 was approximately \$2 trillion, and China's around \$11 trillion, around five times larger. India's GDP is projected to grow more rapidly than that of any Western country, but is not expected to reach China's (although in 2015 India's projected GDP growth was 7.5 percent, exceeding China's for the first time). Various international experts are confident that India will become an economic superpower. In 2012, the Paris-based OECD predicted dramatic changes in the distribution of global economic power by 2060.

Figure 1: Percentage of Global GDP, by Year and Country⁸

	2011	2030	2060
USA	23%	18%	16%
Euro-Zone	17%	12%	9%
China	17%	28%	28%
India	7%	11%	18%

According to these projections, India's GDP is likely to surpass that of Japan by 2020, that of the Euro-zone shortly after 2030, and that of the United States after 2050. In 2060, the combined economies of China and India will likely amount to 46 percent of the global economy, approximately the same rank the two countries had in the mid-18th century's international trade before their internal troubles and the West's expansion and imperialist interference began to undermine both. India's predicted rise from 7 to 18 percent, in parallel to Europe's decline from 17 to 9 percent, is particularly striking. Economic trend forecasts extending longer than

half a century are hazardous. But the OECD has based its India figures on credible projections, such as that India will have the largest youth population in the world. A majority of Indians will be under thirty not long after 2030. A growing proportion of India's young will increasingly be well educated, ambitious, and geographically and professionally mobile. The West, and particularly the Jewish people and Israel, must weigh the likely global political, military, and cultural implications of this dramatic shift in the global balance of power.

India is entering the Middle East – in big, though still discreet, steps

India's links with the Middle East go back 4,000 years when the Indus civilization extended its influence into Mesopotamia and even Pharaonic Egypt, where many Indus artifacts have been excavated. In the first half of the 20th century, the common Middle Eastern and Indian struggle against British colonial rule strengthened these links. In most of the second half, during the Cold War, these links along with India's quasi-alliance with the Soviet Union, compounded the domestic factors causing India to reject diplomatic relations with Israel until 1992. Concurrent with the establishment of formal Indo-Israeli relations, a historically unprecedented situation appeared: India's dependence on Middle Eastern – Arab and Iranian – oil and natural gas. Although this dependence continues to grow, it is becoming increasingly clear that it is mutual. The Gulf oil producers need Asia's economically growing and politically friendly long-term markets at least as urgently as Asia needs their oil. India also needs the remittances of the 7 million Indians who work in the Gulf. These new links are creating huge trade, investment, and personal flows between the two sides, accompanied by strong political and, in some cases, military relations. India's annual trade with the Middle East amounts to approximately \$170 billion. Thirty percent of this total, \$60 billion, comprises trade with the United Arab Emirates, which has barely 9 million inhabitants but an Indian majority labor force. In comparison, trade between India and Israel amounts to approximately

\$5 billion annually, less than three percent of Middle Eastern trade. India also wants good relations with Iran, for geopolitical (common hostility to Pakistan), domestic (possibly more than 20 million Shiites), and historical reasons. However, India imports several times more oil from the Arabs than from Iran. Hostility between the Arab Gulf states and Iran would raise severe policy dilemmas India would not like to face. In spite of its economic weight, India currently does not wish to become directly involved in the most contentious problems of the region, including the Arab-Israeli conflict. In fact, India is not yet prepared to assume a great-power role in the Middle East and has few competent Arabic and other Middle Eastern language experts. But the quest for great-power status, which can be found among India's elites, could one day propel India into seeking a greater role in the Middle East. In general, India until recently has found it difficult to project a meaningful message to the world and convince the international community that it has the will and the capacity to shape global policies. But this may slowly change in the coming years. An Indian policy maker privately and only half jokingly said recently that the Arabs and Iranians do listen to India because India does not say anything – would India say anything to them they would probably stop listening. But India was for centuries, and remains today, their largest nearby neighbor. It is, after China, the second largest market for Middle Eastern oil and natural gas. If India wanted, it could use its economic, political, and cultural influence to play a larger role in the United Nations and other international forums that debate Middle Eastern problems, as well as in the Middle East itself. India is still seen by many as a role model for Third World countries, and it is also one of the five BRICS countries, together with China, Russia, Brazil, and South Africa, and its voice counts in that arena. Israel must be cognizant of India's vast and complex relationship with the Middle East. On the other hand, India has learned a key lesson from its diplomatic experience in the Middle East: Diplomatic ties with Israel have not damaged its relations with either the Arab world or Iran. On the contrary, the Israel relationship has forced the Arab world and Iran to stop taking India for granted – which was the situation that prevailed before India had diplomatic relations with Israel.

India's growing Muslim population, the second largest in the world, is susceptible to foreign-inspired radicalization

If energy is today the first driver of India's entry into the Middle East, Islam is the second. Over the centuries, India has been subject repeatedly to Islamic invasion. Although quite a few Hindus still view this history as foreign conquest, Islam has become an integral part of India's civilization and identity. During most of the 20th century, from the 1920s to the 1990s, India's ruling Congress Party and particularly its early leaders, Gandhi and Nehru, were deeply sensitive to the feelings of India's large Muslim minority. This domestic concern, more than worries about foreign Arab reactions, was the chief reason India rejected Zionism, the creation of the Jewish state, and relations with Israel for so long. If Arab objections had an influence, it was mostly indirect, routed through the sympathies of India's Muslims. India was the only very large non-Muslim country to vote with the Arabs in 1947 against the partition of Palestine into a Jewish and Arab state. India's leaders were afraid that the partition would set a precedent for the partition of India, which in fact it did. However, Prime Minister Modi's election has changed one of the most entrenched paradigms of Indian domestic politics. His policy reversal in favor of Israel was facilitated by the absence of any anti-Semitic traditions in India – traditions that increasingly seem to be masked as hostility to Zionism and the de-legitimization of Israel in Europe. In India, anti-Zionism was an expedient political option. It was not based on deep cultural trends, not even among India's Muslims who, prior to the late 20th century, had good relations with the country's Jews.

Today, and according to often quoted but never verified statistics, over 15 percent of India's population (approximately 180 million people) is Muslim, including possibly more than 20 million Shiites. After partition in 1947, the proportion of Muslims in India's population was estimated to be seven percent. This would indicate that the Muslim population is growing faster than the Hindu majority's population, but this has been disputed. Exact figures are impossible to come by because the issue is so sensitive. In any event, India has the second largest Muslim population

in the world. The position of Indian Muslims and their relationship with India's Hindu majority affects relations between Muslims and non-Muslims all across South Asia and in the Indian diaspora. During the last 20 years, community relations in India have been relatively peaceful although religious tensions can still easily flare up. Signs for the future are mixed. Most of India's Muslims consider themselves Indian and want to remain so. They are more interested in their domestic problems than in the Middle East. Furthermore, the spectacle of conflict-ridden, failed Muslim states around them does not inspire them. On the other hand, there is also a Muslim awakening all across India. Fuelled by money from the Gulf states, and by returning expatriates from the Gulf, Wahabi extremism is infiltrating some of India's Sunni community and some of its clerics. Moderate Muslim clerics warn that this influence has already increased the danger of terrorism in India and beyond. At the same time, Iran's poisonous influence was visible in a 2012 Iranian attempted assassination of an Israeli diplomat in Delhi. The attack was abetted by at least one Indian Shiite acting on Iranian instructions. Whoever rules India, the country's Muslims will continue to carry a lot of weight, both domestically and internationally. This is why world Jewry, together with but even more than Israel, should strengthen relations with India's moderate Muslims and their leadership. It is easier for India's Muslim leaders to have contacts with World Jewry than with Israel directly. Israel and the Jewish people cannot afford to miss an opportunity to mitigate the potential hostility of such a large Muslim population and its future impact on Indian history.

India and Israel's dangerous neighborhoods have created a tacit, implicit strategic convergence of interests

Israel, its American supporters, the Indian defense establishment, and a significant part of India's public see eye-to-eye on a number of issues related to their respective regions. There is a perceived need to contain a common threat. This convergence of interests can be strengthened, but, at least until 2016, it could not be transformed into an open strategic alliance. India has to

consider the feelings of its Muslim population and the Arab world. India has so far succeeded in navigating the narrow path running through its conflicting priorities without jeopardizing its relations with either side. Currently, the military relationship between India and Israel is the strongest and most visible link between the two countries, and the most financially rewarding one for Israel. Exact figures are confidential, but there are estimates of Israeli defense product sales of around a billion dollars annually. And the relationship goes beyond the sale of military hardware. Israel has helped India in the past, for example, in confrontations with Pakistan, and Indian experts are convinced that Israel will help India in the future as well. Defense links with India have provided Israel's military industries with their largest single foreign market. But in addition, they are enhancing Israel's global geostrategic position because Israel can be seen as a military supporter of Asia's second-most important power, a factor with which all Muslim countries have to reckon. In addition, military links between India and Israel could become urgent if Pakistan devolves into a failed state, which would entail the very real danger of its nuclear weapons slipping out of control.

Some experts foresee a possible slackening of Israel's defense links with India due to competition or an Indian reluctance to be too closely associated militarily with Israel. Current opinions about future prospects of Israeli arms sales to India vary. Some predict that these sales are doomed because India, in a few years, could have the capacity to produce domestically all it currently imports from Israel, or because the United States is pursuing the Indian defense market in full force. Others believe that Israel could not be replaced anytime soon. The innovativeness, adaptability, and fast delivery time of its arms manufacturers would be difficult to match. Israel will have to think of appropriate policies to protect the military relationship against efforts to undermine it, from both Indian and foreign Muslim sources hostile to Israel, and from jealous Western competitors. Israel should discuss this problem with the United States at a senior political level and clarify that its links with Asia's great powers are not motivated by mercantile reasons alone, but even more by long-term geopolitical considerations that the United States might understand and, perhaps, support. At the same time,

Israel must make a greater effort to develop non-military links with India, including economic, scientific, and cultural ties. If the relationship between the two countries is to thrive in the long term, it must not be dominated by military considerations alone.

India is the largest civilization on earth and a potential gateway to other Asian nations

India is important not only because of its own weight, but also because of its broader external influence. Israel and the Jewish people should also regard India as a source of “leverage” in other countries. Indian civilization stretches widely beyond the Republic of India. The markers of a civilization include language and script, religion, art and architecture, music, dress, food, mythologies, family structures, patterns of thought, physical appearance and more. Seen from this angle, Indian civilization includes: part of Pakistan; Bangladesh; Sri Lanka; Nepal; Bali and other parts of Indonesia; the large Indian minorities in Malaysia, Myanmar, South Africa and some countries in eastern Africa, the Caribbean, the smaller but very influential Indian minorities in North America and the United Kingdom; Indian workers in the Gulf; and even Buddhist countries such as Thailand or Myanmar, which remember that Buddha was Indian and keep close relations with India. Taken together, this amounts to approximately two billion people. What happens in and to India resonates through half of the world. Bollywood movies are celebrated by fans widely beyond India proper, including in the Muslim world, particularly the Gulf countries. When in 2001 Taliban fanatics destroyed two giant statues of Buddha in Afghanistan, India’s loud public protests were heard and supported in many other parts of this large civilization. There have been few Jewish links with this wider civilization, and Israel’s political, economic, and cultural relations with this part of the world are still quite limited. Currently, Israel has diplomatic and modest economic relations with most countries belonging to this broadly defined Indian civilization, except for Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Malaysia. Trade relations are growing with Indonesia, the largest Muslim country, but Israel and the Jewish people require more

links with countries under this wider, economically growing civilizational umbrella. Their presence in the international arena is likely to increase in the future. The overwhelming majority of all living Hindus and Buddhists, and almost two thirds of all Muslims live in this Indian-influenced world. Myanmar (Burma), which is emerging from decades of isolation, is an interesting case that has recently attracted a lot of attention. This is a strongly Buddhist country with many economic and other links with India. At least 10 percent of its population of more than 60 million is Indian and speaks Indian languages. Links with India, particularly if they are limited to military and economic relations, will not always encourage similar links with other Asian countries because India's own relations with some of its neighbors – not only Pakistan – have sometimes been tense. However, broader, more public links with India, especially in the cultural sphere, will be noted in countries shaped by Indian civilization and could incentivize their own ties to Israel. Greater efforts should be made to make Israel's and the Jewish people's old and new relations with India better known, particularly in Asia.

India's considerable "soft power" across the world could help Israel, but Israel and the Jewish world must develop their own, still limited "soft power" in India

If Israel and the Jewish people had a higher profile in India, India's own soft power across the world could become a significant asset for Israel. India's people, its colors, culture, religions, music and food and its recent history, particularly the memory of Mahatma Gandhi, are known and well liked in much of the world, particularly in North America and Europe. The famous "Magic of India," as British authors called it, still holds. Being seen as a friend of India could carry weight in foreign chancelleries and perhaps also in public opinion. The blockbuster, *Slumdog Millionaire*, was one of the world's most popular films of 2008. It features an orphan growing up in a Mumbai slum who becomes a millionaire through his intellectual brilliance. The horrific (and according to Indian human rights experts, perfectly realistic) scenes of police torture and other grave human rights

violations depicted in this movie have not dented India's popularity in the West. This is the effect of India's soft power. But Jewish and Israeli soft power in India lags far behind the soft power India has in the Jewish world. In Israel, India is broadly popular as Israeli tourism and other signs attest. In contrast, Jewish and Israeli soft power in India has until recently been limited except for a minority of leaders and intellectuals and among some of the Hindu public. To this day, a striking number of Indians do not know what the words "Jews," "Judaism" and "Israel" mean, and if they have heard of Israel, many associate it only with war and terrorism. Very few Indians know the facts and understand the significance of the Holocaust. Equally few are aware that Jewish communities lived happily in their country for more than a thousand years, and that Indian Jews look like Indians, speak Indian languages, and remember India fondly wherever they live today. It would take, among many other steps, a broader and more sustained Jewish-Israeli cultural outreach to India to increase Jewish-Israeli "soft power" there.

India has a large and influential diaspora all over the world with which the Jewish people and Israel should establish links and alliances

The Indian diaspora, too, could provide a measure of leverage if Israel and the Jewish people would make a greater effort to befriend the Indians. The Indian diaspora comprises more than 30 million people. This includes Indians in Western countries, southern and eastern Africa, the Caribbean, Asian countries (Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore, Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka) and the Arab Gulf states. It is the second largest diaspora after the Chinese, and already more influential than the latter. Many of the largest Indian diaspora communities can be found in geopolitically important countries (US: 3 million, UK: 1.2 million, Canada: 1 million, South Africa: 1.2 million), and these are precisely the countries where the political influence and socio-economic status of the Indians are rising swiftly, and where there are also large Jewish communities. In these countries the Indian diaspora has much in common with the Jewish diaspora because both achieved wealth and influence in a relatively short

period. In addition, there are many well-known cultural affinities between Indians and Jews that could even carry over into India itself: family values, high regard for education, and an entrepreneurial mindset. However, what distinguishes the Indian from the Jewish diaspora is that many Indians are connected to their state of origin, their particular language, and their religion more than to the Republic of India. India's diaspora is becoming a global political factor in its own right, similar to the Jewish diaspora. Indian policy makers have already held up the Jewish diaspora as a model for Indians to follow. In the United States (and more recently in the United Kingdom) Jewish and Indian leaders have begun to create links, explore common interests, and, occasionally, help each other politically in domestic and foreign policy issues. American Jewish leaders have called this an "investment in the future." The experience has shown that diaspora Indians, apart from a minority of radical Muslims and leftists, have a positive attitude toward Jews and Israel. A global mechanism for dialogue and cooperation involving India, Israel, and the Indian and Jewish diasporas would be an innovative and promising policy venture. The initiative should come from Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and diaspora Jews.

There is considerable synergy between Israel's scientific and technological sector and India's enormous markets and development needs

Israel, which depends on foreign trade, must take a long-term view and turn to Asia more briskly than is currently the case. Civilian trade between India and Israel is on the upswing. India is one of Israel's most rapidly expanding trade partners, and its trade balance with India is positive (with China: negative). But close to \$5 billion dollars annually is only a fraction of the potential revenues from Indian markets. Experts assert that trade could reach at least 10 if not 15 billion dollars in the not too distant future if the obstacles to the long-delayed Indo-Israeli Free Trade Agreement can be overcome.

Cooperation, trade, investments and joint ventures in science and technology should form the backbone of Israel's continuing ties with

India. India is or could become an ideal market, testing ground, and scale-up partner for Israel's cutting edge civilian technologies. In addition to the military sphere, Israeli water, agricultural, energy, clean environment, and public health technologies could assist India in addressing some of its most pressing needs. India's development challenges present Israel with extraordinary opportunities that must not be missed. In a win-win virtuous cycle, India could boost Israel's technological competitiveness while benefiting from transfer of Israeli expertise. Still, entry into the Indian market remains difficult for small and medium Israeli businesses. There are major challenges to the expansion of links, not the least of which is growing foreign competition, in particular from larger and better resourced U.S. and European companies. In addition, dissimilarities of business culture as well as the hurdles of Indian bureaucracy and corruption are formidable impediments. Israel has to find ways to address these challenges and develop government-supported mechanisms to facilitate and enrich Indo-Israeli-Jewish science, technological and industrial links. Prime Minister Modi's government has given top priority to India's economic modernization and appreciates Israel as a valuable contributor to that process. If Israel disappoints these expectations, its relations with India will not keep growing as they have since 2014. Israel's politicians and trade officials must redouble efforts to facilitate trade relations, prepare Israel's exporters for the Indian market, and Israel's market for Indian imports. India's industrial conglomerates, which have a presence in many parts of the world, have as of mid-2016 not made any major industrial investment in Israel. However, several have sent representatives to Israel and have shown interest in its investment prospects.

Among other actions, Israel should increase its public outreach to the Indian people and its economic and political elites, emphasizing Israel's current and potential technological contributions to India's development. Many Indians are aware of the military relationship between the two countries, but fewer know about Israel's civilian technologies. A greater public information effort focused on Israel's innovative technological potential could improve Israel's image, particularly among the growing urban middle class.

While Indo-Israeli relations are currently on the upswing, these relations are dynamic: if Israel and the Jewish people fail to cultivate them or fail to watch out for negative developments, relations could stop improving.

Prior to Modi's election victory in 2014 there were more Indians and Israelis with a pessimistic view about future relations. They emphasized the allegedly over-proportional growth of India's Muslim population, the increasing radicalization of some of them as mentioned above, and, until 2014, the need of political parties to compete for the Muslim vote. To this could be added a possible slackening of the military relationship between India and Israel, also mentioned above. Beyond the military issue, another worrying sign is the new outbreak of anti-Semitism and de-legitimization of Israel in the West, and the perceived danger that it could infiltrate India's Western-oriented elite opinion shapers, intellectuals, and political classes as well. In 2012 and later, for example, anti-Israeli boycott calls could be heard in Indian universities, intellectual and artist circles, and anti-Israeli and anti-Semitic hate was openly expressed in a few Muslim circles and gatherings. It seems currently unthinkable that India would ever return to its sharp anti-Israeli policies of the 1960s and 1970s, but this does not mean that minority expressions of hostility should be ignored. Israel and Jewish organizations, particularly in the United States, should follow such expressions and work against them when possible.

It is also important for Israel and the Jewish people to forge close relations with the Hindu BJP party, which came to power in 2014, as well as all who oppose foreign-inspired Muslim extremism and welcome stronger relations with Israel in order to counterbalance this extremism. This being said, Israel must continue to keep away from the more violent, extremist Hindu groups.

Facilitating Bonds: India, Israel, and the Jewish People

India's rapidly growing urban middle class is Western-oriented and no longer interested in the Nehruvian foreign policy ideals of the past

India's economic and technological development has spawned the growth of a mostly urban, professional middle class. This middle class is estimated to number approximately 300 million people, of a total population of 1.3 billion, a rural population of around 700 million (up to 600 million of whom have no indoor plumbing) and approximately 180 million Muslims (but here there are statistical overlaps because millions of Muslims belong also to the urban middle class). What distinguishes this middle class is that its great majority has no interest in the old Nehruvian doctrines advocating non-alignment to great powers of the West, but did align India to the Third World, particularly its Muslim nations as well as the Soviet Union. This was an ideological cause of India's erstwhile hostility to Israel. Of course, this ideology still survives in India's left-leaning intellectual elites and some older members of the Congress Party, but they are only a small part of the upper middle class. Some of India's young novelists describe the mentality of this rising class of young urban professionals. They are contemptuous of India's past politicians, they are turned towards Western civilization but do not admire the United States, and they have little interest in foreign policy, particularly not in the Third World issues which were so important for the Congress Party. It is the overwhelming pro-BJP vote of this middle class in the parliamentary elections of May 2014, which brought Narendra Modi to power. Here lies one of Israel's great opportunities because this middle class is likely to judge Israel by its own merits and by what it can contribute to India and not by Israel's image as seen through the Palestinian lens. An opinion poll conducted by Israel in 2011 among almost 5000 Indian adults was telling: 35 percent of the respondents supported Israel, 18 percent the Palestinians, and 47 percent attributed the absence of peace between the two parties to the Palestinian "*culture of hate*," 30% to Israel's settlement activities.⁹ These data do not show what the majority of Indians believe – most of them

have never heard of Israel – and the validity of such polls is temporally limited. However, this poll sampled relatively well-informed Indians: a third were classified as “upper class,” a third as “middle class,” and a third as “lower middle class and skilled workers.” These are exactly the classes that, a few years later, voted for Modi. In India, Israel achieved a better score than it likely would have in most Western countries, save those of the United States and Canada. Much of Israel’s information outreach should be tailored to the ideas and expectations of India’s middle class, and emphasize Israel’s past and projected contributions to India.

World Jewry must continue to interact with India in many ways

The Jewish people, in the United States and elsewhere, played an essential role in trying to convince India of the right of the Jews to return to their ancient homeland. Since 1948, world Jewry has been instrumental in arguing for enhanced Indo-Israeli relations. For several decades, these efforts failed politically but still left some impression on Indian minds. Already in the 1920s and 30s, Herman Kallenbach, Gandhi’s best Jewish friend from their early days in South Africa, tried to convince Gandhi that the Zionist cause was just and merited his support. In 1947, Albert Einstein tried to convince India’s Prime Minister Nehru to vote in favor of the UN partition plan. Both failed. India’s Congress Party leaders had struggled to prevent the partition of India at all costs, and thus, could not afford to alienate India’s Muslims. From the 1950s to the 1990s American Jewish organizations lobbied on Israel’s behalf, sometimes even employing pressure tactics. Their support was essential. In 1992, when formal diplomatic relations were finally established, India was in part motivated by its desire for financial and political support from the United States. Even today, when India has an Israel-friendly government, the support, often subtle, of Jewish organizations remains very helpful.

World Jewry could be a force multiplier for Israel in many fields beyond politics and diplomacy. Forging links with Indian diasporic communities has already been mentioned, but it bears repeating. Jewish communities across the world, as well as Jewish personalities who have achieved

prominence in the arts and letters, in the movie industry, in science and technology, in business, or in politics and who are known in India could play a role. Increasing cultural links with India would greatly benefit from the participation of Jews all over the world, not least because Israel's government budget for cultural policy is dismally small. There are more Jewish Indologists in academia, more India experts in the international media, more collectors of Indian art, more devotees of Indian spirituality, dance, music, food etc. in the Diaspora than in Israel, and their help in building bridges is key. Another sector in which world Jewry and its links with India have been useful, is the Indo-Israeli economic and trade relationship. As mentioned earlier, a sensitive issue for which the Diaspora's involvement is critical is the support for India's moderate Muslim organizations that accept Israel's existence. Again, another target would be Holocaust education and the fight against Holocaust denial. Of all major non-Muslim countries, including China, probably none is more ignorant of the Holocaust than India. Certainly, Holocaust denial can be found in some Muslim sectors, particularly among India's Shiites. Hitler's *Mein Kampf* sells briskly in India. The main reason is not entrenched anti-Semitism, but rather sheer unawareness of the reality of the *Shoah* on one hand, and interest in the alleged common origin of the "Indo-Aryan" peoples propagated by the Nazis on the other. Encouraging better Holocaust education is the responsibility of the entire Jewish people, not only of Israel.

Israeli tourism to India could strengthen India-Israel links or degrade Israel's image there. Indian tourism to Israel has enormous, largely untapped, potential

India is one of the most popular tourist destinations for young Israelis. An estimated half million Israelis have visited India since the opening of diplomatic relations 20 years ago. India attracts Israelis for many reasons. Its proximity to Israel and the fact that it is relatively inexpensive are among them. But there are less material reasons as well: the allure of India's perceived spirituality and exoticism, and the wish to forget for a

time Israel's tensions. The India trip has become a "rite of passage" for young Israelis who have just finished their military service. Whether Israeli tourism has improved Israel's image in India and strengthened links and people-to-people contacts is an open question. Many Israelis travel in groups and have little meaningful interaction with the local population. They most certainly could play a greater role in fostering people-to-people contacts; unfortunately, the behavior of some young Israelis in India has left a negative impression on some Indians. Israel and India should reflect together on how to contend with this issue.

Indian tourism to Israel is a more recent phenomenon. It is growing but still small – around 40,000 annually, at least half of them Christian pilgrims. The potential of Indian tourism to Israel is immense. In time it could have a positive effect on the relationship between the two countries. Israel could become a regular, attractive tourist destination for some of India's growing middle class, its Christians – their number was informally estimated to be approximately 25 million in 2011, its businesspeople, and some of its intellectuals. Cheaper flights are essential, and so is a revision of the often intrusive and humiliating border checks to which Indians are subjected upon entering Israel.

Indian Jews, whether they are Israeli, Indian, or reside elsewhere, could help building bridges between India and Israel.

Jews lived peacefully in India for hundreds of years – mainly in the Konkan Belt near Mumbai, and in Kerala in the south. By Indian standards, their numbers were minuscule yet they were respected and quite a few of them held senior positions in the Indian military, the civil administration, the arts and letters, the film industry and the professions in the 20th century. Before 1948, India's Jews did not publicly call for the creation of a Jewish state. They were too few to become entangled in India's bitter and often violent domestic struggles. But when Israel was created, and apart from approximately 4,000 who remain in India, nearly all left, mostly to Israel where Indian Jews and their offspring number today approximately

80,000. Many of them maintain emotional attachments to both Israel and India: “Israel is my fatherland, but India is my motherland,” was and still is a traditional saying among Indian Jews. Hundreds of them still turn up at the receptions the Indian ambassador to Israel hosts for Indian Israelis to celebrate India’s Republic Day as well as its Independence Day. However, in Israel, Indian Jews, with some notable exceptions, are mostly absent from the higher ranks of government, the military, and academia. The reasons are complex and have been discussed by various experts.¹⁰ Nevertheless, Indian Jews, including community leaders and businessmen who have remained in India, have helped strengthening links between India and Israel in various sectors, but more could be done. In 2015, the Indian Embassy in Israel publicly called upon Indian Israelis to help building stronger bonds between the two nations. This was novel; few foreign embassies in Israel, if any, are known to have issued similar calls to their former nationals.

There are many weighty reasons why the Jewish people and Israel must pay greater attention to India. And by Israel, we do not mean only the Israeli government, but also the economic elite, public opinion shapers, the media, academia where India-studies are under-represented, non-governmental organizations, and last but not least, Jewish and Israeli philanthropists: *pecunia nervus bellorum*, “money is the bowstring of warfare” as a famous Latin proverb has it, and which, of course, applies to much more than warfare.

ENDNOTES

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- 5 Yulia Egorova, *Jews and India: Perceptions and Image*, (New York: Routledge, 2006), 51.
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- 9 Itamar Eichner "From India with love", *Ynet News*, March 4, 2009.
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CHAPTER TWO

India Marches West: Fast-growing links with the Middle East

The Driving Factors

This chapter reviews five major developments that illustrate India's evolving relationship with the Middle East:

- **Energy, the New Key Factor:** India's need for Middle Eastern oil and natural gas draws the country into the Middle East, more than any other factor.
- **Expanding Economic Exchanges with the Middle East – Trade, Investment, and Indian Labor:** India's energy links led to a rapid expansion of economic exchanges with the Middle East.
- **Islam in India:** Islam is the second-most important, but oldest and still relevant, driver of India's links with the Middle East.
- **Political and Military Links with the Middle East:** The three factors above, among others, explain India's expanding political and military links in the Middle East.
- **India's Quest for Global Power Status:** India's quest for great power status could lead to a more proactive Middle East policy.

Renewing Ancient Links

Today's growing relations between India and the Middle East are renewing ancient economic and cultural links. Ties between India and the Middle East are deeply embedded in the past. Archaeological excavations have uncovered a large number of stamp seals and other artifacts from the first Indus civilization in what had been ancient Mesopotamia, showing that Indian civilization has reached out to the Middle East since time immemorial. In fact, when it was first discovered, the Indus civilization was initially referred to as the Indo-Sumerian civilization (Sumer, often regarded as the earliest civilization in the Middle East, was located in southern Mesopotamia), so close the relationship between the two regions was thought to be. The artifacts found indicate that a fairly intensive and broad network of trade between Ancient Mesopotamia and the Indus Valley cities of Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro existed 4,000 years ago.

Trade as well as extensive people-to-people contacts and cultural interactions between India and the Middle East continued to prosper over the centuries, at least until the rise of the English East India Company in the 17th and 18th centuries. The expansion of Islam over the entire Middle East and large parts of India was a key factor contributing to the development of relations between the two regions.

Many Indians prefer the designation "West Asia" rather than "Middle East," which they view as Eurocentric. West Asia is in better accordance with the geographical proximity of the region to the Asian subcontinent and the long-standing historical ties between the two sides. In this chapter, however, for reasons of coherence and because it is more suitable for a Western or Jewish audience, we will stick with the term "Middle East." Although Israel is very much a part of the Middle East, the term as used here is meant to cover Turkey, Iran, and the Arab world from the western boundary of Libya to Iraq's eastern border, including the entire Arabian Peninsula.

Abundant literature has appeared in recent times to describe the noticeable shift in the balance of power from the West to the East, with the West yielding some of its exclusive power to a rising Asia led by China and India. Yet, attention has just begun to be paid to the rapidly growing presence and influence of Asia in the Middle East.¹ A recent notable contribution to the topic is the authoritative 2010 book by Geoffrey Kemp, *The East Moves West: India, China, and Asia's Growing Presence in the Middle East*, to which we will occasionally refer. Kemp includes almost all the countries of Asia in his analysis. However, although Japan and South Korea have undoubtedly acquired impressive economic and industrial clout in the Middle East, their political influence on Middle Eastern affairs is likely to remain very limited, and this is even truer of other Asian countries, such as Vietnam or Thailand. In contrast, the rapidly growing links of China and India with the Middle East are likely to have major geopolitical impacts on the region. Since Kemp published his book, organizations such as the Brookings Institution and the Carnegie Foundation for International Peace have begun to work on India's growing links with the Middle East.

Energy: The New Key Factor*

Indian Needs

Oil is the determinant driver of greater interdependence between Asia and the Middle East in the 21st century. "For the first time we are focusing on Asia," declared, in 1998, Ahmed Zaki Yamani, a former Saudi oil minister and high-level official of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC).² Between 1998 and 2014, the Asia-Pacific region's share of total crude oil imports from major Mideast producers rose from 46 to 74 percent.³ In fact, the Asia-Pacific region has virtually become the only destination of crude oil exports from the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Qatar. Several factors, primarily geographical proximity and Asia's growing demand for oil, help explain the increasing energy interdependence between Mideast producers and Asian countries.

* This sub-chapter was reviewed and updated by Mr. Jon Hansen of the International Energy Agency in Paris

Mideast countries also view the energy they supply Asia, China in particular, as a means of securing long-term political links, and even security, without having to submit in return to human rights demands and pressures to undertake democratic reforms, as has been the case with the United States and other Western countries. By 2030, more than 16 million barrels of crude oil per day are predicted to flow from the Middle East to Asia-Pacific, compared to fewer than 4 million barrels per day to Europe and North America combined.⁴ A technological revolution, fracking, and other advances in oil and gas recovery has brought about a geopolitical revolution: America is approaching energy independence, Europe gets much of its energy resources from Russia, and the Middle Eastern oil producers now, for the first time, depend on the Asia-Pacific markets for their exports and economic survival.

Growth requires energy. Rapid industrialization and urbanization, the growth of the middle class, as well as the increased use of energy-intensive products, have been driving up India's energy demand in the last two decades. Today, India is the world's fifth largest consumer of primary energy resources. India's energy demand will continue to increase, and, according to projections of the International Energy Agency (IEA), it will likely more than double by 2040, which is expected to turn India into the world's third largest energy consumer, after China and the United States.⁵

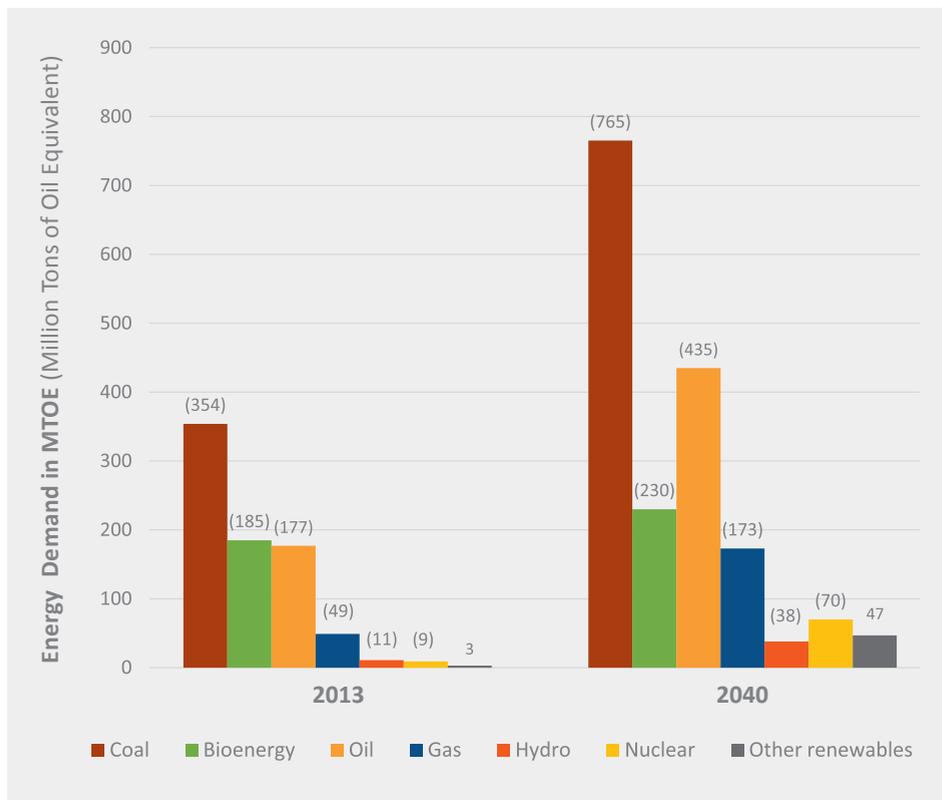
A few years ago, some observers were concerned that India and China's rapidly growing energy consumption would result in increased competition for resources with the West, not to mention the effect on global warming. Indeed Indian energy consumption has almost doubled since 2000.⁶ It was feared that this would continue to drive up energy prices, affecting the affordability of energy in Western consuming countries while, at the same time, increasing the wealth of oil producers in the Middle East and elsewhere. In the meantime, the expansion of global supply, thanks to fracking among other factors, has led to a considerable reduction of crude oil prices. India depends on energy to sustain its economic growth and development. It is worth noting that even though the Indian demand is very high, and it occupies a growing proportion of the global energy market,

India remains a microscopic oil consumer per capita. This is expected to rise massively in the coming years. Today, India accounts for only 6 percent of global energy consumption although it is currently the second largest country in the world, accounting for 18 percent of the global population. It is expected to overtake China by 2040.⁷

Its energy consumption per capita remains well below that of developed economies and the world average. India's per capita electricity consumption in 2012 was 744 kilowatt-hours, less than one fifth of the global average (4235 kh). Its energy consumption is lower than China's; India has 90 percent of China's population but consumes only 30 percent of the energy China does.⁸ Notwithstanding predictions of high and sustained growth, per capita figures will remain far below those of the developed world for years to come.⁹

China's economic development has largely relied on the expansion of its industrial and manufacturing sector. India's economic growth, in contrast, has essentially centered on the development of its service sector, which requires much less energy to operate. Still, India's low energy consumption per capita is primarily a result of the poverty that characterizes most of the country's population. Although it has benefited from rapid and continuous economic growth since the early 1990s, and nurtures some of the world's largest private fortunes, India remains a very poor country and faces a massive and enduring problem of energy impoverishment. According to IEA statistics, about 237 million of India's citizens (WEO 2015) still lack access to electricity, meaning 82 percent of India's population today has access to electricity, and more than 841 million, or 67 percent of India's population, relies on traditional biomass fuels for cooking, for reasons of both access and affordability.¹⁰ The use of traditional biomass fuels generates a series of problems, ranging from economic and environmental concerns to health problems and gender discrimination.¹¹ India's challenge is not just to manage the energy consequences of its fast economic development and sustain continuous growth, but also to ensure increased energy access and affordability for its economically deprived population.

India's Energy Demand by Fuel Type in 2013 with 2040 Projections



Source: International Energy Agency

As in China, coal remains by far India's largest source of primary energy. India's booming demand for electricity is expected to increase its reliance on imported coal, even though the share of coal in its fuel mix will remain the same. Currently, coal constitutes 70 percent of India's power generation. India's third major source of energy after coal and bioenergy is petroleum, which represents about 20 percent of India's primary energy supply. Coal and petroleum together meet nearly 70 percent of India's energy needs. India's energy demand will likely more than double by 2040, but the country's two largest sources of primary energy will remain coal and oil. Between 2012 and 2014, India's reliance on imports for the supply of coal, natural gas and crude oil reached respectively 25 and 39

percent for coal, 32 and 46 percent for gas, and 74 and 92 percent for oil.¹²

India has the world's third largest (after the United States and China) coal reserves: approximately 246 billion tons, of which 92 billion are proven.¹³ Until the mid-1990s, domestic production was sufficient to meet the country's needs. Since then, however, the rapid increase in coal demand has made it difficult for Indian mining companies to keep up with demand, which has come to outstrip domestic supply, requiring India to import coal from foreign producers – primarily from non-Middle Eastern countries, including Australia, Indonesia and South Africa. According to IEA projections, India's overall reliance on coal imports will reach 28 percent by 2030.

If India does not find and exploit its own new oil and gas resources, its reliance on energy imports will increase significantly in the next two decades. According to IEA projections, natural gas imports will quadruple between 2020 and 2030, and account for nearly 60 percent of its total supply. Crude oil imports are predicted to meet 94 percent of India's total crude oil needs by 2030, when it will constitute close to a quarter of India's overall energy supply (including biomass fuels).

India's dependence on energy imports comes with a heavy reliance on Mideast producers. Until 2012-13, around two-thirds of India's total crude oil imports came from the Middle East, with Saudi Arabia its largest supplier. But Nigeria and Angola, India's most significant oil suppliers outside the Middle East, in 2015, greatly increased their exports to India. In May 2015, African oil jumped to 26 percent of India's imports, and Middle Eastern oil dropped to 54 percent. It is currently (2016) still impossible to predict whether this development points to shifting long-term trends.¹⁴ For the time being, the dominant assumption is still that India's oil dependence on the Middle East could reach over 90 percent of total oil imports by 2030. India also currently depends heavily on natural gas imports from the Middle East, with Qatar its key supplier.¹⁵

Not all Indian crude oil imports are destined to domestic consumption. Over a third is re-exported by India after transformation into refined

petroleum products in India's growing energy refining sector. Several Mideast countries, chiefly Iran and the UAE, have traditionally been important markets for Indian exports of these products. India's export reach has in recent years grown beyond the Middle East and South Asia to the Far East and Europe, and even to the United States. The Indian government, along with the private sector, has been making a sustained effort to boost its refining capacity to satisfy rapidly increasing domestic needs, and establish India as a major exporter of refined petroleum products. Refining is seen as a foreign-exchange earner for India to offset energy import expenses.

India's high level of dependence on energy imports is a threat to its energy security as its supply depends so extensively on the Middle East. There is an ongoing risk of supply disruptions due to the region's political and/or economic instability. India's dependence on energy imports also makes it vulnerable to surging oil prices. Any steep rise in oil prices is likely to increase inflation and budget deficits, thereby hampering the country's economic growth. Oil prices increased after the beginning of the so-called Arab Spring, but have since fallen again. India's reluctance to endorse the Western-led military intervention in Libya was at least partly motivated by concerns over higher oil prices.

Toward greater energy security and diversification

The energy crisis and the steep increase of oil prices that came in the wake of the 1973 Yom Kippur War enriched the oil producers and impoverished India along with many other oil-hungry developing countries. This threw India into a tighter embrace with the Gulf countries than it would probably have chosen had there been an alternative. But no oil importers had a choice in those years. The Indian novelist and Nobel laureate V.S. Naipaul called India in a 1977 book "a wounded civilization." He began his book with a bitter comment that India was "again at the periphery of this new (meaning newly oil-rich) Arabian world."¹⁶ Few prominent Indians or persons of Indian origin (Naipaul was not born in India) would have expressed themselves so openly during those years. But many understood

that India had to launch energy source diversification measures to improve its energy security. From the 1980s and 1990s on, India developed initiatives and projects in many different directions to reduce its dependency on Gulf oil – with very limited success so far, as should be clear from the statistics cited earlier in this chapter. Nevertheless, it is interesting to summarize the various ways India has tried to wriggle out of its dependency, as it will continue searching for new energy sources for the foreseeable future.

India's energy security and diversification moves take four main directions:

- Investing in Middle Eastern oil and natural gas
- Searching for oil and gas outside the Middle East
- Increasing self-reliance on its own oil and natural gas resources
- Supporting energy sciences and technologies to develop alternatives to oil and gas

Investments in the Middle East and oil and natural gas

India invests in oil and gas exploration and production in Middle Eastern countries and also tries to attract investments from these countries for its own energy sources. India supports these efforts through diplomatic and economic moves but faces fierce competition, particularly from China and Japan. Acquiring energy assets by investing in the oil industry of Middle Eastern producer countries increases energy security to some degree, but does nothing to diversify energy sources. Three other policies aim at diversification.

Searching for oil and natural gas outside the Middle East

India is looking for oil and gas in Sub-Saharan Africa, Russia, Central Asia, the United States and Mexico among others. Again, it faces competition from China and Japan. India's cumbersome bureaucracy has missed opportunities more than once. Supplies from energy-rich Central Asia are hampered by major transport problems, but Sub-Saharan countries, e.g.

Angola and Nigeria, the new “hot spots” of the world oil industry, have become important suppliers to India. Israel was involved in one project linked to India’s diversification drive, the “Med-Stream Project.” In 2006, the Israeli and Turkish governments planned to build energy pipelines from Central Asia and Russia to Turkey, which would then ship supplies to Israel and then on to India. The project was shelved when relations between Israel and Turkey deteriorated following the 2010 Marmara incident.

Increasing self-reliance on its own oil and natural gas resources

Self-reliance has deep roots in Indian culture. Gandhi saw it as a key moral and religious precept and a means to fight against British rule. But self-reliance often meant protectionism, extensive government regulation, and public ownership of resources and industries, none of which was conducive to a speedy development of endogenous resources. In the 1990s India opened its economy to foreign investments, which has led to some new discoveries. The newest and perhaps most promising potential resource is shale gas, but its development is still hampered by technological, financial, environmental and health problems. Also, it is not clear how much recoverable shale gas India actually has – according to provisional estimates, nothing of the order of magnitude of American or Chinese reserves.

Supporting energy sciences and technologies to develop alternatives to oil and natural gas

India’s first prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, attached enormous importance to science, and this has been a continuing driver of Indian science and technology policies. Important research and development activities are underway to develop coal, nuclear, hydro-, wind and solar power, as well as bio-fuels. India is working to improve its energy conservation and efficiency. India’s energy intensity – the amount of energy required to produce one unit of GDP – ranks among the highest in the world, which comes with negative local and global environmental

consequences. The use of coal is particularly inefficient. As coal represents over 50 percent of India's total energy supply (excluding biomass), any improvement in coal use would lead to greater economic, environmental, and health improvements than increased efficiency in any other power source.

Israel and the Jewish world could make the most important contribution to India's energy needs through cooperative efforts in solar and other renewable technologies. Israel is a leader in solar and other renewable energy sources relevant to India. The two countries have been discussing cooperation since the early 2010s. In 2015, India and Israel were working toward their first cooperation agreement in the renewable energy sector, expanding their strategic relationship to include energy security.¹⁷

Growing Economic Exchanges with the Middle East

Trade

As of 2014, almost 40 percent of the Middle East's total merchandise imports came from Asia, and nearly half of its merchandise exports were sold in Asia. Asia has become the Middle East's first export destination, far ahead of Europe and North America.¹⁸ Trade and investment flows between the two regions are likely to continue expanding. For Mideast firms and investors, Asian countries, with their high and sustained economic growth, relatively low-cost skilled workforces, and dynamic markets have become very attractive export and investment destinations. For example, Israeli exports to Asia in 2015 stood at \$11.4 billion (while total Israeli exports stood at \$45.7 billion – meaning exports to Asia constituted 25 percent of total exports. Exports to Europe represented 30 percent, and those to the United States amounted to roughly 23 percent.)¹⁹

India's trade with the Middle East has increased remarkably since the beginning of the 21ST century. The total value of trade with the Middle East increased 20-fold between 2001 and 2015 whereas India's world trade in this period only increased eight times. Trade between India and the

Middle East reached an amount of \$170 billion for the Indian fiscal year 2014-2015, including over two-thirds of imports.²⁰ Bilateral trade with the UAE (which also acts as a transit for Indian goods) grew from \$3.4 billion in 2001 to almost \$60 billion in 2014-2015, while trade with Saudi Arabia expanded 30-fold in this same period. Though energy trade constitutes the largest part of India's total trade with the region, the Middle East is also an import source and export destination for non-energy goods.

India's trade with the Middle East in 2015 constituted 23 percent of India's total world trade (trade with the United States constituted 10 percent while trade with China was 9.5 percent). Over one-fourth of India's imports come from the Middle East. At the same time, the Middle East represents nearly one-fifth of India's export market, five times more than its China bound exports. India's trade with Israel, minuscule in comparison, represents approximately 3 percent of India's Middle East trade. The UAE is India's third largest trade partner on a global scale, after China and the United States. The UAE is India's second largest export destination after the United States and third largest import source after China and Saudi Arabia. India's privileged economic relationship with the UAE goes a long way back. India had close trade ties with Abu Dhabi even before the UAE federation was established in 1971. Indian economic links with the UAE blossomed in the 1970s, as more than 100,000 Indian workers migrated to the Emirates in the wake of the oil boom. They greatly expanded in the 1990s, when Dubai's rapid development and the UAE's continuing need for labor coincided with India's economic liberalization reforms, and paved the way for rising trade opportunities.

The United Arab Emirates (UAE), the main transit hub between the Middle East and India, has become the center of gravity for India's relationship with the region. The UAE comprises seven oil-rich emirates along the Persian Gulf, with population figures varying widely. 2014 population estimates included approximately 9.3 – 9.6 million people, of whom no more than 1.1 million

(11 percent) were actual Emirati nationals. Most sources agree that Indians form by far the largest single contingent of foreigners there (approximately 2.8 million people, or 27 percent of the UAE's total population and 40-50 percent of the UAE's total labor force).

Late in 2015, it was announced that Israel, whose relations with India are rapidly expanding, established a diplomatic mission in the UAE's capital, Abu Dhabi.

India's trade with all six member countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) – Oman, UAE, Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar and Saudi Arabia – is likely to continue increasing in the coming decade, especially if the two sides conclude a Free Trade Agreement as expected. The GCC is an extremely attractive market for Indian goods, especially in the information technology sector, a result of the population's youth bulge and high spending power. Additionally, the sustained dynamism of the Gulf construction industry is driving demand for heavy machinery and other construction-related imports from India.

Investments and joint ventures

Indian oil and natural gas firms have acquired equity assets and participating interests in the Middle East's energy upstream sector. But beyond energy, Indian companies have also set up offices and businesses and undertaken investments throughout the Middle East in sectors ranging from infrastructure development and manufacturing to health care, information technology, education, and telecommunications. Oman hosts India's largest overseas joint venture, the Oman-India Fertilizer Company. According to the latest figures available, India invested over \$1.6 billion in Saudi Arabia between 2000 and 2015.²² In December 2012, the leading Indian firm, Tata Motors, signed a preliminary agreement to establish a factory in Saudi Arabia for the production of Jaguar Land Rovers, at an initial investment estimated at \$1.2 billion. Still, the UAE is India's primary partner for investments and joint venture projects.

In fiscal year 2009-2010, the UAE ranked as India's seventh favorite destination of foreign direct investment (FDI) in global terms, with FDI outflows amounting to \$484 million – nearly 5 percent of total Indian FDI outflows.²³ A trend has been detected recently that India has shifted its FDI policy away from resource rich countries in favor of countries offering superior tax benefits.²⁴ In one of Dubai's largest free economic zones, Indian firms constituted a fifth of the 612 new companies established in the first four months of 2012.²⁵ Birla Institute of Technology & Science Pilani, one of India's leading higher education scientific institutes, chose Dubai as the location of its only international campus, which has, since its opening in 2007, become the most sought-after engineering college in the Gulf. In 2009, Zee Entertainment Enterprises, India's leading media firm also chose Dubai to launch Zee Alwan, the first Arabic-language channel exclusively devoted to the broadcast of Hindi Bollywood movies, and is today one of the most popular channels in the Gulf. In 2012, Zee Entertainment announced a \$100-million investment in a second Dubai-based Arabic channel, Zee Aflam, which showcases various Hindi programs. India is, therefore, accumulating cultural influence or "soft power" in the Gulf, in addition to its economic weight.

Companies from Mideast countries also invest capital and enter into joint ventures in India, particularly in the energy downstream sector but also in other sectors such as infrastructure, pharmaceutical and chemical industries, and computer software. Again, the UAE stands out. The UAE's FDI equity into India between 2000 and 2015 amounted to nearly \$3.3 billion, making it India's tenth largest investor worldwide. Apart from the UAE however, Middle Eastern countries are still transferring little capital into the Indian market. In contrast to the UAE, Oman, India's second largest Middle Eastern investor, invested only \$414 million during the same period. Israel's total FDI equity inflows to India during the same period (\$91 million) were higher than those of Saudi Arabia.²⁶

But initiatives to promote bilateral investments and joint ventures between India and the Middle East are on the rise. India is interested in the participation of Gulf countries in expanding and modernizing

its domestic infrastructure, while Gulf countries are hoping to attract Indian investments and workers to develop such sectors as information technology and construction. In 2007, India and Oman announced the launching of a joint investment fund, with an initial capitalization of \$100 million, to finance projects in both countries. Also, India and Saudi Arabia announced that they would set up a \$750 million-joint investment fund that would primarily serve as a channel for Saudi investments into Indian infrastructure projects. There have also been reports of discussions between India and Qatar to establish a similar joint investment fund.

The political and economic environment is favorable to increased investments and joint ventures between India and the Middle East. Politically, the fact that India has good diplomatic relations with the region's states and has not been a source of military tension there are viewed as guarantees of stability by Middle Eastern investors. In the words of a prominent Kuwaiti political analyst, Arab Gulf countries feel at ease in dealing with India because India, like China, "does not carry any political baggage; it also does not impose its values or preach political reforms or interfere in the GCC's domestic affairs."²⁷ Economically, India remains one of the world's fastest growing economies and it has made substantial progress in improving conditions for foreign investors. It also has the advantage of being an English-speaking country. As for the Gulf, the young age and high spending power of its population – one of the highest in the world – make the region a very attractive investment destination for Indian firms eager to conquer new dynamic markets for their products.

Indian labor in the Middle East

Human flows include, first and foremost, the massive presence and continuing arrival of Asian workers in the Persian Gulf since the early 1970s. Kemp (2010) estimated that there were around 8.5 million Asian workers in the Persian Gulf (not including illegal workers), nearly half of them Indians.²⁸ Recently, Asia and the Middle East have also benefited from the development of bilateral tourism and from increased cultural and educational ties.

More specifically, the phenomenon of large-scale skilled and unskilled Indian labor migration to the Gulf began on the heels of the 1973 oil price jump, which gave rise to a massive investment program by Gulf oil producing states and, hence, a growing demand for foreign labor. Initially, the Gulf countries' needs were met by labor migration from neighboring Arab countries, but India and Pakistan gradually came to supply most of the unskilled labor. India's total migrant population in the Gulf increased from under 300,000 in 1975²⁹ to around 6 million in 2014 and 7.3 million in 2015.³⁰ These workers are said to support 30 million Indians back home. India has largely overtaken Pakistan and, in the aftermath of the 1990 Iraq invasion of Kuwait, replaced most non-national Arab workers. Labor flows from India to the Gulf have continued to grow rapidly in recent years, nearly doubling both between 2004 to 2008 and 2010-2015.³¹

These numbers today represent roughly 80 percent of India's total migrant labor population worldwide.³² Indian migrants are the largest expatriate population of the Gulf and a significant portion of the total population and the workforce. The UAE is home today to 2.8 million Indians (those born in India), while Saudi Arabia hosts, according to 2016 figures put forth by both Indian and Saudi sources, about 3 million. These are followed by Kuwait, Oman and Qatar, who host between 500,000 and 750,000 Indian workers each.³³ In the UAE, Indian laborers currently constitute about 27 percent of the total population, and almost half of its workforce. India's labor migrant population in the Gulf exceeds China's, although flows of Chinese workers to the region have increased in recent years. Approximately 300,000 Chinese work in the UAE.³⁴

The Indian expatriate community in the Gulf essentially comes from South Indian states, in particular from Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Andhra Pradesh. Although Indian migrants to the Gulf remain in majority unskilled or low-skilled workers, they also include a growing number of skilled workers as well as businessmen, and professionals.

Mutual benefits of Indian labor in the Gulf

Indian labor migration to the Gulf contributes to promoting trade and investment ties between the two regions. Indians in the Gulf create demand for Indian goods for their own consumption and help popularize these products among the populace of their host countries.

Remittances from the Gulf contribute significantly to the Indian economy. In recent years, Indian workers in the Gulf have sent an estimated average of U.S.\$30 billion from their salaries back home annually (in 2014, remittances to India from the UAE stood just over \$12 billion, with another almost \$11 billion from Saudi Arabia and almost \$5 billion from Kuwait),³⁵ which represents far more than the total FDI annual inflows from the Gulf to India. On the macro-economic level, these remittances also provide India with a large amount of hard currency and contribute to leveling out its balance of payments with Gulf countries. On the micro-economic level, labor migration to the Gulf alleviates unemployment, and remittances reduce poverty and improve the standard of living of migrants and their families (and sometimes even of their local community). The impact of remittances is higher in certain South Indian states where a larger section of the local population has emigrated to work overseas.³⁶

Foreign laborers, of which Indian workers form a great part, represent for Gulf countries a cheap and abundant workforce that compensates for the limited number of local workers with required skills and attitudes, and they stimulate domestic consumption and local property markets. Indian skilled workers and professionals have greatly contributed to the economic development of Gulf countries, notably in the fields of information technology and telecommunications.

Drawbacks of Indian labor in the Gulf

India's concerns over the rights and living conditions of Indian workers in the Gulf may affect ties between India and Gulf countries in the future. India has been sensitive to claims of discrimination and harsh conditions by Indians working in the Gulf, notably in Saudi Arabia and Bahrain. On a

different level, the export to India of radical Islamic ideologies might be another undesirable consequence of labor migration to the Gulf. Muslims constitute a high proportion of Indian workers in the Gulf. During their stay in the Gulf, including in countries where the Muslim Brotherhood is influential, they may be susceptible to Islamic radicalization. This could have political and security consequences for India that have not yet received sufficient attention. For example, it is possible that the strong hostility to Israel that can be found in Kerala has partly been imported, and is most certainly encouraged, by the large number of Keralese Muslims who worked in the Gulf.

As for Gulf countries, they need to accommodate the rather high financial cost of foreign labor migration. Heavy expenditures are required to expand the services and infrastructure necessary to accommodate foreign workers. Salaries, which are usually not paid in local currency, significantly deplete the Gulf countries' hard currency incomes. But the most pressing concern for Gulf countries relates to the large share of foreign workers in their total population. Non-nationals constitute over 20 percent of the total population of Saudi Arabia, the largest Gulf country. It is feared that the expatriate population could threaten the indigenous culture and form a "fifth column" that assists foreign powers in undermining the stability of Gulf countries. This perception may lead to a reduced openness of the region to foreign labor migration, especially when the unemployment rate among Gulf nationals, especially those just entering the workforce, is growing. Kuwait and Saudi Arabia have already started to implement policies aimed at clamping down on labor migration through supply and demand restrictions of foreign workers.³⁷

However, in the short term at least, it is unlikely that Indian labor migration to the Gulf will decline significantly. It is indeed doubtful that the Gulf countries' efforts to reduce foreign labor and increase the proportion of nationals in the workforce will show rapid success. Changes in attitudes and perceptions of indigenous workers vis-a-vis jobs they have come to see as only appropriate for foreign laborers are very gradual, and some economic sectors – especially the construction industry – would suffer

from severe shortages of workers if labor migration were constrained. Second, even if these restricting policies are successful, Indian workers will not be the first of the expatriate population affected. Gulf countries have shown a marked preference for Indian and other Asian workers over their fellow Arabs.³⁸ In addition, although Chinese workers are generally considered more efficient, Indians will likely continue to be preferred. Indian workers share deep cultural commonalities with the local population in Gulf countries, whether in terms of traditional values, religion, food, clothing, or attitudes toward women. In contrast, wide cultural gaps make cohabitation between Gulf nationals and Chinese laborers more problematic.

The necessity for India to ensure the safety of its workers in the region will also remain a primary consideration with respect to the Gulf countries and favor stronger ties. India does not want to repeat the humiliating experience endured during the First Gulf War, when hundreds of thousands of Indian laborers remained stranded in Kuwait after Saddam Hussein's invasion. India had to lease transport aircraft and ships to organize an evacuation. The recent popular protests in North African and Mideast countries have raised concerns in India over the safety of its nationals working in these countries and the flow of remittances. In 2011, thousands of Indian laborers had to be evacuated under difficult conditions from Egypt and Libya. Again in 2015, India dispatched ships and planes to evacuate its nationals from war-torn Yemen (Operation Rahat).

Other flows of persons, apart from labor migration, have been growing in the last decade and are likely to further strengthen ties between India and the Gulf. Tourism has been increasing rapidly in both directions. There are roughly 500 flights per week between India and the UAE³⁹. In contrast, Israel's national airline, El Al, the only company offering direct flights between Israel and India, offered just three weekly flights from Tel Aviv to Mumbai in 2015. Educational flows from the Gulf to India have also increased in recent years. A growing number of students from the Gulf are showing interest in enrolling in Indian universities and technical institutions for a combination of reasons, including their excellent quality,

lower costs, and less stringent visa requirements than in the United States and Western European countries.

Islam in India

India's old common history and cultural heritage with the Muslim Middle East

Today, half the world's Muslims live in the Asia-Pacific region. The four countries with the largest Muslim populations – Indonesia, Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh – are all Asian nations. Their Muslim populations constitute almost double the total number of Muslims in the entire Middle East.⁴⁰ Pakistan and Bangladesh, given their history, language, and way of life, are part of a broadly defined Indian civilization that reaches well beyond the Republic of India's borders. The Indian civilization and its religions have had a deep effect on Indonesia as well. India occupies a central place in the world history of Islam.

All the drivers of India's move into the Middle East discussed thus far are relatively new and the result of India's rapid economic growth and increasing dependence on energy imports. The Muslim factor is another matter. India's links with the Middle East and Islam are deeply embedded in the past. Islam first came to the Indian subcontinent centuries ago, through trade and invasions, and has since become an integral part of Indian history, culture, and society. Islam remains a key to understanding India's fast-growing links with the Middle East in the 21st century.

Throughout centuries, long before, but even more since Islamic times, Indian cotton cloth, silk, rice, sandalwood, and spices were exchanged for Middle Eastern dates, pearls, gems, and precious metals. The Middle East was at the crossroads of several of the silk and spice overland trade routes connecting Europe to India, and more broadly, Asia. Maritime trade between the Persian Gulf and the western coast of India also flourished, the result of geographical proximity and the seasonal monsoon winds of the Arabian Sea. Ports in the Persian Gulf were major importers of Indian

dyes, particularly of Indian indigo, the indispensable blue dye. Jewish merchants, as a later Chapter will show, were also significant participants in this trade.

Trade ties between India and the Middle East have been accompanied by intensive people-to-people contacts and cultural interactions. Many Arab Muslim as well as Jewish traders from the Middle East, who sometimes married local women, set up their base on the Malabar Coast – the long south-western coast line of the Indian subcontinent facing the Indian Ocean, particularly in the states of Kerala and Karnataka. Likewise, wealthy Indian merchants settled in the Gulf and other Mideast countries. During the time of the Abbasid Caliphate (750-1258), many Indian scholars resided in Baghdad and their work in such disciplines as mathematics, astronomy, and medicine was translated from Sanskrit to Arabic.

Beyond trade links, multiple incursions and conquests by Muslim invaders from the Middle East led to the emergence of an Indo-Islamic culture with marked Arab, Turkish, Persian, Afghan, and Moghul influences. The first invasions of Arab Muslims reached northwest India in the late 7th and early 8th centuries, with the conquest of the province of Sindh by Muhammad bin Qasim. The destruction of Hindu and Buddhist temples followed, and history holds accounts of victorious Muslims executing Indian fighters and enslaving their wives and children, a practice certainly not exclusive to Muslims in those and other times. In general, historians are divided on how and why Indians converted to Islam.⁴¹ Whereas some argue that it was mostly of their own volition in a desire to escape the Hindu caste system or to have a more affluent life and higher social status, others claim that many were converted by force. Most probably both are right, depending on time and place.

The areas of Punjab and Gujarat in northwestern India suffered multiple incursions of the Ghaznavid Afghan Muslim rulers in the 11th and 12th centuries. The period of significant Muslim expansion in the Indian subcontinent stretched from the 13th to the 18th centuries, under the Delhi Sultanate and later the Mughal Empire. In the 16th and 17th centuries, the

Mughals, a Muslim dynasty from Central Asia, conquered and unified most of India, except for some southern parts. The Mughal Empire flourished for almost 300 years. Akbar the Great (reigned 1556-1605) ruled India, including its non-Muslim subjects, with great tolerance. In contrast, his great-grandson Emperor Aurangzeb (reigned 1658-1707) was a fanatical Muslim. His policy of destroying Hindu and Sikh temples caused the other religious communities lasting bitterness, even if Aurangzeb's policy was not only motivated by religion but also by politics, as some authors have argued. Aurangzeb's policy certainly contributed to the decline and end of the Mughal Empire as aggrieved Hindu leaders called for British help and intervention.

Irrespective of the more violent chapter of their common history, the long-standing connections between the Indian subcontinent and the Middle East are reflected in Indian art, architecture, literature, music, and languages. Urdu, the common language of a large number of South Asian, particularly Pakistani, Muslims, and the mother tongue of over 50 million people in India, is largely derived from Persian and Arabic vocabulary and script.

The rising power of the English East India Company in the 17th and 18th centuries and the advent of British colonialism in the 19th century caused a dramatic setback in trade and other links between India and the Muslim Middle East. In the 20th century, the freedom struggles of India and the Muslim Middle East reversed this trend and led to rediscovery and rapprochement. After independence, the Indian leadership, headed by Prime Minister Nehru, revived the political, economic, and cultural ties with the Middle East that had been disrupted during the colonial interlude. The personal friendship between Nehru and Egyptian President Nasser, as well India's leadership role in the Non-Aligned Movement, played a significant role in strengthening India's ties to the Arab and Muslim world.

This long-lasting, common historical and cultural heritage provides a solid basis for mutual relations in many fields. Civilizational links with the Arabs and Iranians figure prominently in India's official political rhetoric. For example, during an official visit to Saudi Arabia in 2010, the Indian

prime minister at the time, Manmohan Singh, recalled the historical links between the two sides “that have left an indelible mark upon [India’s] culture and civilization ... reflected in the natural empathy and sense of comfort we have when we meet each other.” He highlighted that not only is “Islam an integral part of India’s nationhood and ethos and of the rich tapestry of its culture,” but also that India “has made significant contributions to all aspects of Islamic civilization.”⁴² More discreetly, India also expressed its concern about the treatment of Indian workers in Saudi Arabia, Saudi financing of Pakistan’s nuclear arsenal, and the spread of Muslim extremism originating in Saudi Arabia. Prime Minister Modi’s first state visits to the Middle East (United Arab Emirates in August 2015 and Saudi Arabia in April 2016) showed that India’s bonds with the main Sunni Arab Gulf countries were stonger and more important than ever.

Pre-independence years: the Khilafat movement and British imperial policy

Even before India’s independence, Muslim concerns and issues were central to the Indian subcontinent’s domestic politics. The Indian National Congress Party (Congress Party) and the All-India Muslim League (AIML), the two political movements that were to play a decisive role in India’s freedom struggle, had close and friendly relations at the start of the 20th century. However, after the outbreak of World War I, their relations gradually deteriorated as competition for Muslim support and votes escalated. While the Congress Party aspired to represent all Indians, regardless of their religious or social belonging, the AIML claimed that it was the sole legitimate voice of Indian Muslims. The Congress Party had succeeded in attracting the backing and involvement of a number of Muslim leaders, but its grassroots support in the Muslim community remained limited. In the eyes of many Indian Muslims, it appeared as little more than a party at the service of Hindu interests and objectives. This widespread perception among Indian Muslims had a profound impact on the stance adopted at the time by the Congress Party toward the Middle East.

The struggle between the Congress Party and the AIML for Muslim votes and support crystallized around the Khilafat issue, which arose in the aftermath of World War I when the Allied Powers undertook to dismantle the Ottoman Empire. This was viewed as an attack against Islam because the Ottoman sultan also traditionally held the title of caliph – the supreme leader of the Muslim *Ummah* in Sunni Islam. Interestingly, it is in India that the most vehement protests against the abolition of the Caliphate took place. While the AIML initially led the offensive, the Congress Party joined the movement with the hope of forging closer ties with Indian Muslims and uniting Hindus and Muslims in the struggle for independence. The Congress Party advocated for the resolution of the Khilafat issue “in accordance with the just and legitimate sentiments of Indian Mussalmans” and proclaimed, “it is the duty of every non-Muslim (...) to assist his Mussalman brother.”⁴³ The Khilafat issue was the major factor that triggered the involvement of Indian nationalists. Whereas the Indian Khilafat movement rapidly weakened after the Islamic caliphate was abolished in 1924 by the first Turkish President Ataturk, another Middle Eastern issue, Palestine had already arisen to dominate the Indian political agenda. The Palestine question soon became a bone of contention between the Congress Party and the AIML, with Gandhi opposing Jewish nationalist aspirations in Palestine.⁴⁴

The Indian nationalists were not alone in their concerns that certain decisions taken with respect to the Middle East and Palestine could foment the hostility of Indian Muslims. Britain expressed its own reservations on several occasions. Shortly before the adoption of the Balfour Declaration in 1917, British Secretary of India Sir Edwin Montagu, who was, incidentally, the only Jewish member of the cabinet, vehemently opposed the adoption of a statement supporting Zionist aspirations in Palestine, arguing among other things that such a statement would “at once alarm the Moslems of India.”⁴⁵ In fact, he succeeded in watering down the originally more pro-Zionist wording of the Balfour Declaration, to the consternation of Chaim Weizmann. In 1939, the adoption by the British government of the – for the Jews – infamous White Paper closing the doors to Jewish emigration

to Palestine for the five-year period 1940-1944 was to a great extent an attempt to mitigate the concerns of the Muslim world, and of Indian Muslims in particular.

Even after World War II, British Prime Minister Attlee rejected U.S. President Truman's request to allow 100,000 homeless Jewish refugees into Palestine. These Jews, among the few who had survived the Nazi Holocaust, had nowhere to go and were waiting in camps in Allied-occupied Germany. Attlee emphasized that such a move risked not only antagonizing the entire Middle East region, but also India's "ninety million Moslems who are easily inflamed."⁴⁶ Thus, from the 1930s to 1946, Britain's imperial design to keep India at all costs called for the appeasement of India's Muslims, among other reasons, because they were seen as safer supporters of British rule than the Hindus. In turn, appeasement in India informed and influenced Britain's policy in Palestine and the Middle East, and Britain sided increasingly with the Arabs and against the Jews. Hence, Britain decided to close the doors of Palestine, as well as India, to Jewish immigration. In India, no more than 1000-2000 Jewish refugees – precise figures are not available – were allowed in. This left countless numbers of Jews trying to flee Nazi-dominated Europe without refuge. Most of them perished in the Nazi death camps. It was history's most tragic, albeit indirect, connection between India and the Jewish people. It is true that Britain closed the doors to Palestine primarily to appease Palestinian and Middle Eastern Arabs, but by Britain's own admission, concern about Indian Muslim reactions also played a significant part in this decision. As far as is known, there was no specific intervention by Indian Muslim leaders asking Britain to close the doors of Palestine to fleeing Jews. It was British imperial dreams, absurdly maintained even in 1946, barely a year before the exhausted British Empire was forced to quit India.

The post-independence years: Indian Muslims as a domestic constraint

One could have expected that the partition of British India in 1947 and the secession of most Indian Muslims who wanted and got their own state,

Pakistan, would put the Indian preoccupation with Palestine to rest, at least in the Republic of India with its huge non-Muslim majority. This is, in fact, what the prominent Indian historian, policy expert, and diplomat, K.M. Panikkar, believed. After all, it was to a large extent the resolute, but ultimately defeated plan of Gandhi, Nehru, and the Indian National Congress party to prevent partition that motivated their solicitude for Muslim sensitivities. On the eve of partition, Panikkar expressed confidence that the Indian nationalists' support for the Arab and Muslim world would quickly disappear after independence and the formation of a Muslim state in the sub-continent. It is wrong to think that "Hindu opinion is solidly in favor of Islamic claims in Palestine," he wrote in a note to the Jewish delegation from Palestine at the 1947 Asia Relations Conference in New Delhi.⁴⁷ He analyzed the support for Islamic claims essentially as a "tactical move" designed to forge and strengthen Hindu-Muslim unity against foreign rule.⁴⁸

He was, however, proved wrong. Following partition, a sizeable part of the Muslim population opted to stay in India and emerged as an influential minority. Their impact was notably felt on India's foreign policy toward the Middle East, and particularly in relation to the Arab-Israeli conflict. Indian leaders continued to fear that pursuing policies regarded as inimical to the Arab and Muslim world might spark off riots and domestic unrest among Indian Muslims. Unfortunately, India's history from 1947 until at least 2002, if not later, showed that these fears were not baseless. Relations between Indian Muslims and non-Muslims have often been tense, and sometimes violent. The bloody riots that occurred immediately before and after partition claimed the lives of hundreds of thousands of Indians, both Hindus and Muslims. Among the numerous incidents later on, the city of Ayodhya in Uttar Pradesh became the theater of violent riots in 1992, following the destruction of a mosque. The riots quickly spread to Mumbai and other cities throughout India. Then, in 2002, riots broke out in Gujarat during which more than a thousand Indians, the large majority apparently Muslims, were killed. Since 2002, there has been no violence of a similar magnitude in

India, but Hindu-Muslim tensions remain endemic, particularly in the country's northern and western states. Hardly a month passes without some Hindu-Muslim incident reported in the press.

Nevertheless, the impact of the Muslim factor on India's domestic politics and its relations with the Middle East has weakened since the turn of the 21st century. This has partly been the result of the rise to power in 1998 of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), a nationalist and Hindu political party in less need than the Congress Party of Muslim support at the polls. Even before 1998, the BJP became India's premier opposition political party following the 1991 national legislative elections, thus gaining a significant capacity to pressure the ruling coalition. At the same time, the Congress Party's concerns over losing Muslim support also weakened, as several prominent Muslim leaders had already left the party during the 1991 elections.

The election victory of Narendra Modi in 2014 finally led to an even more significant reduction of internal Muslim constraining power on Indian foreign policy, as indicated before. Until 2014 the Indian political establishment remained wary of Muslim reactions to the country's Mideast policy. This emerged clearly from a series of WikiLeaks cables, published and analyzed by *The Hindu* in early 2011. *The Hindu* argues that the Indian government's policy toward the region has remained "hostage to 'Muslim vote'."⁴⁹ A 2006 U.S. embassy cable, relating to the cool reaction of the Indian government with respect to Ehud Olmert becoming Israel's prime minister, explained that India had "chosen to remain silent" in order to "avoid ruffling Muslim sentiments ... India will wait until other nations voice their opinions..., a feature typical of the GOI [Government of India] when it comes to reacting particularly about Middle Eastern issues, given the importance of the Muslim vote to the ruling Congress party."⁵⁰ According to another diplomatic cable of 2006, the close attention paid to Muslim sensitivities is motivated by the Congress party's determination to distance itself from the Hindu nationalist BJP, and to "win back the Muslim voter from regional parties to which most Muslims currently claim allegiance."⁵¹ In a 2009 cable, the comment of the U.S. political counselor

regarding India's policy toward Iran is even more straightforward: "Much of India's Iran policy is designed for public consumption by the domestic Muslim."⁵²

Indian Muslims today

India is home today to approximately 180 million Muslims. Exact figures are difficult to come by. This is probably the world's second largest Muslim population after Indonesia, and the largest Muslim-minority population worldwide. Due, in large measure, to faster natural growth, the proportion of Muslims in India has increased from about 7 percent of India's total population at the time of independence, to perhaps 15 percent today. Further, India is surrounded by countries with sizeable Muslim populations – Bangladesh and Pakistan – which also have high rates of population growth. As a result, some assert that the ratio between Hindus and Muslims in the Indian subcontinent is becoming slightly more favorable to the Muslims. Hindu leaders are concerned by these demographic trends. Also, India, followed by Pakistan, is said to have the world's largest Shia population after Iran, about 20 million, or more than 10 percent of India's total Muslim population. This would partly explain the 2009 WikiLeaks comment on India's Iran policy. India's Shias are connected to Iran by family and other ties, and successive Indian governments have assumed that they value close ties with Iran. The Shia are a small proportion of India's population. They are not a unified community. They are divided by political and other differences according to the Indian state where they live. Therefore, they do not form a voting bloc at the national level, but they do in Uttar Pradesh, India's most populous state with more than 200 million inhabitants. In general, the Shias are important because they are better educated and socially and economically better integrated than Sunni Muslims. They have played an active role in Indian political life, and almost all the important political parties have Shia Muslims in their ranks. Iran seems to have refrained from supporting Indian Shia militant or insurrectionist movements (unlike in other countries), but it sometimes pressures the Shia community to intervene on Iran's behalf.

Indian Shias organized some of the largest rallies protesting India's partial agreement to sanctions against Iran, which were implemented as a result of its nuclear program. In addition, in 2012 Iran used at least one Indian Shia supporter to help prepare a nearly deadly terror attack against an Israeli diplomat in Delhi. No other sovereign country would have met a similar state-sponsored terror act without a sharp reaction. The absence of any public protest by the Indian government was telling. It showed the strength of the Shia factor in India's domestic and foreign policy.⁵³

There is little doubt that the overwhelming majority of Indian Muslims want to remain Indian citizens – apart, perhaps, from the specific case of Indian Kashmiri Muslims, who represent barely one percent of India's population. Still, many Indian Muslims have personal links with the Middle East due to tourism, academic exchanges, the growing numbers of Hajj pilgrims to Mecca and, not least, the millions who work in the region. Moreover, significantly, a Muslim religious resurgence has been underway in India since the 1970s. In recent years, this resurgence has fueled a radicalization of a – probably still small – segment of India's Muslim population drawn to Muslim fundamentalism. This trend has been inspired, and sometimes directed and funded, by sources in the Middle East, and has become an issue of growing concern to Indian authorities. India is cooperating with Arab and Muslim countries, and, discreetly, also Israel, to address this danger.

Political and Military Links with the Muslim Middle East, and the Israel Factor

Protecting energy supplies

It is often forgotten that large numbers of Indian soldiers under the flag of the British Commonwealth, and later under the auspices of the United Nations, patrolled or fought in the Middle East. Indian civil servants also played an important role in carrying out British, not Indian, policy in the Middle East. The British administration of India coincided with the beginning of British hegemony over much of the Middle East. Geoffrey

Kemp asserted that Britain ruled the Middle East “from Bombay, not Cairo” (interestingly enough, after independence and until the establishment of diplomatic relations with Israel, Indian observers criticized their country for deciding its Mideast policy in Cairo, the seat of the Arab League, rather than in New Delhi).⁵⁴ Indians contributed significantly to the Allied war effort in the Middle East during both World Wars. A memorial site in the Haifa Indian Cemetery honors the hundreds of Indian soldiers who fell in the fight to liberate the city from Ottoman rule in 1918, and, every year, the Indian Army commemorates “Haifa Day,” the day when the Ottomans were driven out of the city. There is widespread “amnesia” among Indians about their nation’s past military involvement in the Middle East, because having provided soldiers to the British Empire is no source of national pride.⁵⁵ One of Britain’s main military objectives in the Middle East was to secure the oil wells. Today, protecting energy supplies remains a major concern – not of Britain, but of Asia. India has, since the 1950s, participated in several UN peacekeeping operations in the Middle East. It provided military personnel to the first UN peacekeeping operation in the Suez Canal, the Sinai Peninsula, and the Gaza Strip between 1956 and 1967. India also supplied military observers to the UN peacekeeping observation missions in Lebanon, Yemen, and on the Iran-Iraq and Iraq-Kuwait borders. As of 2016, Indian soldiers were participating in seven UN peacekeeping operations, including on the Israel-Syria and Israel-Lebanon borders.

In the post-Cold War era, India’s strategic doctrine and foreign policy underwent several major shifts as it painfully adjusted to the disappearance of the Soviet Union, a close friend and major military supplier. It has also had to adjust to the emergence of the United States as the only superpower in the reconfigured international system. India’s friendship with its Mideast neighbors has not suffered from the major changes in the country’s strategic doctrine and policy. India has, in recent years, multiplied high-level visits to Mideast countries in order to promote long-term friendly and cooperative political ties with key energy suppliers. India has also multiplied the number of invitations to leaders and officials

of Mideast countries to visit New Delhi. Among the highest-profile visits was that of Saudi Arabia's King Abdullah in 2006 as the guest of honor at the Republic Day Parade.

India has developed significant defense and security ties with several of its Mideast key partners apart from Israel, including in particular, the UAE, Iran, Oman, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia. Naval cooperation is the main focus of India's defense ties with the Persian Gulf. Strengthening naval ties with Persian Gulf countries aims at improving the security of both energy and other trade flows in the Indian Ocean. India does not want to depend entirely on the United States to safeguard the Indian Ocean's shipping lanes. This cooperation helps India to extend its reach beyond the Indian Ocean. In particular, India and the Gulf countries have a mutual interest in boosting cooperation against maritime piracy, especially in light of piracy in the Gulf of Aden, which has risen significantly in recent years. India's overall naval strategy is also partly driven by its anxiety over China's String of Pearls strategy – its quest to increase its influence along the sea routes of the Indian Ocean. Beyond naval cooperation, India has forged close defense and security ties with Persian Gulf countries to fight the rise of criminal activity, money laundering, and illegal arms trading, between the two regions, as well as in the field of counter-terrorism. India has a high-stake interest in seeing the Persian Gulf move toward political modernization and religious moderation, and away from becoming more entrenched as a bastion of international terrorism and religious extremism.

Nothing guarantees that India's policy of forging closer political and military ties with Mideast countries, much less "strategic partnerships" – an exaggerated phrase that has been used repeatedly to describe India's relationships with Saudi Arabia and Iran – will succeed in ensuring the safety of energy supplies and other economic flows, especially in times of crisis. In fact, such a policy has, in the past, proven ineffectual for other countries.

In the second decade of the 21st century, one cannot yet speak of a major Asian power projection into the Middle East, comparable to those of

Western powers in earlier decades. The crucial question is whether, when, and how India and China will inject their own power into the Middle East, as Middle Eastern oil is indispensable to their very survival. A part of this question is whether India and China will compete, perhaps clash or cooperate, with the other major powers in the Middle East, particularly the United States and Russia. Various long-term scenarios are possible, depending on whether the recent reduction of America's commitments and military presence in the Middle East turns out to be permanent, or whether America will reassert its power in the region. India and China's entry into the Middle East will likely have consequences for their relations with many countries, including the United States, Russia, Iran, Turkey, the Arab countries, and Israel, and quite possibly with one another. A large swath of the region already suffers from a power vacuum, at least temporarily. It is uncharted waters, which Asian energy importers are not yet well prepared to navigate.

India's increasing energy dependence on the Middle East could also have a number of positive effects on the region's stability; its nurturing and expansion of economic, military, and political ties with the Middle East may allow the Indian leadership to exert stronger influence on the region's affairs, and, in the medium to long term, strengthen India's international power status. At the same time, however, there is a risk that India will be unwillingly drawn into the Middle East's local and regional disputes without the ability to wield hard power comparable to that of the United States.

Facing the tension between Iran and the Arab world

The paramount regional tension in the Middle East is between Iran and the Sunni Arab countries. Iran has been extremely important to India for a long time, far beyond energy interests. Although it yielded to U.S. pressure and quietly reduced its oil imports from Iran, as well as its exports of refined petroleum products, India refused to completely sever ties with Iran when international sanctions against Tehran were still in place. When Indians speak of Iran, they think of hundreds of years of cultural influence that have shaped an Indian language (Urdu), Indian poetry, art, music and more.

Iran is also seen as India's primary economic and geographical gateway to Central Asia. Besides, Iran is no threat to India; on the contrary, it serves as a regional counterweight against (a potentially hostile) Sunni Pakistan, Afghanistan, and the Taliban. India like Iran is extremely concerned about the future of Pakistan's neighbor Afghanistan. India fears that both these countries could fall into extremist hands. On the other hand, India is uncomfortable with many Iranian policies and public declarations even if it refrains from making its criticism public. "Iran is a headache," commented one Indian policy adviser.

A serious Iranian military threat against the Arab Gulf, which provides most of India's oil and is also strategically critical to India in terms of trade, labor and political links, would severely test India's priorities. As writes P.R. Kumaraswamy, one of the leading Indian experts on India's Middle East policies, "when it comes to Iran, New Delhi can ignore pressures from Washington and political noises from Israel. But it cannot afford to ignore Arab fears, concerns, and anxieties."⁵⁶

This is why Modi's first, finely calibrated visits to the Middle East have been so significant. He went to Iran in April 2016, shortly after his Saudi Arabia visit. He strengthened political and economic ties with the Arabs, but also security links in part because some Indian Muslim extremists had been joining ISIS. In Iran, he agreed to finance the building of Chabahar port, which is less than 100 km away from a major Pakistani port. It will allow India a new gateway to Afghanistan and Central Asia, eliminating the need to pass through Pakistan.

Some have suggested that there has been a "recalibration" of India's priorities in favor of the Gulf Arabs.⁵⁷ Certainly, Modi has initiated a more "activist" foreign policy than his predecessors, not only on the world stage -- he has made dozens of visits to countries near and far -- but also, prudently, in the troubled Middle East. Perhaps Iran was not pleased with what some called India's "tilting" toward Saudi Arabia, but it got enough out of Modi's visit to not show any discontent publically. But Pakistan was almost certainly unnerved. Modi reinforced India's position against

Pakistan with two indirect strategies. One was forging an ever-growing alliance with Saudi Arabia, Pakistan's erstwhile supporter, the other was investing in Iran, Pakistan's neighbor, in order to diminish Pakistan's geostrategic assets.

No harm came to Israel as a result of Modi's first major political and economic initiatives in the Muslim Middle East. Israel is more concerned by its Western friends and allies' investments in Iran. Modi's state visit to Israel will likely take place later in 2017, and if there has been an Indian "tilting" toward the Arab Gulf countries, it was very much in line with Israel's own discreet efforts toward the same countries, which feel threatened by Iran.

Containing Middle Eastern solidarity with Pakistan

Apart from protecting energy supplies, there is another major reason for India to seek close links with all the Muslim countries of the Middle East. That reason is Pakistan. Pakistan and India have been locked in a bitter rivalry since partition of the subcontinent in 1947. Partition was a very traumatic experience for the population of both countries, which has remained imprinted in their collective memory and continues to resonate and impact the bilateral relationship. Since partition, India and Pakistan have fought three major wars, two of them over the territory of Kashmir, which remains the core issue of contention between the two countries. From the first 1947-1948 conflict onward, Pakistan has led continuous efforts to internationalize the Kashmir issue and gain global endorsement of its position. It has attempted to rely on Muslim solidarity to gain the support of Mideast countries, painting the Kashmir conflict as a fight of India against Muslims and Islam. During the first decades of India's independence, the need to contain Muslim solidarity with Pakistan became one of the major factors underlying India's Mideast policy. During the Cold War, India courted the Muslim Middle East in an attempt to weaken Pakistan's diplomatic and economic links in the region. India hoped to benefit from Arab or Iranian support in the Kashmir conflict; or, at least, it wanted to neutralize Pakistan's influence in the region and offset Pakistani propaganda designed to present India as anti-Muslim.

Since the early 1990s, however, Pakistan has been a much less significant factor in India's relations with the Middle East. It became clear to India that even its most enthusiastic support for Arab causes did not, and would not diminish Arab support for Pakistan whenever it clashes with India. To a great extent, this realization came after Pakistan succeeded in putting the Kashmir issue on the agenda of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) and secured passage of several resolutions unfavorable to India. Besides, although Pakistan in the 1960s and 1970s could almost be considered India's equal in capabilities and power, the balance of power has now significantly shifted in favor of India. Accordingly, the need to contain Muslim solidarity with Pakistan has become much less urgent .

Yet, the impact of India's rivalry with Pakistan on India's Arab policies has not altogether disappeared. It will continue to play a role, albeit a more limited one. There is a complex, rarely openly admitted, triangular relationship between India, Pakistan, and Iran that focuses on the Shia minorities in India and Pakistan. The treatment of the Shia minority in Pakistan has been, and continues to be, brutal, with hundreds, probably thousands, of them killed and maimed in horrific suicide and other bombings by Taliban and other Sunni extremists. This has created enormous resentment in Iran, the self-appointed global guardian of Shia Islam, and has favored a closer engagement with India. As for India, it is essential to ensure that Iran, Pakistan's other strong neighbor, never supports Pakistan against India. This helps to explain, among other reasons, why India treats its Shia minority with great care and consideration. It is also why India feels that it can never break completely with Iran. Indo-Iranian ties are meant to serve as a powerful counterweight to Pakistan and to the upsurge of Sunni Islamic extremist groups throughout South Asia. India's cooperation with Iran to stabilize and rebuild Afghanistan has the goal of disrupting Pakistani attempts to regain influence over Afghanistan. India's financing of the port at Chabahar in Iran must be seen in this context. Pakistan, in turn, wants to expand its regional clout, in order to reduce that of India. To a certain extent, in moving closer to Iran the Indian leadership has also given expression to India's resentment that the U.S. has never fully supported it against Pakistan and has maintained close security ties with Islamabad.

Pakistan is still seen by India as a hereditary enemy. Notwithstanding the unending promises to improve relations, the pain of partition and Pakistani threats to put an end to India or Hinduism are not easily forgotten. Many Indians regard the Kashmir problem as insoluble – it weaves too many complex issues together. Others believe that this problem will slowly disappear over time. Terrorist acts committed by Pakistani militants on Indian soil have provoked strong anger, and countries that support Pakistan today, or have in the past, have caused a roiling resentment in India. This means that any move by Israel toward Pakistan (including those invented by Pakistan to disturb Indo-Israeli relations) could impact badly on Indian attitudes toward Israel.

The Israel factor: Balancing the links with the Muslim Middle East

India fully normalized relations and began major cooperation with Israel only several decades after it had begun developing close ties with Arab and Muslim countries. The fear that establishing relations with the Jewish state would harm Indian interests in the Arab and Muslim world was one of the key factors motivating India's hostile posture toward Israel during the Cold War. When India normalized diplomatic ties with Israel in 1992, its parallel move into the broader Middle East accelerated, but it had not anticipated that its dependence on Mideast oil would grow so fast and so extensively. In other words, India's establishment of relations with the Jewish state in 1992 was neither positively nor negatively linked to its growing ties with other countries in the region. Rather, it was the result of unrelated geopolitical factors, particularly the collapse of the Soviet Union and the emergence of the United States as the world's sole superpower. As time passed, however, India's relations with Israel became increasingly linked to its general Mideast plans and policies, though not always in obvious ways.

In the early period of normalization, India feared adverse Arab and Muslim reaction to its rapprochement with the Jewish state and sought to balance friendly steps toward Israel with "similar gestures" toward the

Muslim Middle East.⁵⁸ Under the government of Indian Prime Minister Rao (1991-1996), meetings with senior Israeli officials were thus generally preceded or followed by similar meetings with the Palestinian leadership. In late January 1992, just days before initiating full diplomatic relations with Israel, Rao held confidential talks in New Delhi with Yasser Arafat, the leader of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), in an apparent effort to placate his reaction to the move. The Indian government stepped up gestures of friendship toward its Muslim and Arab partners throughout the 1990s, at least partly to mitigate their concerns over rapprochement with Israel. This trend continued, although to a much lesser extent, into the first rule of the Hindu BJP government (1996-2004).

However, the responses of the Muslim Middle East to the expanded India-Israel ties have remained “muted almost to the point of indifference.”⁵⁹ Even Teheran has refrained from making public statements decrying these expanded ties. Mideast countries have proved unwilling to “hold their relations with New Delhi hostage to Indo-Israeli ties.”⁶⁰ In fact, the most meaningful improvements of India’s relations with Iran and Saudi Arabia happened in the two decades since normalization with Israel. And so, gradually, from the late 1990s, Indian leaders have become less inhibited in expanding ties with Israel and have remained “unconcerned about the erstwhile drive for balance.”⁶¹

Kumaraswamy argues that Indo-Israeli relations have in fact “forced key states of the Middle East to take India seriously.”⁶² Prime Minister Modi’s government did not wait long after the election of 2014 to significantly enhance India’s relations with Israel with a number of fast, dramatic steps. India uncharacteristically refused to condemn Israel’s 2014 Gaza incursion and abstained, for the first time, at least once, from voting against Israel in a UN forum. Perhaps most importantly, India’s President Pranab Mukherjee made a highly visible state visit to Israel in October 2015, the first of its kind. He emphasized the growing friendship between the two countries as well as India’s wish to expand relations with Israel in every sector. However, just before coming to Israel, he visited Jordan and the Palestinian territories, where he emphatically reiterated India’s support

for Palestinian aspirations. He seemed to return to India's traditional balancing pattern – with one major difference: he did not attack Israel from Amman or Ramallah. In August 2015, India's Foreign Minister Ms. Sushma Swaraj visited Egypt to boost bilateral relations, but also to reassure the Arab world that India's "unwavering" support for Palestinian rights would not change. Only a few months later in January 2016, Swaraj visited Israel, where she made similarly enthusiastic statements on India's friendship with Israel. These statements, professing friendship for both Palestinians and Israelis, represents a new and visible of phase of India's Middle East balancing act, which began already under the Congress Party's rule.

To understand Arab and Iranian reactions to India, one has to remember the place of India not only in Arab and Iranian history, but also in the Arab and Iranian imagination. Arabs and Iranians have known India as a neighbor for a much longer time than they have known the West – two thousand years or more. They know that India, with its huge population, will forever remain its neighbor. This cannot be said of the West. In turn, India may feel less compelled than the West to appease Arab, Iranian, or other Muslim grievances at the expense of third countries, for example Israel. India has no colonial past in the Middle East, and hence no guilt feelings with regard to the Muslim world. This might facilitate an Indian political role in the Middle East.

India's Quest for Global Power Status

The slow but steady shift of global power to Asia has the potential to transform first China and later India – if it so wishes – into great powers within a generation. In historical terms, the speed of this global transformation is unique. Russia, England, and France required centuries to build up and defend their power status; it took the United States a century; and Germany and Japan did so in less than a century, but both risked and lost, much of their former global status.

At first glance, the Middle East would seem an appropriate region for India to gain more influence and power. Geographic proximity, growing economic

interdependence, the importance of Islam in India, and the absence of negative historical baggage all bode well for India's assuming greater power in the region. However, these are necessary but not sufficient conditions. It takes more than a growing GDP to emerge and be acknowledged as a great power in general, and more than a large Muslim minority to become a great power in the Middle East. India, once the leader of the Non-Aligned Movement, has changed course since the end of the Cold War. It has asserted itself as a major Asian regional power, and is often regarded as a hegemonic power by its smaller neighbors. The 1998 Pokhran nuclear tests were largely driven by the Bharatiya Janata Party-led government's aspirations to establish India as a major power on the international stage. The memory of a long past when India had major economic, cultural and religious influence in Asia has shaped India's sense of identity. However, through the 20th century India lacked a strong will to exercise power in Asia or elsewhere in the world, and still there is no consensus in India or the international arena whether India indeed has the requisite capabilities and strength to achieve great power status. But 2014 seems to have brought a change at least in India's "will to power," to use Nietzsche's term. Modi, for instance in the already mentioned Operation Rahat, has taken steps to project power. In 2015, India evacuated successfully and under extremely difficult conditions about 4,000 people stranded in war-torn Yemen. Most were Indian workers, but there were also nationals from 26 other countries. Operation Rahat, as it was called, was orchestrated from Djibouti. It pooled resources from the Indian Navy, the Indian Airforce, and Air India. To Indian commentators, it was obvious that New Delhi was exercising a "hard power" skill set it was ready to deploy in crisis situations, including in the Middle East. It is likely that the decline of American influence, the assertiveness of China in Asia, and the turmoil in the Middle East have convinced Modi that India cannot not simply stand by and wait.

India's Assets

India has the world's second largest population and, according to projections, will overtake China as the world's most populous nation by

2030, with more than 1.5 billion people.⁶³ In contrast to China, which suffers from an ageing and soon shrinking workforce as a direct result of its one-child policy, India is blessed with a young, growing, and increasingly educated work force. Its dependency ratio is one of the lowest in the world, and will likely remain so for at least a generation. India's massive territory in South Asia and its strategic geographical location along the Indian Ocean are also remarkable assets for growth and development, and for gaining power and influence beyond the regional arena. India already has overwhelming military clout in South Asia. It has succeeded in expanding and modernizing its conventional armed forces, especially naval forces – the Indian navy has the largest presence in the Indian Ocean after the United States. Politically, India's strength lies in its unity as a nation and its vibrant, although occasionally derided, democratic system. India's democracy has allowed much room for entrepreneurial activity and has favored the development of an extremely dynamic and innovative private sector. India's economy is one of the world's largest and fastest growing. It has become a premier high-tech and outsourcing hub owing to a skilled workforce with English-language proficiency. India's well-functioning financial markets and British-based legal system, its large middle-class with growing influence, and its prosperous diaspora are all significant signs of India's economic dynamism and potential as a global power. To this has to be added India's cultural "soft power," particularly in the West and to some degree also in the Middle East.

So far, India has been accepted without argument as a member of the Group of Twenty (G20) Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors and of the Financial Stability Board, two international bodies that have taken a leading role in confronting the global financial and economic crisis. In 2010, India – together with China and Brazil, among other countries – obtained enhanced voting rights in the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, making it the seventh largest shareholder in the two Bretton Wood institutions. France and the United Kingdom have called for an enlargement of the G8 to include five leading emerging economies – China, India, Brazil, Mexico and South Africa. Although

this recommendation has yet to be implemented, India has regularly participated in the informal G8+5 meetings held regularly in the last few years. India has also been elected to several key UN bodies – including the Human Rights Council, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and, most importantly, the Security Council. India is also one of the five “BRICS” countries. Belonging to the same league as China, Russia, Brazil, and South Africa has conferred greater status and prestige to India today than having been the nominal head of dozens of smaller African and Asian countries.

Since the 1990s, Indian leaders have bolstered the country’s standing and influence in its extended neighborhood – eastward with its “Look East” policy, and to its south throughout much of the Indian Ocean and its littoral.⁶⁴ In addition, even before Modi came to power, Indian leaders had begun to show increasing attention to the areas to India’s north and west: Central Asia and the Middle East. Some analysts have suggested that India has adopted a “Look West” policy. It is likely that this region will acquire growing importance to Indian leaders as Delhi’s aspirations to global power status strengthen.

India’s liabilities

India continues to suffer from major economic and social bottlenecks, including poverty, unemployment, illiteracy and the lack or poor state of physical infrastructure – especially highways, air and maritime transport, and electricity. There are also sharp disparities in economic development levels among its various regions and states. According to provisional World Bank calculations, India’s per capita income amounted to \$1,582 in 2015, considerably below China’s (\$7,925) and among the lowest in the world⁶⁵ India ranks only 135 in the UN Human Development Index of the 187 countries and territories included. India continues to lag significantly behind China in terms of economic development and performance. Indian growth rates since the mid-1990s, although quite impressive, have often been lower than those of China by two to four percent on average. However, growth rates for 2015 were a bit higher in

India than in China. In any case, implementing needed economic reforms in India is constrained by several major factors – not the least of which are its unbridled corruption at many levels of government and sluggish bureaucracy. Additionally, India’s sustained economic growth and dynamism will continue to depend heavily on peace and stability, both domestic and regional. Unless there is an economic miracle in India or a catastrophe in China, or both concurrently, there is no chance India will catch up to China.

Beyond doubts about India’s economic capabilities, the main question marks over India’s power aspirations are diplomatic and political. India’s ability to project the image of a great power to the wider world (and the country’s willingness and capacity to help shape global policies) is not yet guaranteed. Harsh Pant, a leading Indian expert, argued before the 2014 BJP election victory that Indian leaders do not even have a consistent or long-term-oriented foreign policy or strategy: “[t]here’s an intellectual vacuum at the heart of Indian foreign policy (...) India has little to offer except some platitudinous rhetoric, which only shows the hollowness of India’s rising global stature.”⁶⁶ India’s Foreign Service remains underfunded and small, as do its think tanks and university programs dealing with international affairs and foreign policy. Furthermore, India’s participation in global governance remains limited. To date, its bid to gain a permanent seat on the UN Security Council has not succeeded. This is partly due to the key global players’ perception that India is not yet a credible great power. In addition, granting a permanent seat to India would open a Pandora’s Box, with an inevitable escalation of pressure from other major or growing powers, notably Brazil, Germany, South Africa and Japan, to also secure permanent membership on the Security Council. In 2010, President Obama’s dramatic announcement of support for India’s candidacy for a permanent seat on a potentially reconfigured UN Security Council made headlines in Indian and international media. Some thought that India’s two-year term (starting in January 2011) as a non-permanent Security Council member would be a stepping-stone to a permanent status. But this did not materialize. For many, India’s passivity

showed its “distaste, and perhaps inability, to take a clear position on international issues.”⁶⁷ India has generally not known how to wield its power on the international scene. There have been early signs that this may be changing in the wake of the 2014 BJP victory.

In the Middle East, India has a few specific handicaps. Unlike the United States or Russia, India cannot take great risks or make unexpected major moves as it has too many interests on all sides, including the safety of its millions of workers. It is not surprising that India made no public comment on the “Arab Spring,” in contrast to the flood of declarations that came from the West. A second, easier to address handicap is that India’s think tanks, academic centers of international relations, and strategic advisory bodies have few professional Arabists, no Hebrew speakers, and, with one major exception, no real Israel experts. India’s professional knowledge of the Middle East is far below that of the United States, China, and Israel itself.

Like China and other countries eager to accede to global power status, India will have to grapple with conflicting policy objectives. To some extent, it has already done so in carefully balancing its Middle East policy between its interests in Arab and Muslim countries and those in Israel. But it may have to confront even more daunting challenges in the future. A possible confrontation between Iran and the Arab world, both important to India, has been mentioned as one example. It is likely that India will need to demonstrate its capacity to project strength and influence in its extended neighborhood at least, if not worldwide.

In any event, the discussion of whether India will become a superpower and gain a permanent seat on the UN Security Council is largely irrelevant to Israel and Jewish communities worldwide. Whatever happens, India is a giant sitting at the flanks of the Arab and Muslim world. For Israel and the Jewish people, not reaching out to India would be an egregious mistake. It is simply not an option.

ENDNOTES

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CHAPTER THREE

The Development of Indo-Israeli Ties

This chapter examines the core dynamics of Indo-Israeli links from the independence of India (1947) and Israel (1948) to today (2017). Reviewing political, military, economic, and cultural relations will show how far all civilian fields have, until very recently, lagged behind the military relationship; some still do. A short list of main events and dates over seven decades of history includes:

- 1947: India votes against the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine (UN Resolution 181);
- 1949: India votes against the admission of Israel to the United Nations;
- 1952: India recognizes the State of Israel but declines diplomatic and other relations;
- 1950s-1991: India's political and public position is hostile to Israel;
- 1960s: Beginning of secret Indo-Israeli military relations, with no political effects;
- 1992: India establishes diplomatic relations with Israel;
- 1998-2004: The newly elected Hindu BJP government boosts relations with Israel;
- 2004-2014: The Congress Party's return to power stalls further progress in relations;
- 2014: The election victory of the BJP's Narendra Modi opens a new period of open friendship and cooperation with Israel.

Thus, for these two states that claim to descend from civilizations that are thousands years old, change happened with the speed of light. But India has time, and Israel, which faces a new threat every other day, does not have time. For Israel the wait seemed long.

Historical Background: 1947-1992

Cold War period: recognition without normalization

The modern states India and Israel emerged within a year of one another, both on territories formerly administered by Great Britain. As anticipated by the Indian Congress Party's negative attitude toward Zionism since the 1920s, relations between the two newly born countries did not get off to a good start. In 1947, India was the only major non-Muslim country to reject the UN partition plan for Palestine, along with all Muslim countries and two smaller countries, Cuba and Greece. In 1949, it voted against Israel's admission to the UN. It delayed official recognition of Israel until September 1950, over two years after the Jewish state proclaimed independence, and even then did not grant it full diplomatic status; it only allowed Israel to open a consular office in Bombay in 1953. Despite some contacts and occasional Israeli military aid, India's policies and pronouncements remained for more than forty years resolutely hostile to Israel and supportive of Arab positions. It was only on January 29, 1992 that Indian Prime Minister Narasimha Rao officially announced the establishment of full diplomatic ties with Israel.

Initially, budgetary considerations may have precluded India's opening of a representative office in Israel, although if India had really wanted it could have appointed an ambassador to Israel in a nearby country. Even in the mid-1950s, the lack of resources forced the Indian government to have its ambassador to Egypt concurrently accredited to Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan. But financial constraints cannot explain India's long-lasting hostility toward Israel.

As said already, the main constraint explaining India's refusal to normalize relations with Israel till 1992 was the "Muslim factor," operating concurrently at domestic and regional levels. Ideological considerations played an equally decisive role. India, like China, carries no negative historical or religious baggage with respect to Jews. It provided them with a uniquely hospitable environment throughout the centuries. The founding fathers of modern India, Gandhi and Nehru, knew that Jews had often been persecuted in other parts of the world and were not insensitive to their yearnings for statehood: "It is one of the wonders of history how the Jews, without a home or a refuge, harassed and persecuted beyond measure, and often done to death, have preserved their identity and held together for over 2000 years (...) Everywhere they went they were treated as unwelcome and undesirable strangers," wrote Nehru in the 1930s, even prior to the Holocaust.¹ But in stark contrast to China's revolutionary and first president, Sun Yat-sen, Gandhi and Nehru rejected the Jews' right to return to their ancient homeland to become a sovereign nation again.

In 1921, one year after Sun Yat-sen had applauded the Zionist program, Gandhi declared: "The Jews cannot receive sovereign rights in a place which has been held for centuries by Muslim powers by right of religious conquest."² Nehru claimed that despite the deep attachment the Jews had for the "Holy Land" of Palestine, this land could not become theirs because it was "already somebody else's home ... we must remember that Palestine is essentially an Arab country, and must remain so."³ Gandhi and Nehru's rejection of the partition of Palestine was closely linked to their opposition to establishing a separate country for Indian Muslims in British India. They feared that a partition of Palestine might also serve as a model for India's future.⁴ The Indian Congress Party wanted a secular and undivided Indian state and opposed the All-India Muslim League's religious separatism. It could not both denigrate the idea of a separate Muslim nation in India and endorse Jewish national aspirations in Palestine. This all the less so because Indians generally did not understand that Judaism is not only a religion but also a civilization, a people, a nation. Thus, while the All-India Muslim League used Islam to rationalize support for the Palestinians, the

Indian Congress Party used the rejection of religious separatism and the belief in secularism to explain why it too supported the Palestinians and rejected the proposed Jewish state. Thus, in India, Zionism got the worst of both worlds. The rivalry between the Congress Party and the All-India Muslim League before independence continued after independence as Indo-Pakistani rivalry. Both countries rejected Israel and refused to have relations with it, with India citing its secular logic and Pakistan its Muslim solidarity. India's official secular ideology created a curious tradition of denial and obfuscation, which has been laid bare by P.R. Kumaraswamy. According to him, it prompted Indian representatives and large parts of the elites to deny that the Muslim factor was the decisive driver of India's hostility to Israel, lest admission of this all too obvious fact would dent India's claim to be secular.

Logically, it then prompted them to insist that India's unreserved support for the Palestinians was due only to India's "genuine" feelings of justice and morality. Such denials and justifications have not completely disappeared in India, particularly in intellectual circles.

India's leadership position in the Non-Aligned Movement, its fervent anti-imperialist and anti-Western foreign policy during the entire Cold War period, and its quasi-alliance with the virulently anti-Israel Soviet Union, cemented India's position in the Arab-Israeli conflict. Following independence, most of India's leadership did not yet perceive Israel as a colonialist power and outpost of the West, but also did not see it as part of the emerging Afro-Asian community. India rapidly yielded to Arab pressure when the Arabs threatened to boycott the 1955 Asian-African Bandung conference if Israel were invited. After the 1956 Sinai campaign, and even more so after the 1967 war, Israel's place on India's ideological world map became permanently fixed: it was a Western, colonialist, and imperialist outpost.

The 15 long years during which Nehru's daughter Indira Gandhi ruled India (1966-77 and 1980-84) were the lowest point in in India's attitude toward Israel. It was under Indira Gandhi's rule that India supported the infamous 1975 UN resolution equating Zionism with racism. The reason was not

simply an inherited family tradition of hostility to Israel as some have alleged, but an increased need to be particularly cautious in regard to the Muslim and Arab world. In this respect, Indira Gandhi had indeed learned a thing or two from her father, Prime Minister Nehru. In a geo-strategic masterstroke of Bismarckian proportions, Indira Gandhi intervened in the 1971 civil war in East Pakistan. She helped set up the new, secessionist state of Bangladesh, defeated the Pakistani army, and eliminated it from India's eastern flank – note that then Major General JFR Jacob, an Indian Baghdadi Jew, is known for having played an important role in the defeat and surrender of the Pakistani army in East Bengal. Thus, Indira Gandhi castrated India's arch-foe, reduced it to the size of a local power, and set India on course to great power status. Her masterstroke was accompanied by a flood of moral justifications. This was one of the most shattering defeats the Muslim world suffered in the 20th century at the hand of non-Muslims. It looked like an irreversible defeat, in contrast to the Muslim and Arab defeats at Western and Israeli hands which in Muslim and Arab eyes could only be temporary. Indira Gandhi had every reason to soften her humiliating blow to Islam by conveying particular nastiness to Israel. In addition, Indira Gandhi moved ever closer to the Soviet Union, which raised the ire of Washington and made it very difficult for Israel and the Jewish people to show friendship for India.

India's adverse attitude toward the Jewish state throughout the Cold War stands out in sharp contrast to its policy vis-à-vis the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) during the same period. India was, indeed, one of the first non-Arab and non-Muslim countries to recognize the PLO (1975). In 1980, the Indian government accorded the PLO representative office in New Delhi full diplomatic status and eagerly invited its chairman, Yasser Arafat, for an official visit. Full diplomatic recognition of the PLO thus preceded India's normalization of relations with Israel by more than a decade.

The end of the Cold War and the normalization of relations

India was the last major non-Muslim country to normalize relations with Israel – just a few days after China in 1992.⁵ Only the Vatican and

Ireland normalized relations with Israel later than India. The end of the Cold War opened the door for Indian leaders to engage in a process of rapprochement with the United States and Israel and deprived the Non-Aligned Movement of most of its original “raison d’être” and clout. The collapse of the Soviet Union led India to question the ideological, pro-Soviet orientation of its foreign policy, including in regard to its relations with Israel. In fact, the Soviet Union cleared the path just before its dissolution, by deciding to renew relations with Israel.

On the regional level, the fact that Egypt had already recognized Israel and established full diplomatic relations with it in the wake of the 1979 Camp David peace treaty 12 years earlier, weighed heavily on Indian deliberations. How long could India pretend to be more “Arab” than the largest Arab country? In 1991, the Madrid Conference opened the way for negotiations between Israel, the Palestinians, and several Arab nations. If India wanted to be taken seriously as a relevant power, including in the Middle East, it had to participate, and this meant that it needed relations with all the countries involved, including Israel. Also, the Palestinian and the Pakistani factors had lost some of their former weight. The PLO’s support for Saddam Hussein before and during the first Iraq War had greatly damaged the Palestinian position in the Arab world.

India’s decision to establish diplomatic relations with Israel must also be seen as part of a massive change in India’s domestic and foreign policies in the early 1990s. After decades of retrenchment, India opened up to the wider – particularly Western – world. The country began to discard its Soviet-style economic planning and controls and endeavored to develop a more open market economy.

The importance of the United States for India increased enormously after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Not only was the United States the sole superpower left standing in the international system, but beyond geostrategic concerns, India also needed its economic support as it was facing a serious balance of payment crisis. This forced it to solicit assistance from the then U.S.-dominated International Monetary Fund and World Bank. Indian leaders came to believe that normalization with

Israel would facilitate India's necessary rapprochement with the United States. India's negative diplomatic posture toward Israel, indeed, had long been an impediment in its relations with the United States: "India's anti-Israel position had alienated many of India's ardent supporters in the U.S. Congress who were Jewish."⁶ At the same time, the collapse of the Soviet Union had plunged India into a severe security and defense dilemma – the Soviet Union had supported India against Pakistan and China over the years, and, in 1991, it was meeting almost 80 percent of India's military requirements. During the Cold War, even though full diplomatic ties were lacking, Israel agreed to provide India with valuable military and intelligence equipment and expertise on several occasions. Indian leaders – from the defense establishment in particular – were hopeful that normalization would facilitate and stimulate greater defense cooperation with Israel, and thus maintain and improve India's military capabilities.

The Indo-Israeli rapprochement benefited from diminishing Muslim constraint on India's domestic politics, as explained in the previous chapter. Opposition to closer ties with Israel was henceforth mainly concentrated in the Communist parties and other, more marginal political formations of the left.

Politics and Diplomacy since 1992

Steady progress since 1992, and a sea change in 2014

Political and diplomatic relations between India and Israel have made substantial headway since normalization. From 1992 onward, there have been frequent bilateral visits of government officials and a wide range of cooperation agreements have been signed. In 1996, Israel's president, Ezer Weizman, made a high-profile state visit to India. However, it was the formation of a BJP-led government under the premiership of Atal Bihari Vajpayee after the 1998 election victory that boosted relations between India and Israel as no other single event ever had before. It made possible the most important visit by an Israeli leader to India, that of Prime Minister Ariel Sharon in September 2003, only a few months

after Iranian President Mohammad Khatami was received by New Delhi as the chief guest of India's Republic Day Parade. The timing of these two visits may have been a means for India to display its determination to continue balancing interests and ties between Iran and Israel, and a way to warn both countries that they could not expect India's exclusive support and attention. In addition, the timing of the Israeli prime minister's visit to India, during the commemoration of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, was also imbued with powerful symbolism. Ariel Sharon held talks on a wide range of issues with Indian Prime Minister Vajpayee and other senior Indian officials, resulting in the signature of six bilateral agreements and the release of a joint declaration, in which the common fight against international terrorism figured prominently.⁷ Sharon's visit to India also accelerated Indo-Israeli defense ties.

When India's Congress Party returned to power between 2004 and 2014, progress in visible political relations between the two countries stalled. The only high-level visit from India's central government was that of Foreign Minister Krishna in January 2012 to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations. However, visits by politically lower profile Indian government ministers responsible for specific sectors, such as trade or tourism, have not been affected. In fact, the number of such visits grew.⁸

Beyond high-profile visits and the finalization of agreements at the national level, bilateral ties have greatly benefited from direct links between specific Indian state governments and the Israeli government and private sector. Generally, the last two decades have been marked by an increasing shift of power in India from the federal to state levels. Chief ministers of several Indian states – including Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, and Maharashtra – have come to Israel with high-level delegations and have been at the forefront of developing cooperation with the Jewish state, especially in the fields of agriculture, water and other technologies, and the sciences. It has been easier for Indian state government officials to overcome the political constraints still weighing on the development of ties with Israel and to pursue, rather successfully, their primarily economic agenda out of the public eye.

With Narendra Modi's 2014 election victory, the BJP returned to power a decade after it had lost to the Congress Party. From the beginning, Modi made it clear in word and deed that he planned to strengthen Indo-Israeli relations not only in the military, technological, and economic sectors where they were already good, but also in the political and diplomatic fields where relations had been distant. The first highly visible, unprecedented official demonstration of this policy was the state visit of India's President Pranab Mukherjee to Israel in October 2015. In his speech before the Israeli Knesset Mukherjee reminded his audience that both India and Israel are very ancient civilizations with common bonds going back 2,000 years. Indians like to recall the historical and cultural background of contemporary political links. They do it often when commending their good relations with the Arab countries and Iran. Maybe Israel does not sufficiently appreciate that it has assets in India beyond science and technology.⁹

Major constraints

The Muslim factor

Beyond simple electoral and geopolitical considerations, the Indian government has to be wary of any move that might offset the delicate balance between Muslims and Hindus that is critical to the stability of Indian society. It avoids stirring up volatility in this relationship, which has sometimes resulted in violent confrontations between the two communities.

However, it was already noteworthy in 1992 that the bulk of Indian Muslims barely reacted at all to the establishment of diplomatic relations between India and Israel. There were a few protests but no major violence. The same absence of major anti-Israeli reactions could be observed after Modi's was elected prime minister in 2014. Still, ever since normalization, Congress Party leaders have kept relations with Israel discrete because the links between the two countries, particularly in the defense and security fields, have more than once come under attack by Indian Muslim

organizations. Over the course of the three armed conflicts between Israel and Hamas-controlled Gaza in 2009, 2012 and 2014, and the 2010 Turkish flotilla raid, activists from Indian Muslim groups have staged anti-Israel protest rallies calling on the Indian government to sever relations with the Jewish state.

In its external dimension, the Muslim factor relates to India's interdependence with the Middle East. In its bilateral relations with all Arab states, including those with no oil, India's public statements generously supported the Arab stand against Israel as long as the Congress Party was in power. A remarkable display of this attitude came during the 2010 state visit of Indian President Pratibha Devisingh Patil to Syria, a country with no exportable oil and no particular economic or strategic value for India. The Indian president appeared at the Golan borderline between Syria and Israel, celebrated her country's deep friendship with Bashar al-Assad's repressive dictatorship, and backed Syria's claims against Israel. In times of crisis, when violence has flared up between Israel and its neighbors, India has tended to blame Israel first. However, it was already possible to discern a subtle shift in India's Israel blaming policies during the last years of Congress Party rule, and this might have helped to open the way to Modi's policy change in 2014. The official statements released by the Indian government during Operation Cast Lead (2008/9) blamed Israel for the violence and for using "disproportionate" and "indiscriminate" force. India's condemnation of Israel in the aftermath of the 2010 Mavi Marmara incident was no less severe.¹⁰ However, in both cases, India stood aside from the fiercest voices in the worldwide anti-Israeli chorus. However, official Indian government statements during Cast Lead reflected a more balanced view of the situation compared to the one-sided stance it took two years earlier with respect to the Second Lebanon War.¹¹ The Indian government acknowledged the serious and provocative character of the rocket attacks launched against Israel. India's more nuanced reaction to Cast Lead might also have been a message to Pakistan about cross-border terrorism.

This change in India's blaming policies became apparent in its response to Israel's Operation Pillar of Defense in Gaza in November 2012. India's relative balance and moderation, calling on "both sides to exercise maximum restraint," were appreciated by Israeli diplomats.

It was during Operation Protective Edge, against missile attacks from Gaza, only two months after Modi's victory in May 2014 that a much more radical shift of India's position in favor of Israel became visible. The Indian government refused – for the first time ever – to condemn Israeli attacks against Gaza. On July 15, 2014 the Lok Sabha, the lower house of India's parliament, was in uproar as the Congress, Communist and Muslim opposition parties walked out in protest. "Domestic politics should not affect our foreign policy," admonished the government's parliamentary affairs minister, a precedent setting Indian government acknowledgement that India's Israel policies had been deeply influenced by domestic Muslim concerns.¹² There were other signs that change was in the air. One was a cordial and publicly announced phone conversation between the Israeli and Indian prime ministers, immediately after Modi's election. An official Indian condemnation of missile fire from Gaza was another. Nevertheless, on July 23, 2014, India voted together with many other countries, in favor of a UN Human Rights Council resolution to set up a commission of enquiry into alleged Israeli "war crimes" in Gaza. This should not have come as a surprise. India did not wish to be the only other country to join the United States in opposing this resolution. Shortly after President Mukherjee's 2015 visit to Israel, India voted a second time against Israel when it supported a one-sided UNESCO resolution that condemned Israel's alleged "aggression" on the Temple Mount.¹³ Issues touching on Muslim sensitivities will remain relevant in India irrespective of the government in power. Prime Minister Modi cannot give the impression that he pursues exclusively Hindu policies.

However, on May 2, 2017, India abstained from a UNESCO vote about the Temple Mount that was critical of Israel. This new voting pattern indicates that henceforth neither side can take India's vote for granted. India may decide on a case-by-case basis whether to abstain from anti-Israel votes

or support the Muslim countries. What is important is that the long-term trend in India's voting pattern is positive for Israel, and this started even before the BJP took power in 2014, in parallel to the mellowing of India's "blaming policies." Beginning in the early 1990s, India stopped participating with Arab and Muslim countries in the active promotion of anti-Israeli resolutions, and when it did vote against Israel it no longer made public statements calling attention to the fact, as was the case before 1990.

In the short and medium terms, India is unlikely to aspire to a major role in Arab-Israeli diplomacy. India's approach, like China's, differs fundamentally from that of Western countries. There have been no comprehensive Indian peace plans, no frantic interventions, and no high-level visits to solve the Arab-Israeli conflict. However, this could change if India decides to use its growing weight in the Middle East in seeking greater influence. To prepare for this case, Israel and the Jewish people must ensure that India's politicians and elites understand Israel's concerns.

Of course, a lot may depend on Israel's Arab and Palestinian policies. During Congress Party rule, most Indian politicians and diplomats genuinely disagreed with Israel's policies in regard to the Palestinians. Their disagreement was not always a matter of political expediency, but of tradition and long-held convictions. Such convictions will be heard much less often while the BJP remains in power, but they will not disappear entirely. The Palestinian issue has, in the past, been excessively important in Indian diplomacy and in the opinions of its elites because it mirrored the internal and external dimensions of India's Muslim factor.

The question, then, is whether Modi's victory represents a watershed in Indo-Israeli relations that will become permanent. A look at long-term trends cannot give a final answer to this question, but they can indicate the main developments that must be watched. One decisive trend is the future of the Muslim factor. India's Muslim population may continue growing more rapidly than the majority Hindu population. Muslim political power may become determinant in a number of key

states as power continues to shift from the central government to state governments. And more Muslims may become radicalized. If these trends materialize, India's new Israel policy may not be sustainable in the long term. However, against these – only possible, not certain – trends stand the deep socio-economic changes that explain Modi's victory. He won the elections with the massive support of India's young and of India's middle and lower middle classes who ignored or rejected the traditional warning of India's elites and the Congress Party that voting for the BJP was anti-Muslim. This urban, mostly non-Muslim middle class, currently over 300 million people, is projected to exceed 500 million by 2025, and represents the main countervailing trend to the possible growth of Islam in India. This middle class is modern, Western in outlook, and (with the exception of some intellectuals) not interested in Palestine and the Arab-Israeli conflict. This middle class is partly indifferent, and partly sympathetic to Israel. Modi's victory demolished a long-held taboo in Indian politics: until 2014, it was taken for granted that a friend of Israel and the Jews – as Modi is known to be – could not become India's leader because of Muslim constraint. With the Muslim deterrent power thus eroding, at least in the short and medium terms, other Indian politicians are likely to regard Israel in a new light. One could also imagine a scenario in which growing Muslim power and assertiveness – resulting from the first of the two possible major trends – will lead to a Hindu backlash, with or without BJP encouragement. The BJP's victory has already encouraged Hindu assertiveness, if not extremism. During the 2014 Gaza war, 20,000 Hindus in Calcutta demonstrated noisily in support of Israel. Hindu extremists are generally enthusiastic Israel supporters, without any encouragement from Israel.

So much for the internal dimension of the Muslim factor. The primary external dimension is the likely increase of India's interdependence with the Muslim Middle East due to expanding energy and economic links. This could become a positive challenge for Indo-Israeli relations if India begins to use its growing weight in the Middle East to push for real peace if possible, or security and stabilization if necessary. Could India's growing

interdependence with the Middle East also have negative consequences for Israel? The last quarter century saw this interdependence grow year-by-year while relations with Israel improved as well. So far, recent history does not point to a likely negative outcome for Israel.

The Indian left

After the Congress Party returned to power in 2004 as head of the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) coalition, Israel became concerned that left-wing parties, whose parliamentary support was critical to the survival of the coalition, could succeed in moving the country away from Israel, especially in the military and security spheres. And indeed, when Manmohan Singh became prime minister, left-wing parties exerted internal and external pressures on the coalition to alter India's Israel policy. During Operation Cast Lead and in the aftermath of the flotilla raid, leaders and activists from the left – in particular from the Communist Party of India (Marxist), together with militant Muslim groups, organized protest rallies against Israel in several Indian cities, calling for the Indian government to sever military relations, if not all ties, with the Jewish state. And yet, the Indian left failed to bring about any far-reaching changes in India's Israel policy. Its overall influence over India's foreign policy has diminished over the years, for various internal reasons, including its opposition to the India-U.S. civilian nuclear deal. The political weight of the left has decreased again since the 2009 and 2014 Indian general elections.

However, the Indian left's posture on Israel continues to permeate the views of the Indian intellectual and cultural elites which have very little knowledge of Israel or Judaism, as appears in our review of the position of India's English language novelists on Judaism and Israel (Chapter 4). This is a major problem that a much broader Jewish and Israeli cultural policy in India should address. A considerable part of the Indian intelligentsia has bought the one-sided Arab narrative of the expulsion of the Palestinians by Israel, but chooses to ignore the flight and expulsion of nearly all Jews from Arab lands and Iran. Still, the sympathy conveyed to the Palestinians does not express itself in hostility to or criticism of Jews in general,

including the Indian Jews who immigrated to Israel. And until recently, even the most vocal critics of Israel did not call for its elimination, as is the case in some radical left-wing circles in the West. In India, in contrast to Europe particularly, new anti-Zionism is, so far, not linked to traditional anti-Semitism. It, therefore, may still be easier to mitigate, but this could change. In the last several years, foreign extremist Muslim and anti-Semitic or anti-Zionist Western agents and propaganda, together with their like-minded domestic Indian friends, have begun to agitate in India and have organized various boycott movements against Israel. Some of this agitation may be financed by oil-rich Gulf countries. Israel and its Indian friends will have to develop adequate responses to this agitation. There are also concerns that this may have ramifications for India's few remaining Jews, their relationship with Indian Muslims in particular.

Looking Back at India under Congress Party Rule: A persistent lack of dialogue between India's and Israel's leaders

The 2014 BJP return to power has obviated the third constraint, which, in addition to Muslim and left-wing opposition, hampered Indo-Israeli political relations. Between 1948 and 2014 there was a near complete lack of direct dialogue between the senior political leaderships of the two countries, interrupted only by President Ezer Weizmann and Prime Minister Sharon's short India visits in 1996 and 2003 respectively. This absence of high-level dialogue between two nearby countries with no direct conflicts of interest was unique in contemporary diplomatic relations. Until 2015, no Indian president or prime minister ever visited Israel. In the years before the change of government in India, Israel's senior leadership – president, prime minister, foreign minister and even defense minister – were not welcome in India. In contrast, Palestinian National Authority President Mahmoud Abbas came on a three-day official visit to India in September 2012, his second state-visit to India. Many Indian politicians expressed a genuinely sympathetic view of Israel in private, but did not wish to be seen in public with Israeli leaders or make Indo-Israeli cooperation public. Domestically, the lack of high-level dialogue had consequences at lower levels as well. Israel's links with political parties in

India were one of the weaker points of the Indo-Israeli relationship. Some Indian politicians did not want to meet with Israeli diplomats, not least for fear of losing the Muslim vote.

Also, there was still a genuine political aversion to Israel by some Hindu politicians or their advisers. Nehru and Gandhi's heritage of non-alignment and solidarity with the Arab world had not completely disappeared. Policy experts sometimes underestimate the effect of "personal chemistry" between political leaders. Their sympathies, antipathies, and personal prejudices can affect relations between states. In this respect, Israel had to cope with a difficult Indian heritage. Between 1947 and 2014, India was ruled – with large interruptions it is true – by the same small family that controlled the Congress Party. Apart from India's objective geopolitical interests in the Muslim Middle East, antipathy to Israel has apparently been a family tradition, transmitted from Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru to his daughter Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, from her to her son Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi (who, however, began to slightly modify India's positions in regard to Israel), and from him, according to some sources, to his widow Sonia Gandhi, the current head of the Congress Party. If one change in India's Israel policy can be predicted to be lasting, it is this one: It is very unlikely that any Indian government of the future will return to a policy of boycotting top-level dialogues with Israel.

The Military

Milestones in India-Israel military partnership

Indo-Israeli defense ties had begun developing even before normalization. The defense relationship between the two countries had, at least until 1998 and perhaps much longer, no influence on their formal political relationship. As in the case of China, Israel's military links with India, including cooperation between air forces, was the beginning, and for a long time the core, of the Indo-Israeli relationship. India sought and received Israeli military aid and provision of small quantities of arms and ammunition during moments of crisis such as the 1962 Sino-Indian War

and the 1965, 1971, and 1999 Indo-Pakistani conflicts. Since the 1992 normalization of relations, Indian purchases of Israeli weapons systems and technologies have increased considerably.

Two key events, close together in time, boosted India's weapons purchases from Israel in the late 1990s and early 2000s. The first was the rise to power of the Hindu BJP party after the 1998 general elections. During the six years the BJP was in power (1998-2004), it made intensive efforts to expand ties with Israel, in the political and diplomatic fields as described earlier, but even more so in the military and security spheres. The BJP-led Indian government regarded Israel as a valuable ally in the fight against Muslim extremism and terrorism, and, perhaps, also against neighboring Pakistan. India's expansion of military trade and cooperation with Israel was also part of a larger shift in Indian strategic and foreign policy doctrine. Military and economic clout, rather than Nehru's non-alignment and moral diplomacy, were now viewed as the basis of India's power in the regional and international arenas. Accordingly, the development of military capabilities became a prime focus of the BJP government. It favored the acquisition of advanced weapons systems and technologies from Israel, especially at a time when India suffered from technological isolation as a result of the sanctions originally imposed in 1974 and stiffened by the United States and other countries in the wake of the 1998 Pokhran-II nuclear tests.¹⁴ The defeat of the BJP and return to power of the Congress party after the 2004 general elections caused no significant damage to Indo-Israeli military trade. Defense links have continued to thrive because policy makers regard them as being in India's overarching national interest, irrespective of the party in power.

The second key event that favored the expansion of Israeli military sales to India in the early 2000s was the 1999 Kargil War between India and Pakistan. The Israeli role in helping the Indian army in this time of severe crisis facilitated better mutual understanding and appreciation and contributed to strengthening bilateral ties in the defense and security spheres.

A decade or so after normalization, Israel had already emerged as India's second largest military supplier, with defense deals estimated at

approximately \$1 billion annually. In early 2009, Israel briefly overtook Russia as India's primary military supplier. One of the most significant defense deals was the Israel's sale of three Phalcon Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) to India in early 2004, for more than 1 billion U.S. dollars. The Phalcon AWACS is among the world's most advanced warning and control systems. Just a few years earlier massive American pressure had forced Israel to break a legally binding contract to sell China the Phalcon system, and this provoked the most serious crisis in the history of Sino-Israeli relations. The fact that Israel sold the Phalcon to India so soon after it was forced to rescind the contract with China, was said to compound Beijing's anger. Perhaps this was a foretaste of the difficult choices that Israel, which seeks friendship and cooperation with both of Asia's giants, may face in the future. If the United States did not oppose Israel's sale of the Phalcon to India, it is probably because it was seen by the American administration as congruent with the U.S. response to a perceived China threat. Joint cooperation between American Jewish and Indian lobbies played a role in obtaining the Bush administration's approval.

Indo-Israeli military cooperation has gone far beyond a buyer-supplier relationship, with major joint research and development ventures initiated by Indian and Israeli defense firms, and extensive bilateral cooperation in intelligence and counter-terrorism. In 2007, the two countries agreed to develop a new generation of Barak air-defense missiles together, with a total investment of nearly \$2.5 billion. The so-called Barak 8 project (also called Barak-II or Barak NG) was probably the largest joint Indo-Israeli defense venture prior to 2014. For Kumaraswamy, this joint weapons development project constituted "a quantum leap in the two countries' relations." It was not only "the largest single deal involving Israel but [it] also mark[ed] a new phase in defense-related cooperation between the two countries." It signaled India and Israel's willingness to move beyond their traditional buyer-supplier relationship in the military sector and advance "greater synergy between the two defense establishments."¹⁵

Military trade and cooperation offer a number of key benefits to both countries. The high quality and competitive prices of Israeli weapons, as well as the fact that they are generally tested on the ground, are very important to India. Speed of delivery and innovative flexibility in adapting to specific Indian needs are additional Israeli assets in comparison to most other countries. Last but not least, Russia, the United States, France and the United Kingdom export weaponry and military technologies to all interested Arab countries, and to Turkey from where they sometimes filter eastward to Pakistan. Israel is the only advanced weapons manufacturer that has not exported arms to Arab countries, and since the deterioration of relations after 2008 and until 2016, no longer to Turkey either. Of course, there is no defense or other relationship between Israel and Pakistan. This is very important to India.

Israel's success in maintaining a substantial, qualitative military edge over the Arab and Muslim world relies on massive American support, but also on Israel's own ability to develop and fund innovative defense projects that usually require significant financial resources. Israel's limited domestic market has always been a major impediment to the development of the country's weapons systems and military technologies. The best way for Israel's military industries to fund research and development of new products and technologies is to recoup costs through exports to foreign countries. In this regard, India, and its growing defense budget, is an extremely attractive partner. Arms sales and the transfer of advanced technology to India has become a significant part of the total turnover of Israeli defense firms – the Indian *Economic Times* reported in September 2012 that the “single-biggest buyer of Israel's defence products now is India.”¹⁶ Israeli military industries have also been able to share the high cost of development of cutting-edge military weapons and systems through the formation of joint ventures with Indian defense research institutions and companies, with the latter keen on benefiting from the transfer of Israeli advanced technology and expertise. In addition, the expansion of bilateral ties in the intelligence and counter-terrorism sectors reveals India and Israel's eagerness to improve their capabilities to respond to similar threats. The common fight against

terrorism and radical Islam has promoted increased cooperation in many fields, including joint military training exercises. Shared concerns over nuclear proliferation and long-range missile technology underlie the two countries' support for the development of anti-ballistic missile defense systems.¹⁷ India and Israel's growing strategic interest in the Indian Ocean is the chief impetus for the development of Indo-Israeli naval cooperation. Another promising initiative is Indian-Israeli cooperation in space technologies, which often have defense applications. On January 28, 2008 Israel's mini-satellite TechSAR was successfully sent into space from south India by an Indian launch vehicle. The satellite was – and maybe still is – flying over hostile countries such as Iran, which triggered its protest.

The BJP's election victory in 2014 gave a new, almost immediate boost to the Indo-Israeli defense relationship. Several important Indian defense-related decisions have been taken since Modi's election. India ended its boycott of IMI (Israel Military Industries Ltd.) that resulted from past bribery allegations, paving the way for the planned joint development of a new battle tank and other projects. This was followed by the clearing of a long-delayed sale of Israeli navy missiles, the closing of a large sale of Israeli anti-tank missiles (in spite of strong American competition), and the successful testing of a jointly developed aerial defense system. Both countries agreed to greatly increase cooperation in cyber-security and the fight against terrorism. In February 2015, Israel's defense minister, Moshe Ya'alon, paid an official visit to India, the first of its kind, and met with Prime Minister Modi.

At the beginning of 2016, Israeli and Indian defense companies announced a further tightening of cooperation. IAI (Israel Aerospace Industries) and Rafael Advanced Defense Systems were the most prominent Israeli companies mentioned in this context. Thus, cooperation between Indian and Israeli defense manufacturers will likely continue for years to come.

Constraints and challenges

The U.S. factor

The United States has been Israel's prime military supplier since the 1970s. It provides Israel with a great amount of military aid, which gives it substantial veto power over Israel's military exports.¹⁸ There has been American opposition to some planned weapons deals between India and Israel, particularly when U.S. technology or financial input are involved. In 2003 for instance, the U.S. intervened politically to thwart Israel's sale to India of the Arrow anti-ballistic missile defense system, a system developed first and only by Israel but largely financed by the U.S. Still, the overall U.S. view of Israel's defense and security cooperation with India is generally positive. However, if the deep reason for America's positive attitude is the hope of some policy makers to see India, supplied by Israel, play a role in new "Asian Pivot" policy meant to counter-balance the rise of China, Israel will have to be on its guard. India remains allergic to any idea of being used by a great power as a pawn against another great power, and the very last thing that Israel would wish is to see its relations with China damaged again by appearing as part of a global China containment strategy. But China's power rise in Asia is not the only factor affecting U.S. policy vis-à-vis Indo-Israeli defense ties. The United States must also consider the possible and actual reactions of Pakistan, the Arab world, and Muslim terrorist organizations such as al-Qaeda. Pakistani and other Muslim extremists have for decades been obsessed with an imaginary "Hindu-Jewish" or "Hindu-Zionist Axis" allegedly set up to destroy Islam. These terms, which the late Osama bin-Laden and his acolytes liked to use, can be found on extremist Pakistani websites.

Arguably, the most potent but least talked-about reason for some U.S. ambiguity on Indo-Israeli defense ties is industrial-technological competition even when Israel does not incorporate American technology in its weapons systems. Israel's technological excellence has its drawbacks when it irritates its powerful protector in foreign markets. For example, it was reported in 2009 that a major Israeli defense company had been

forced by the U.S. to withdraw a joint bid with a Swedish firm for the sale of 120 fighter aircrafts to the Indian Air Force, ostensibly due to concerns that some American technology would be integrated in these fighters.¹⁹ Surprisingly – or rather not surprisingly – two U.S. firms, obviously using American technology, participated in the same bid. It appears that the U.S. may have been more concerned that the joint – perhaps more competitive – Israeli-Swedish bid would force the two American firms to lower their prices. Israel yielded because it could not afford tensions with the U.S. defense establishment. Perhaps there are ways to defuse such tensions, for example by modifying conditions for U.S.-Israeli joint ventures that affect potential sales to India.

In the medium and long terms, much will depend on whether India moves closer to the U.S. if and when its military requirements become more sophisticated. Are the United States and India “natural allies,” as many Americans believe? If India does move closer to the U.S., Israel’s military technology could become partly redundant. To compound this problem for Israel, if India’s increasingly sophisticated requirements generate Indian demands that Israel share more sensitive military technologies, Israel’s relationship with the American defense establishment could run into difficulties, again. Some Indians, including some senior military commanders, have sometimes viewed Israel purely as a stepping-stone to better ties with America, a U.S. “vassal” that cannot move independently of its “master.” Thus, if India’s direct military ties with the U.S. improve, particularly if the U.S. is willing to sell at better terms, Israel’s value as a provider might be eroded. America is entering the lucrative Indian defense market and can offer India generous credits, which Israel cannot do.

However, this is only one possible scenario. Another, not impossible scenario sees India not moving nearer, but further away from the U.S. Some in the Indian leadership continue to be wary of close defense and security links with the U.S., which rarely come without political demands. They are concerned that these could lead to U.S. constraints on India’s foreign policy independence. A third, contrarian scenario envisions upheaval in Pakistan, perhaps with Pakistan’s nuclear arsenal slipping

out of control, which might force the U.S. and India into an alliance of intervention. The future of Pakistan is every bit as unpredictable as that of the Middle East. Whether such a scenario would dispel Indian distrust of the U.S. and increase its readiness to become more dependent on U.S. military supplies cannot be predicted.

A stronger Israeli position in India and China, and a growing interest of these countries in Israel's survival and prosperity, would in the long term also affect the Middle East situation. Israeli defense sales, in the past to China and currently to India, were and are more than mere business transactions. They also serve a long-term geopolitical purpose that is not against American interests, and which the U.S. may wish to encourage. It would help Israel if the American political establishment could better understand this purpose, and the American Jewish community could play a critical role in explaining Asia's long-term importance for Israel.

Bureaucracy and corruption

India's legendary bureaucracy is characterized by enormous slowness, lack of transparency and coordination, and obstructionism. It can take a great amount of time to negotiate, sign, and implement deals with India, especially in the military and security sectors, which are, more than others, subject to India's domestic politics. All experts agree that it is almost impossible, particularly for smaller companies, to make effective deals in India without Indian middlemen who speak the local language, know how to navigate the system, and are "rewarded" for their help. This partly explains some of the allegations of corruption that have more than once strained Indo-Israeli military ties. In 2006, India's Central Bureau of Investigation launched an investigation into a case of suspected corruption relating to the sale of anti-missile systems by Israeli companies. It was alleged that bribes had been paid to influence the decision of the then Indian defense minister. In 2009, allegations of corruption were leveled against another Israeli defense company, Israel Military Industries Ltd., which was subsequently banned from doing any business in India (the prohibition was lifted by the Modi government in 2014).²⁰ It seems that the blacklisting of this company has

had no impact on existing military trade and cooperation between India and Israel.

Allegations of corruption against Israeli companies are most frequently voiced by the Indian left and, in particular, the Communist Party (Marxist), as well as Muslim interests. This is because they are ideologically committed to support the Arab and Palestinian struggle against Israel. But foreign firms and countries seeking to conquer the lucrative and quickly expanding Indian defense market and, therefore, have to beat Israeli competition have also raised similar allegations. For example, during the discussions prior to Israel's accession to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in 2010 Israel was criticized for not taking enough action against bribery and corruption in international transactions, particularly in arms deals. Although the countries and companies allegedly involved were not named explicitly, these accusations pointed at the activities of Israeli defense firms in India.²¹ It is impossible for outsiders to know what the truth is, and therefore very difficult to make specific policy suggestions. But it is clear that Israel will have to cope with such allegations in the future as well.

Other factors affecting long-term prospects of Indo-Israeli military links

During the past decade alone Israeli weapons sales to India were estimated to exceed \$10 billion, and they, along with military cooperation, are expected by many to continue expanding significantly in the coming years. Yet, Israel cannot be sure that these links with India will thrive forever.

In early 2012, Indian Defense Minister Anthony turned down a request by his Israeli counterpart, Ehud Barak, to visit India's well-known DefExpo, where the Israeli pavilion, the largest of the foreign delegations, exhibited Israel's latest state-of-the-art weapons systems and technologies. Anthony's refusal was motivated by domestic political sensitivities, as his primary pool of support is found in the State of Kerala, which has a large, partly radical Muslim minority. Modi's election victory in 2014 turned this incident into a small, temporary stumbling block, but one cannot exclude the possibility that domestic concerns could interfere with the military relationship between the two countries in the future. And there is a

more serious obstacle that Israel might have to face. Until recently, U.S. and European defense firms were handicapped by restrictions imposed by their governments on the export of advanced technologies to India in response to its 1974 and 1998 nuclear tests. Today U.S. and European defense firms are no longer subject to these limitations. This could make the long-term expansion of Indo-Israeli military ties more difficult, as it is often not easy for Israel's relatively small firms to compete with large U.S. and European corporations. For the time being, Israeli defense firms continue to benefit from their well-known technological excellence and their close ties with the Indian military establishment.

Apart from U.S. policies, Israel will also have to watch the complex, evolving and sometimes adversarial relationship between the two Asian giants, China and India, and reflect on the possible implications for its defense links. Some Indians are said to be worried by Israel's growing ties with China. China would like to renew its former links with Israel's highly respected defense establishment. Israel has made it clear that it will not agree to this as long as the United States is adamantly opposed to such a renewal. Nevertheless, the Indian political and military establishments may have watched with some unease the first-ever visit to Israel by the Chinese chief of staff in August 2011, as well as other exchange visits of Israeli and Chinese senior military leaders.

However, a few experts in both Israel and India have suggested that the military relationship between the two countries is, in the long term, doomed. They argue that Israel will have to develop other links with India. The reasons they cite include some of the afore-mentioned obstacles, particularly U.S. constraint, but they add one more. India wishes, as emphasized by the new Modi government, to develop its own weapons industries and become self-sufficient. Indeed, India has outstanding military scientists and engineers. Still, it would be foolhardy to make predictions on this issue. Many countries want to be independent in weapon's procurement, but no country can, not even the United States. For the time being, Israel's excellence and innovativeness in some specific weapons' developments is unchallenged, and Israel's arms industries do not seem particularly worried.

Economic Exchanges

Rapid growth, past and future

A vast frontier

If there is one sector where the sky is the limit for future growth, it is the economic and trade links between India and Israel. Bilateral trade, which generated in 2014 over \$4.5 billion, excluding military trade, is predicted to triple to \$15 billion were an Indo-Israeli free trade agreement signed. Israel first proposed a free or preferential trade agreement with India as early as 2006, but it was only in 2010 that the Indian government agreed to enter talks to establish a free trade zone with Israel. As of 2016, the talks have not borne fruit. There are no public explanations for these delays. Probably Israeli concerns about competition from low-cost Indian consumer goods play a role. India has free trade agreements with neighboring countries, but very few with more remote ones. In some sectors where India is weak, Israel is particularly strong. Agriculture, water and renewable energy (especially solar) technologies, medical and biotechnological equipment, and homeland security systems are all sectors with great potential for Israeli exports to India. As for Indian sales to Israel, the textiles sector has enormous potential. For Israel, there is an additional attractive aspect to economic relations with India – an attraction that Israel will not mention openly, but that was publicly emphasized by none less than India’s minister of trade during his 2012 Israel visit: through cooperation with Indian companies, Israel is or will be able to penetrate the markets of the Near and Middle East more easily.

The rapid growth of India’s urban middle class and other societal trends are encouraging the growth of Indo-Israeli economic links. There is no ideological reluctance in the Indian business community to be engaged with Israel. The positive attitude of India’s business elite toward Israel is based on respect for Israel’s achievements in science, technology, and agriculture.

Bilateral trade until 2014

Indo-Israeli trade in the civilian sector has greatly expanded since normalization, a spillover, to a certain extent, from military trade. Apparently, the two countries initially agreed that Israeli weapons sales to India would be offset by an Israeli commitment to purchase Indian products.²² However, civilian sector trade moves in both directions today.

Figure 3: Expansion of Indo-Israeli non-defense trade from 1992 to 2014



Source: Israel Central Bureau of Statistics

In 1992 bilateral non-defense trade was only 202 million dollars. In 2000 it rose to 1.1 billion dollars, in 2004 to 2.15 billion and kept rising until it reached in 2008, 4 billion. Then in 2009 there was a sharp decline to 3 billion. The 2008 and 2009 global financial crisis and economic slowdown left their mark on trade between India and Israel, particularly in the diamond business, a sector hit hard by the crisis worldwide. But trade between the two countries bounced back fast and in 2011 Israel-India trade reached its peak since 1992, with 5.2 billion dollars. Between 2011 and 2014 there was again a substantial trade reduction to 4 billion in 2013 and 4.44 billion in 2014. This occurred against the backdrop of a

severe downturn of the Indian economy, high inflation and a depreciation of the local currency. These factors reduced Indian demand for Israeli goods.²³ In 2015 India's economy started growing again, which, if it continues, is likely to boost bilateral trade in the years following 2016. Looking at the long-term trend, the increase between 1992 and 2014 was massive, particularly when seen in isolation. However, in international comparison, India-Israel trade is still modest. Israel's trade with Turkey is of the same order of magnitude as trade with India, more than 5 billion dollars, although Turkey's population is twenty times smaller than that of India, and its GDP four times smaller.

In 2014, trade with India represented 3.2 percent of Israel's exports and 3.1 percent of its imports. For India in 2012-13, trade with Israel was even more negligible, at least in relative terms. Israeli exports to India were 0.48 percent of its total Indian imports. Indian exports to Israel amounted to 1.33 percent of its total exports.²⁴ India's trade with Israel represents approximately 3 percent of India's total Middle East trade. While these figures could be seen as disappointing, India was and remains one of Israel's fastest growing trade partners, along with Turkey and Brazil.²⁵

India's trade with Israel has long been based primarily on one commodity: diamonds and precious stones (in 2004, nearly 70 percent of total Indo-Israeli trade,²⁶ by 2014 it had decreased steeply to 53.5 percent). Indo-Israeli diamond ties have revived trade links in precious stones, which date back to the Middle Ages²⁷ and perhaps even to Biblical times. Today, diamond trade between the two countries is not a classic buyer-supplier relationship, but rather an exchange of expertise. Whereas Indian diamond manufacturers are adept at cutting and polishing small-sized diamonds, Israeli diamond manufacturers are known for their expert cutting and polishing of unusually shaped and larger diamonds. Accordingly, Indian manufacturers export larger rough diamonds to Israel for cutting and polishing while Israeli manufacturers export smaller rough diamonds to India. However, diamond cutting and polishing confers little added value, and thus, the diamond trade is not a particularly lucrative component of the Indo-Israeli economic relationship. That said, it is a

relationship that engages the Jewish people worldwide with India like no other traditional economic sector. The Ramat Gan diamond bourse is the hub of an international Jewish diamond network, involving Antwerp, Amsterdam, New York and more. Diamonds have created thousands of professional and personal links between Indians and Jews globally. In recent years, Indo-Israeli trade has diversified, with other sectors growing in importance, including: high tech products such as communications systems, medical equipment, educational technologies, software and digital printing products, chemical and mineral products, machinery and electrical equipment, textiles, plastics, rubber, plant and vegetable products, base metals and transport equipment.

Bilateral investments and joint ventures

Not surprisingly, many of the sectors most propitious for bilateral investments and joint ventures are also the ones where much bilateral trade can or will be found. Over a hundred Israeli companies have established a presence in India through joint ventures, investments, and other cooperative projects. Still, this number is minuscule compared to the far greater number of Israeli companies that have opened offices and developed activities in the United States and in West Europe. In 2015, there were more than 300 Israeli investments in India, mainly in high-tech and agriculture. While the traditional business thrust in diamonds, agriculture, chemicals, information and communication technology, and pharmaceuticals remains strong, there is a growing preference of Israeli companies for sectors such as water technologies, homeland security and real estate. Some Israeli companies have set up R&D centers or manufacturing plants and have opened subsidiaries or offices in India. Teva Pharmaceuticals, Truphatek, Pelamix, Huliote, Netafim and others have set up manufacturing plants in India. There are some Israeli companies that are focusing exclusively on the Indian market.²⁸ As of early 2010, Israeli investments in India – excluding those in the defense sector – were estimated at about \$3 billion.²⁹ According to other figures, foreign direct investment inflows (one foreign entity acquiring a controlling

interest in a firm in another country) from Israel to India are currently low. Figures released by the Department of Industrial Policy & Promotion, India, indicate that foreign direct investment inflows from Israel to India from April 2000 to December 2014 totaled 77.3 million dollars. But these figures may not accurately reflect all inflows from Israel, as many Israeli companies invest in India through the U.S., Europe, and Singapore.

While official data about India's investment in Israel is not available, these investments are probably not large, but they include acquisition of Israeli drip-irrigation, pharmaceutical, software, telecommunication, and engineering companies. Indian companies are showing their presence in Israel through mergers and acquisitions and by opening branch offices. In its first, still very small investment in Israel, Tata Group announced in 2013 that it would invest \$5 million in the Ramot Technology Transfer Center at Tel Aviv University.

- **IT and telecommunications**

Indo-Israeli cooperation and investments in IT and telecommunications have been thriving, supported by the strength and dynamism of the two sectors in both countries. Many Israeli IT and telecommunications firms have outsourced part or all of their activities to India, including in research and development, owing to lower labor costs along with a highly skilled and English-speaking workforce. Ness Technologies, a leading Israeli technology services provider, has nearly 3,000 employees working in five branch offices throughout India. In recent years, Israeli companies have also shown an increasing interest in the telecommunications market in India. In 2014, Israel's TowerJazz teamed up with India's Jaiprakash Associates and IBM to build a \$5.6 billion chip plant near Delhi.

- **Agriculture and water technologies**

While agriculture contributes less than a fifth of the India's gross domestic product, it is the essential source of livelihood for the rural poor, who represent, according to World Bank figures, 68 percent of the total population, although only 50 percent of the population makes its living

from agriculture.³⁰ India benefits from diverse agro-climatic conditions and has the world's highest *arable land to land mass* ratio and the largest irrigation network. Yet Indian agriculture continues to be characterized by poor performance, largely due to rudimentary cultivation practices and a lack of advanced technologies. Development of India's agriculture also depends on effective water supply and management practices, especially as its growing population, rapid industrialization, and urbanization have resulted in the overexploitation of surface and ground water in recent decades. This has led to water scarcity and contamination in some regions, including, periodically, in major urban areas. It will become increasingly critical for India to improve water conservation and efficiency, and to expand water treatment and recycling capabilities. Even before normalized relations, India sought Israeli cooperation and assistance in agriculture and water technologies. Indian companies were eager to benefit from Israel's technological acumen, while Israeli firms and investors found the high sales potential in the large and fast growing Indian market attractive. MASHAV, the international development cooperation department of Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, participated in the establishment of several agricultural and dairy demonstration farms in India. The Israeli firm Netafim, well-known for inventing the drip-irrigation system, has 12 regional and state offices in India, two manufacturing plants, and over 600 employees – all of them Indians. It is regarded as Netafim's most successful subsidiary. Today, over 250,000 Indian farms are irrigated by Netafim systems. Netafim's Indian subsidiary has been working on a drip-irrigation project in the remote Bagalkot district of India's North Karnataka state. When completed, the Ramthal (Marol) integrated micro-irrigation project will be the world's largest single drip-irrigation project, worth about 60 million dollars.³¹

- **Renewable energy**

Energy sciences and technologies to develop alternatives to oil and natural gas, discussed in the preceding chapter, is one of the ways toward greater Indian energy security and diversification. In the past Indo-Israeli

cooperation in the field of renewable energy sources remained limited. However, this could change if a first 2015/16 Indo-Israeli cooperation agreement in the renewable energy sector is implemented. Israel is well placed to benefit from the increased Indian interest in renewable energy sources. India is hard pressed not only to diversify energy supplies, but also to address energy poverty, climate change, and environmental degradation. The most powerful boost for renewable energies may eventually follow from the 2015 United Nations Climate Change Conference in Paris, which produced, for the first time in history, an agreement between almost 200 countries, including India and Israel. This agreement promises to reduce greenhouse gas emissions across the globe, not least by compelling its signatories to switch to renewable energies. For Indo-Israeli cooperation in this field to move ahead, a number of bureaucratic hurdles will have to be overcome.

- **Pharmaceutical and healthcare sector**

A large pool of high quality English-speaking scientists and experts, some world-class facilities, and relatively low development and manufacturing costs are some of the key factors that make India an attractive location for medical and pharmaceutical research and development. An increasing number of Israeli healthcare and pharmaceutical firms see India as an advantageous destination for outsourcing research and development activities, and for collaborative enterprises with local companies. Driven by its growing and increasingly health-conscious middle class, India has also emerged as a pharmaceutical and healthcare market with immense opportunities; this has not gone unnoticed by Israeli firms.

- **Homeland security**

The first-ever Indo-Israeli joint venture in homeland security was initiated in late 2008, in the wake of the Mumbai terrorist attacks. In 2009, an India-Israel Homeland Security Cooperation forum was held in Mumbai and New Delhi. High-level Indian homeland security delegations have visited Israel since then to continue exploring areas with potential for

bilateral ties. For example, at a major security conference in Tel-Aviv in 2014, executives of many top Indian firms were shopping for systems to secure their pipelines, refineries, and other infrastructure components. Homeland security, a relatively new field of Indo-Israeli cooperation, is likely to grow in the coming years. Israeli companies are known internationally for providing state-of-the-art security equipment, as well as some of the most advanced and effective security services and technologies.

- **Large infrastructure projects**

Israel has also become involved in large urban and other infrastructure projects in India. For example, in 2014 Israel Ports Co. partnered with India's Cargo Motors to build a deep-water port in Gujarat (Modi's home state),³² and, in 2015, the City of Tel Aviv-Yafo announced an agreement to assist in creating "smart cities" in India. Tel Aviv-Yafo plans to begin with transferring its digital-urban technologies to help with the urban transformation of the Indian cities Pune, Nagpur, and Nashik in Maharashtra although the execution of this plan could be a long, drawn-out process.³³

More frequent Indian delegations to Israel

The last few years have seen a multiplication of initiatives to advance economic ties between the two countries. Several Israeli organizations, both governmental and private, have launched programs designed to facilitate trade and business ventures with India in specific economic sectors. They organized bilateral seminars, and invited Indian delegations of scientists, businesspeople, and government officials to visit Israel. Increasing numbers of delegations of Indian businesspeople are coming to Israel to meet with Israeli companies and entrepreneurs and explore mutual investment opportunities. The May 2012 Israel visit by an Infosys delegation, one of India's leading and largest software companies, was thus followed by an agreement with the Israeli Chief Scientist's Office for industrial R&D cooperation. The same month, an Indian delegation to Israel's AgriTech, which included more than 2,000 government

representatives and businesspeople, was the largest foreign delegation at the exhibition. In June 2012, an Indian delegation of senior executives of leading Indian technological companies participated in the third Israel-India Technology Forum held in Kfar Hamaccabiah, Israel.

More Indian delegations have visited Israel since 2012. One could mention, in 2014, the India Pavilion in the first Israel Innovation Conference, which brought 35 private and governmental exhibitors from India to Israel; the visit of the chief ministers of Maharashtra and Meghalaya who attended, together with other delegates, the AgriTech-2015 Exhibition and Conference In 2015; or the 8th Meeting of the India-Israel Forum (IIF), which brought industry leaders of both countries together, including representatives of some of India's big conglomerates (Tata, Reliance). At the beginning of 2016, the industry minister of Odisha (Orissa) came with a delegation to explore business opportunities in Israel.³⁴ Last but not least, late in February 2016, a delegation from Aditya Birla, India's third-largest corporation, a multinational with 120, 000 employees, arrived in Israel. Birla plans to review as many as 500 Israeli start-ups in a wide variety of technology areas, with the intention of cooperation and investment. As said India's main corporations have traditionally avoided Israel except for recent investments by Tata and Infosys. If the investments of Birla materialize, it could be the beginning of a quantitative and qualitative change in Indo-Israeli economic relations. By making major investments, Indian industry would demonstrate a tangible interest in Israel's future and prosperity, another improvement of mutual ties beyond the political and military links.³⁵

Constraints and challenges

General obstacles and constraints

The section on military links discussed the problems of India's cumbersome bureaucracy and alleged corruption. The same problems also exist in the civilian sector. Although all foreign countries and companies have to cope with these, Israel may face an additional problem. There are reasons to suspect that the refusal of India's top government leaders to visit Israel

before 2014 or meet with Israel's leaders, may, to some extent, have had a discouraging effect on India's large industrial conglomerates and multinationals. In spite of a generally favorable Indian business attitude to Israel, India's business tycoons are more comfortable investing in countries their leaders visit than in those they avoid. This could be one of the reasons that prior to 2015 there had been no major Indian investment in Israel. Time will tell whether past or projected visits of Indian leaders will change this situation.

However, India is not the only source of obstacles. During the protracted negotiations of a free trade agreement (FTA), differences over tariffs have been a major stumbling block. Israel, like many other countries, regards India's current high tariff policy as prohibitive. It has attempted to convince India that the risk of the Indian market becoming inundated with Israeli products as a result of tariff relief is very low, not least because of the limited size of Israel's manufacturing industry. In fact, Israel has more reason to fear a massive inflow of cheap Indian goods once an FTA is reached. Knowledgeable Israeli sources attribute the signing delays of the long expected FTA, in some measure, also to Israel's recalcitrance and lack of enthusiasm.

Another daunting problem, which only Israel can solve, is the shortage of economic counselors among its diplomats in India. Although Israel now pays much more attention to Asia than in the past, particularly to India, and has upgraded its diplomatic presence on the subcontinent, there is still not enough emphasis on promoting Indo-Israeli economic ties. There are only two economic attachés in Mumbai, India's economic hub, and one in Bangalore. Poor cooperation between Israel's Foreign and Trade Ministries only exacerbate this problem.

Main challenges for Israeli businesspeople in India

- **Cultural differences and misunderstanding**

Many Israeli businesspeople come to India without knowing much, if anything, about Indian culture and its business environment. Differences in business culture often complicate the genesis of business ties and

cause confusion, embarrassment, conflict, and misunderstandings. A joint Indo-Israeli survey found that temporal perception is a major dissimilarity between India and Israel's business cultures: "[f]or Israelis, time is precious and a perishable commodity. This underlies their thrust for quick and fast gains, which are translated by Indians as a tendency of being assertive and aggressive. The Indian time perception is more relaxed ... They put emphasis on first evaluation of the counterpart, and developing mutual trust relations, and then reaching comfortably long term decisions."³⁶ Different communication styles are another substantial gap between Indians and Israelis. The Israeli style of communication is characteristically straightforward, and, in particular, questions are expected to be answered with a clear "yes" or "no" and conflicts dealt with openly. In contrast, Indians try to avoid overt conflict and often find it difficult to raise problematic issues with their Israeli counterparts, or to say "no" clearly: "Indians have hundreds of ways to say 'no' implicitly, and expect the other side to understand the message, accept it and carry on while maintaining their relationship without burning bridges for future opportunities. The Israelis, however, feel discomfort with uncertain situations in life and therefore interprets the avoidance to say a clear 'no' as lack of openness, holding cards close to the chest, and unfairness."³⁷

Indian businesspeople often find their Israeli counterparts overconfident, even aggressive, while their Israeli counterparts often misread and resent what they perceive as an unacceptable lack of clarity and directness. A third major difference relates to how Indians and Israelis approach and tackle problems. Whereas Israelis are very goal-oriented, Indians generally focus more on the process and are reluctant to cut "unnecessary" corners to reach their targets. Another significant issue relates to the nature of contracts in India. For Israeli entrepreneurs, a signed contract must be respected and a legal complaint can be filed if it is not executed properly. For many Indians, there is nothing sacred about contracts, and it is not unusual for them to review some contractual clauses and obligations even after an agreement is signed. This is linked both to local culture and to the fact that the Indian court system is inefficient, often taking years for legal claims to be heard.

- **Finding the right local partner and location**

Although the vast size of the Indian market offers Israeli firms and investors enormous opportunities, it also makes finding the right inroads difficult. Israeli firms and investors find it difficult, and understandably so, to establish themselves in a territory as large as the European continent. This is particularly the case for small and medium-sized Israeli enterprises. Israeli entrepreneurs have to forge a partnership with a local Indian firm, which takes time, patience, and personal relationships. Only a local partner may help the Israeli entrepreneur navigate through the Indian bureaucracy, tailor his or her products to the specific needs of the Indian customer (often a farmer from a small village), and identify the right location to establish his or her business. This means taking into consideration infrastructure quality, availability and cost of offices, quality of workforce, and more. Indian infrastructure remains under-developed: electricity, water supply, and road transport can be problematic. Equally problematic is the local workforce. There is keen competition for the few high-quality engineers – especially in cities like Bangalore and Mumbai where many Western companies are headquartered, and most eventually prefer to work for large Western companies that pay well and confer prestige rather than for Israeli companies.

Main challenges for Indian businesspeople in Israel

Many specific challenges remain. Several relate to the sheer difficulty and inconvenience for Indian businesspeople to visit Israel. Since Air India ceased flying to and from Israel, apparently the result of “political pressure exerted by Islamic movements,”³⁸ the Israeli national airline El Al is the only carrier offering direct flights between India and Israel. Options for Indian businesspeople thus remain few – depending on the time of year there are two, three, or four direct flights a week between Tel Aviv and Mumbai, and none between Tel Aviv and New Delhi. In addition, flights to Israel remain relatively expensive and long (eight hours from Tel Aviv to Mumbai because El Al is prohibited from the air space of some Arab countries, as well as Iran and Pakistan). In addition, the fact that

many Indian entrepreneurs and executives visit and conduct business with Gulf countries often complicates the process of obtaining an Israeli visa. Furthermore, Indian visitors have had unpleasant experiences with Israeli security operatives at Ben-Gurion Airport (often because they have Arab visas in their passport). This risks jeopardizing important relations, including in the economic and business arenas.

Another major constraint facing Indian businesspeople interested in economic links with Israel relates to the dearth of relations between the elites, including the business elites of the two countries. Despite India's enormous size, its business elites comprise no more than 5,000 people, and Israel's elites are of course much fewer. And yet Indian businesspeople find it more difficult to identify, and reach out to the right business leaders in Israel than in other Western countries. The professional and personal networks that would allow them to create the necessary connections simply are not there.

Culture

Cultural policy to build soft power

No country wants to rely solely on military and economic means in the conduct of foreign relations. Cultural outreach to foreign audiences in order to promote a positive image of one's country has become a common practice, and cultural policy to build "soft power" is today one of the pillars of international relations. Dance, music, literature, painting, photography as well as other performing and visual arts are forms of expression accessible to all and can break through language, political, and other barriers. In a world where politics polarizes societies, art can succeed in fostering dialogue. Academic and educational exchanges and initiatives can also be key instruments in improving mutual understanding and reciprocal perceptions. If cultural diplomacy helps build a foundation of trust between two nations, it could also encourage the development of ties on other levels.

Engaging foreign countries through cultural activity is particularly relevant to Israel. Many foreigners, including entrepreneurs and investors, show reluctance to visit Israel or initiate business activities in a country that they see as prone to instability and war. Exposing them to Israel's remarkably dynamic culture and society could help overcome negative perceptions and arouse their interest in pursuing business opportunities in this country. More broadly speaking, cultural diplomacy can serve to influence foreign public opinion of Israel and help counter ignorance and misconceptions. Generally, it is an underutilized tool in fighting the international campaign to delegitimize Israel. This is particularly important, considering that many see Israel almost exclusively through the lens of the Israeli-Palestinian and Israeli-Arab conflict.³⁹ There is no continent where Israel's cultural outreach is as critical, could have as much impact, and would be as well received as Asia, particularly India and China.

Asia is the fastest rising continent, yet for the great majority of Asians, if one excludes Muslims, Israel and Judaism are a blank slate. There is no tradition of indigenous hostility, and if there are prejudices and misunderstandings, they are imports from the West or from the Muslim world. Yet, there is no continent where Israeli and Jewish cultural outreach has been as weak and insufficient as Asia. Of course, this was originally due to the fact that few Jews lived in Asia and that most Asian countries established relations with Israel long after the West. Thus, it comes as no surprise that Jewish interest focused on the regions where Jews were living in the past and present: Europe, America, and the Muslim world. The case of India exemplifies the effort that will be necessary to close the gap.

Widespread Indian lack of knowledge of Jews and Israel

India is one of the few countries that have been historically free from anti-Semitism, whether popular or governmental. In the wake of the 2008 Mumbai terrorist attacks that targeted, among other sites, the city's Chabad Jewish center, Mumbai's Jewish community continued to stress that Jews had never suffered from anti-Semitism and had always maintained friendly ties with their neighbors, including the Muslim

community. Likewise, Indian public opinion of Israel is not hostile, in contrast to that of western European countries. In fact, according to a 2012 BBC annual global survey, 54 percent of the Indian public has no opinion about Israel's impact on the world, whereas only 17 percent perceive Israel's influence as mainly negative, well below the world average (50 percent) and that of Western countries.⁴⁰ Another undated study has Israel's favorability rating in India at 70 percent.⁴¹ Indian Jews as well as Israeli diplomats and visitors confirm the impression that India is a country where most people have no view of Israel or Jews at all, and if they do have one it is rarely hostile or negative. A poll carried out for the Israeli Foreign Ministry, which measured attitudes toward Israel in 13 countries in 2009 found that no less than 58 percent of Indians were well disposed to Israel and supported the country, the best international score.⁴²

Still, a degree of caution is required. The perception of Jews and Israel in India is not always clear-cut. For one thing, anti-Semitism was, in fact, not completely absent in Indian history, but when it emerged, its sources were not indigenous. In the 16th and 17th centuries, Indian Jews living in the states of Goa and Kerala endured harsh persecution at the hands of Portuguese Christian rulers and missionaries. To this day, a form of transplanted European Christian anti-Semitism can still be found in Goa. It sometimes expresses itself in hostility and resentment against young Israeli tourists who, admittedly, are not always the most respectful of local inhabitants and culture. Also, a few 19th century Hindu writings about Judaism and Jews can be seen as anti-Semitic. Further, some Indians have endorsed Christian- and Muslim-inspired anti-Jewish stereotypes, depicting them as greedy and unscrupulous moneylenders, blaming them for the death of Jesus or for conspiring against Muslims. A more widespread and contemporary perception, including among the Indian urban middle and upper-middle class, is that Jews and Israelis play a major role in, and wield disproportionate influence over, global politics and economics, in part owing to their close ties with the United States. This view can take the form of positive philo-Semitism, widespread in India

and other Asian countries, including China and Japan. As for sympathizers of the Hindu nationalist right wing, they often see Jews and Israelis only through the lens of a strategic alliance against Muslims, a view with which the Jewish and Israeli side is not always comfortable. On the other hand, there is outright hostility toward Israel among a few sectors of the Indian population. Indian left-wing organizations and individuals, as well as some Muslims are strongly antagonistic to Israel, and this attitude has permeated the views of some of India's intellectual elite (Chapter 4).

The Indians' lack of knowledge of Judaism and Israel remains a serious problem – but could also be a great opportunity for Israel and the Jewish people to establish their own narrative. An analysis of the place of Jews, Judaism, and Israel in India's contemporary English language literature (Chapter 4) shows that ignorance and misperceptions have extended even to important parts of India's cultural elite. Most Indians know nothing of their country's ancient Jewish communities. Even in Mumbai, where the majority of Indian Jews live today, most residents of the city have no idea what a Jew or a synagogue is, as an American filmmaker recently discovered.⁴³ Also, it is apparently not uncommon for Jews to be mistaken for a sect of Christians, Zoroastrians, or Muslims. Ignorance about Israel is similarly widespread among Indians. A field study published in early 2009 by an Israeli think tank in cooperation with the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs surveyed perceptions of Israel among the Indian urban middle and upper-middle class. The study found that Israel was “virtual unknown” among a large share of respondents, and most had no clear idea of where Israel was geographically located within the Middle East.⁴⁴ Knowledge regarding Israel is essentially limited to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and to the Arab and Muslim Middle East. Accordingly, many participants saw Israel as a “troubled, backward, and desolate place embroiled in constant conflict.”⁴⁵ They often assumed that Israel, like some Mideast Arab and Muslim countries, had an authoritarian system of government and accorded women partial, very limited rights. Even among those Indians aware of Israel's economic and technological prowess, the salience of the Israeli-Arab conflict remained such that they perceived these advances

as pertaining solely to the military. The study also found that many respondents made no distinction between Jews and Israelis. They tended to see Israel as a monolithic society, in deep contrast with multicultural and multi-religious India. But India is changing. The Indian media has begun to report more frequently about Israel, mostly not negatively. It is possible that a new study for 2017 would show a better-informed Indian reading public.

Particularly shocking for Jews and Israelis is India's widespread ignorance of the Holocaust. No word exists for it in Hindi, India's dominant language. Among Indian Muslims, some are aware of the Holocaust but generally view it as a Jewish hoax and tend to deny or minimize its magnitude. The Second World War is taught in Indian schools, but it does not occupy a significant place in the curriculum, and the Holocaust is barely mentioned. There is an old and apparently still surviving admiration for Hitler among Indian readers, including the youth. The largest publisher and distributor of *Mein Kampf* in India has sold over 100,000 copies since 2000. It seems that the book is not only popular in some ultra-nationalist circles but also among business students looking for advice on business management.⁴⁶ This is troubling even if it is not linked at all to hostility to Jews. For Indians, the Second World War was much less about Germany than it was about Asia, Japan, and India's struggle for independence from the British. Additionally, Indians remember that they lost millions to famine during the Second World War, and many more during partition.

In 2002 the Israeli government protested against the absence of the Holocaust in the standard Indian history schoolbooks. Since the first decade of the 21st century, a young Indian scholar of Muslim origin, Navras Jaat Aafreedi of Gautam Buddha University, has been fighting against Holocaust ignorance and denial in India. For example, in 2009, he organized the screening of dozens of movies about the Holocaust on the campuses of the two largest universities of Lucknow, a city notorious for its anti-Israel demonstrations and Muslim anti-Semitic discourse. Prominent Indian figures and intellectuals, many of them Muslims, came to address an audience of over 4,000 people and spoke out against anti-Semitism

and Holocaust denial. Israel's embassy in New Delhi is undertaking other efforts to increase Holocaust awareness in India, for example inviting Indian educators to visit Yad Vashem in Jerusalem.

Are Indians interested in learning more about Judaism and Israel? The evidence is mixed. Certainly, many are interested as religious beliefs and practices generally arouse fascination and curiosity among Indians. With respect to Israel, the aforementioned survey – which may be outdated in 2017 – revealed that it was not clear to respondents why learning more about such an “obscure” country would benefit their lives. Nonetheless, if the Indian interest can be stirred, it could easily serve as a basis of sympathy just because there is little historical baggage, no connection to Biblical times, nor the Holocaust. Highlighting Israel's survival in a hostile environment and its social solidarity and collective spirit, in spite of the incredible diversity and heterogeneity of its society, could arouse empathic understanding and admiration. Israel's multicultural society is more similar to India than Indians realize.

Cultural cooperation between India and Israel

Israel's cultural outreach to India

Cultural contacts between India and Israel preceded normalization. From the 1950s to the early 1990s, the Israeli consulate in Mumbai organized frequent and diverse cultural activities, including lectures, concerts, and exhibitions. Cultural events were seen as a key instrument in reaching out to the Indian elite and cultivating friends of Israel in influential circles. Shortly after normalization, in 1993, the two governments signed a formal umbrella agreement for promoting cultural cooperation. In 1994, a directive of the Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs set as a key objective for increasing cultural, academic, and scientific activity in the international arena, “to reach out to those places that until recently barely knew Israel,” including India in particular.⁴⁷ It is the responsibility of the cultural attaché at the Israeli embassy in New Delhi to devise and organize initiatives to promote Israeli and Jewish culture. There are many

different cultural and artistic activities. Dance and music are quite popular artistic disciplines in both countries, and they can help to break language and social barriers and shatter misunderstandings and misconceptions. These two artistic disciplines have been successful in reaching out to all sections of India's population, including, and perhaps most importantly, children and young adults. The screening of Israeli movies in India is a relatively recent phenomenon, one with great potential. In particular, efforts should be aimed at screening Israeli movies that do not focus on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but rather raise global or social issues affecting the Israeli and Indian societies in similar ways. A Bollywood movie made in Israel, with Indian film stars in an Israeli landscape and background, would likely have tremendous appeal in India.

Israel's visual arts are barely known in India. Their potential for strengthening cultural links should not be disregarded because, like the performing arts, the visual arts can break through language and political barriers and foster dialogue. Could sport become a bridge between Israel and India? India's national sport is cricket. Israel's national cricket team should visit and play in India. Last but not least, Israel's rich contemporary literature is known to India's interested readers, and public meetings between Indian and Israeli writers have taken place both in India and in Israel. Some Israeli cultural events in India are organized for huge audiences, at least by Israeli standards, often with a few thousand people in attendance. Children, teenagers, and young adults constitute a significant segment of the spectators, a positive trend considering that they will form the Indian elites of tomorrow.

The lack of a Jewish-Israeli cultural center in India, however, impedes the development of broader and more diverse Indo-Israeli cultural ties and people-to-people contacts. The delegations of Israeli artists brought to India by the Israeli embassy perform mainly in the framework of local festivals, and there are hardly any opportunities for Israeli artists to conduct independent performances or tours in India. The opening of a Jewish-Israeli cultural center would allow for regular cultural events, film presentations, academic debates, panel discussions and more, and should

also include a library on Jewish history and civilization. Setting up such a center should become a joint goal of world Jewry and Israel.

A severe handicap limits cultural links: insufficient funding. The overall cultural budget of Israel's Foreign Ministry is far too small to enable Israel to conduct appropriate and effective cultural diplomacy abroad. The budget allocated for the promotion of Israeli and Jewish culture in India is miniscule considering India's size, increasing global importance, and rapidly growing population. As a result, Israel has to continuously seek other, non-governmental resources to fund Israeli performances in foreign countries. It has been said that the Foreign Ministry can fund no more than two activities for every ten that would be possible.⁴⁸ Moreover, many Israeli diplomats lack appropriate fluency in the cultural fields and are usually more interested in dealing with political matters. Financial and other contributions of world Jewry to strengthen Israeli and Jewish cultural outreach in India would be both welcome and prudent. There are many Jews across the world who love or teach various aspects of Indian culture, or who collect Indian art. They could be very helpful in fostering cultural links between India, the Jewish people, and Israel.

In spite of all these constraints, in 2013 Israel opened a Consulate in Bangalore (Bengaluru), in order to complement its two diplomatic missions in the North (Delhi, Mumbai). Israel decided to also build cultural ties with South India. The south is a huge territory that is very different from India's north. It has rich traditions and languages that date back thousands of years. Israel is keen on building a dynamic cultural relationship particularly with Puducherry (former Pondicherry), one of South India's main cultural centers. This should facilitate the exchange of visitors representing the arts, film, and theater, and foster people-to-people ties.⁴⁹

India's cultural outreach to Israel

No survey has been conducted as of 2016 to investigate Israeli and Jewish perceptions of India and Indians. India is certainly a popular tourist destination for Israelis, particularly its youth. Beyond these backpackers who come back to Israel with some familiarity with Indian culture and

traditions, and beyond the limited circle of India scholars and students, there are many other Israelis who are interested in India's ancient and contemporary history and culture. From the 19th century on, some of the great scholars of Indian languages and civilization in the West have been Jews, and in the 20th and 21st centuries, the attraction that Gandhi, Tagore, Buddhism, Hinduism, Yoga and other forms of Eastern wisdom have had on quite a number of Western Jews is well known (Chapter 4).

In Israel, Indian cultural activities are organized and promoted by the Indian embassy and by several Israeli organizations representing the Indian Jewish community in Israel. Several Bollywood films have been screened in Israel in recent years, and Indian film festivals have been held in Israel. Still, showing Indian movies to Israeli audiences is a recent development, and its potential is just beginning to be tapped.

India's cultural outreach to Israel parallels Israel's outreach to India: performing arts such as music and dance are central, but the visual arts are little represented. India's overall cultural policy toward foreign audiences has been often criticized for its lack of focus on contemporary art. India is reaching out to the Indian Jewish population in Israel. In 2011 the Indian Embassy organized for the first time a three-week cricket tournament in Israel, in order "to interact with the local Indian community in an informal, non-official, relaxed setting," to quote the spokesman of the Indian Embassy.

Promoting Hindi movies and the dance forms associated with them is another way for the Indian Embassy to help introduce Indian popular culture to Indian Israelis. There are 85,000 Israelis of Indian origin.⁵⁰ The Indian Jewish community forms the bulk of the audiences for cultural events organized by the Indian Embassy and by local Indian associations. This is the result of a deliberate cultural policy by the Indian Embassy, which until quite recently aimed primarily at strengthening ties with the Indian Jewish community. The Indian government worries that the younger, Israeli-born generation of Indian Jews will end up losing its "Indianness," and views the maintenance of strong cultural links with this population as important. Of course, India's policy in this respect is

quite similar to that of the Israeli embassies, which cultivate privileged links with the Jewish communities all over the world and endeavor to strengthen the Diaspora's attachment to Israel.

But change is underway, and India has begun to reach out to the broader Israeli public. The Indian Embassy organized, for the first time in 2011 and again in subsequent years, a three-week cultural festival in Israel, with a wide range of music, film, dance and other artistic events on offer in Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, and Haifa. They provided the general Israeli public with "an occasion to engage with the cultural diversity of India's heritage."⁵¹ India has established cultural centers in its neighborhood, and in key cities throughout the West and the developing world. They present cultural programs involving the participation of local Indians, as well as programs with a greater intellectual focus, aimed primarily at enhancing understanding of India. However, there is still no permanent Indian cultural center in Israel, just as there is no Jewish-Israeli cultural center in India.

The academic scene: progress and gaps

Academic programs in Israeli universities on modern India, and programs in Indian universities on Israel, are severely underdeveloped and understaffed. This shortcoming in both countries does not do justice to the importance that the two have for each other today. It limits both countries' mutual understanding. Israel's few academic India experts have barely any links with Israeli decision makers in regard to India. Opening channels of communication between them could be useful to both sides.

At Tel Aviv University, courses on India essentially cover topics related to India's classical civilization and colonial and immediate post-colonial history. At the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, too, attention is mainly paid to the philological, literary, religious, and cultural aspects of Indian civilization, rather than to contemporary issues. The department of Asian Studies at Haifa University, in contrast, emphasizes contemporary Asia with the aim of preparing students for future careers related to diplomacy, communication, commerce, and research. In addition, the Graduate

School of Management at Haifa University has created an International Executive MBA program taught in English with a regional emphasis on conducting business in Asia, including India. In 2011, Haifa University also opened a program of Hindu-Jewish studies that aims at increasing mutual understanding between Hindus and Jews.

There are no departments of Jewish studies in Indian universities and academic institutes. There is no regular Hebrew instruction at Indian universities. The Israeli embassy in New Delhi receives frequent requests from Indian students, diplomats, and businesspeople interested in learning Hebrew – requests that cannot be met. For a long time, the only course taught about Israel at an Indian institute of higher education was that of Professor Kumaraswamy at Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi. More recently, Navras Jaat Aafreedi, the Indian Holocaust scholar mentioned above, has also begun to promote Jewish and Israeli studies. Another recent and promising university institute to study and teach about Israel is the Jindal Centre for Israel Studies, JSIA, at the O.P. Jindal Global University in the state of Haryana (New Delhi Campus). In March 2017, the JSIA and the Tel Aviv University held an international conference on Indo-Israeli "Political and Cultural Crossings."

Several Israeli and Indian universities have signed partnership agreements to facilitate student exchanges and visiting scholars programs. Significantly, bilateral cooperation agreements have been signed mainly in the science and technology arena. The Technion-Israeli Institute of Technology in Haifa has partnered with several Indian scientific establishments, including India's International Centre for Entrepreneurship and Technology (iCreate) to launch a joint program of start-up incubation.⁵² In 2010, the Faculty of Science at the Hebrew University signed a cooperation agreement with the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research. The Hebrew University, the Weizmann Institute, and the Technion annually host dozens of visiting scientists from India, predominantly doctoral and post-doctoral researchers. Since 2012, the Israeli Council of Higher Education has offered annual post-doctoral fellowships to about 100 students from India and China. Under this initiative, each student is awarded an annual scholarship

of NIS 100,000 (about \$26,000 as of early 2016) to pursue research in one of Israel's eight research institutes. Through 2015, 235 out of the total 300 scholarships have been availed by Indian scholars. In addition, since 2013 the Israeli government has offered 250 summer scholarships for short-term undergraduate courses for students from India and China. Around 30-40 Indian students benefit from this annually. Last but not least, in mid-summer 2014, India and Israel signed an agreement providing \$10 million to carry out joint scientific research projects, the first agreement of this sort between the two countries.

Outside of the scientific disciplines, there are hardly any Indian students who come to pursue academic degrees or research in Israel. Primary attention should be directed toward expanding student and scholar exchange programs in business and the humanities. These students and scholars could play a positive role in advancing Indo-Israeli ties.

The Trouble with Young Israeli Tourists

Today, nearly all countries regard tourism as a cost-effective and pleasant means to foster mutual understanding and friendship between nations. Virtually every international treaty of friendship or cooperation has a chapter on the promotion of tourism. Tension or hostility between countries often manifests itself in restrictions or prohibitions of touristic travel. Hence, it is not surprising that prior to normalization, bilateral tourism between India and Israel was practically non-existent. Only in the late 1980s, following an Anti-Defamation League visit to India – an instance of beneficial involvement of American Jewry – did the Indian government relax visa procedures for Israeli tourists and groups. Incidentally, an attack in 1991 by Muslim militants against a group of Israeli tourists in the Indian state Jammu and Kashmir may have hastened the rapprochement process between India and Israel. One Israeli was killed, a second kidnapped, but the courageous struggle of the unarmed young Israelis against their aggressors was praised in the Indian media and impressed the Indian public. A senior Israeli diplomat, Moshe Yegar, flew to India to deal with the incident and met with senior Indian officials.⁵³

After the normalization in 1992, the flow of tourists between the two countries began to expand quickly. The number of Israeli tourists visiting India has grown from fewer than 10,000 in 1992 to more than 40,000 a year from 2008 on.⁵⁴ Israeli tourism to India has kept increasing after the 2008 Mumbai terror attack, despite frequent travel warnings issued by the Israeli Counter-Terrorism Bureau. The post-army “big trip” to India has indeed become an institutionalized rite of passage for many young Israelis.⁵⁵

Indian tourism to Israel has also increased substantially since normalization, and most significantly in the last several years. It grew from little more than 3,000 in 1992 to over 15,000 in 2000, and close to 40,000 as of 2011. In 2012, India overtook South Korea as the Asian country sending the most tourists to Israel. The same year, during the first ever visit of an Indian tourism minister to Israel, the two parties signed a joint memorandum setting the goal of doubling the number of tourists between the two countries within a three-year period, which has not yet been met. The Israeli tourism minister allocated a budget to promote Israel as a tourism destination for Indians, and advocated the introduction of additional direct flights between the two countries. There is great potential for attracting more Indian Christian pilgrims to Israel – they presently constitute almost half of India’s tourists to Israel.

However, tourism has raised a number of problems that have to be addressed. As in the case of Indian businesspeople wanting to visit Israel, it can prove challenging for Indian tourists to obtain a visa to Israel when their passports contain stamps from Muslim Mideast countries. In addition, unpleasant security checks of Indian travelers at Ben Gurion Airport, as already mentioned, will not encourage tourism.

India, too, has begun to impose more limitations on Israeli tourism, mainly in the form of visa restrictions. This could be the result of the repeated misbehavior by some young Israelis in India, linked for example to drug use and trafficking. A study by the Israeli researcher Daria Maoz, published in 2004, was already strongly critical of young Israeli

backpackers in India, claiming that they often ignore the feelings of the locals and treat their traditions and customs with contempt. This may be true for some, but certainly not most Israelis. Maoz further polemicized against the perceived disrespectful relations of post-army Israeli travelers with Indian local people.⁵⁶ In 2009, the Catholic Church in Goa, a haven for many young Israelis, leveled similar accusations against Israeli tourists.

While there is enough anecdotal evidence of Israeli misbehavior in India to leave those who seek closer links with India worried, it is not clear that such cases have had a more than local and temporary impact on Indian perceptions. Still, the Israeli government was sufficiently concerned by this issue to plan, in 2007, a “Backpackers for Peace” program. It would have called on young Israelis to participate in social projects in India and respect Indian behavioral norms, but it never got off the ground due, apparently, to budgetary restrictions.

In place of this unrealized official program, several Israeli and international Jewish NGOs have launched similar programs aimed at helping India and improving the image of Israeli travelers there. These include short-term programs that encourage Israeli travelers to take part in volunteer projects in local communities, as well as longer-term programs for young Jewish and Israeli adults that combine internship and training opportunities in Israel and India. The Israeli government and private donors should further support such projects.

It is much too early to tell what contribution tourism has made (and could make) to the links between India and Israel. This is only the beginning of a long story. More than 500,000 Israelis have visited India in the last 20 years. Among them one finds many who returned enthralled by the country’s culture, religions, food, and music. No doubt, India has great allure for Israelis.

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CHAPTER FOUR

India, the Jewish People, and Israel: A Triangular Relationship

Contacts between the Jewish people and India predate the creation of the State of Israel by many centuries. These contacts were multifaceted and more complex than those between the two modern states, Israel and the Republic of India. This chapter first reviews the historic significance of the Jews of India. Then, the chapter describes world Jewry's decisive role in reaching out to India in the 20th century and advancing Indo-Israeli-Jewish links. This has become the most significant connection between the Jews of the world and India, and it only became possible in the 20th century once there were world Jewish, American Jewish and world Zionist organizations speaking on behalf of large numbers of Jews.

The Jews of India: A Long-Lasting Symbiosis*

A history of people-to-people links between the Jews and Indians must begin with the Indian Jews. Jews came to India and remained there since times immemorial. Several groups can be distinguished:

Bene Israel: Prior to the 1950s when the overwhelming majority moved to Israel, this was the largest Jewish community in India, numbering

* This section on the Jews of India draws from a large number of sources, but does not present a comprehensive summary of the academic literature on the subject. For a detailed study of the history and anthropology of India's Jews see, among others, the numerous publications of Hebrew University's Dr. Shalva Weil.

around 25,000. There are significantly more than twice that number in Israel today. Approximately 4,000 remain in India, but according to informal estimates by Indian Jewish leaders, there are also 25,000 Indians with one Jewish parent, and 100,000 with one Jewish grandparent. Many of them have not forgotten their Jewish roots. The majority of the Bene Israel lived in the Konkan south of Mumbai. Estimations of when they first arrived in India vary widely between the 8th century BCE and the 6th century CE. Some traditional narratives place their first arrival in the wake of the Second Temple's destruction in 70 CE. In the 20th century, members of this small community played, widely beyond their small numbers, distinguished roles in India's artistic and cultural life, including in the film industry, the professions, public health sphere, and, not least, in the armed forces. They have not enjoyed similar success in Israel's turbulent melting pot, which has been Israel's loss as much as theirs.

Cochini Jews of Kerala: Jewish traders and sailors have visited the Malabar Coast (southwest India) since Biblical times. Precisely when Jews settled in Cochin and other Kerala cities and created thriving communities is disputed, but here, too, the years following the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE are credible but not currently definitive. A copper tablet from 1000 CE, which was issued by local rulers and granted the Jews substantial economic privileges, is undisputed. They numbered 2000 to 3000 in the 1950s when nearly all of them moved to Israel. The Jews of Kerala developed forms of cultural symbiosis unique in Jewish history. The Jewish women of Kerala had an old tradition of writing poems, composing music to accompany them, and singing their creations before public audiences. The themes were Jewish, the language Malayalam, one of the Dravidian languages of South India.¹

Sephardi Jews: A small stream of refugees fleeing the Inquisition in Spain and Portugal settled mainly in Kerala between the 16th and 18th centuries. They became known as "Paradesis" (foreigners). Among them were important professionals and intellectuals. The Paradesis did not intermarry with the Cochinis. Also, in contrast to the great majority of Sephardi Jews, they abandoned their native Iberian languages but remained Jews and spoke Malayalam.

Baghdadis: Since the 18th century, Jews from Baghdad and other places in the Middle East fled Arab persecution and found refuge in India. They mostly did not integrate but remained linked to British rule. Though latecomers and few, their contribution to India was important. Best known is David Sassoon, business tycoon, philanthropist, and leader of the Jewish community of Mumbai who founded schools, hospitals, libraries and more that still bear his name today.

Bene Menashe: They are a tribal group from India's remote northeastern states who speak a Burmese dialect. They appeared in the 20th century, claimed to descend from one of Israel's lost Ten Tribes, and as self-declared Jews demanded the right to settle in Israel. Israel has accepted thousands of them after conversion, and thousands more are waiting. The case of the Bene Menashe demonstrates how the creation of a Jewish state changed the dynamics of the Indo-Jewish relationship. It is not the traditional Jews of India who attracted the Bene Menashe to Judaism, on the contrary, the Bene Israel rejected their claims. It is the soft power that Israel, the Jewish state, exerts in a remote, barely accessible corner of the earth.

Western Jews:² In modern times, a small heterogeneous stream of Western Jews came to India – some for a limited time, others settled permanently. They came for professional, artistic, or economic reasons. A few made real contributions to India, for example, Doctor Mordecai Haffkine from Odessa who in the late 19th century developed the first effective vaccines against cholera and bubonic plague in India. Some also were searching for adventure, others for Eastern wisdom. The latter are a mixed group, with one prominent Jewish devotee among others, Mira Alfassa born 1878 in Paris who became the companion of the famous spiritual leader Sri Aurobindo Gosh in Pondicherry. In their time, the most prominent Jews temporarily residing in India were two senior British politicians who served in the Indian Raj, Edwin Samuel Montagu (Secretary of State for India 1917-1922), a strong opponent of Zionism and the Balfour Declaration (1917), and Rufus Isaacs who as Lord Reading became Viceroy of India (1921-1926). India has forgotten both of them. These and other Western Jews who lived in India rarely if ever contributed

to the links between India and the Jewish people, and even less to the Zionist struggle. They may have loved India's culture, its people, and its food, but they did not seek a symbiosis between Judaism (which most of them had abandoned anyway) and India, and those who remained Jews generally functioned as individuals without any Jewish agenda.

It was the Jews of old India who developed a close symbiotic relationship with Indian civilization. They adopted Indian languages, dress, patterns of behavior, and diet without ever ceasing to be Jews by religion. Hence, when the Protestant missionaries who came to India in the 19th century tried to convert Indian Jews, they failed and were surprised that these Jews adamantly refused to abandon Judaism. Jewish acculturation to India had many components. Jewish religious holidays, celebrations such as marriage ceremonies and folklore incorporated Hindu, and also a few Muslim, elements. The transfer of rituals and other practices between religions occurred in India more generally, it was not limited to Jews and Hindus. In this case, Jews appeared to intensify their Jewishness and Jewish pride by incorporating well-known and respected Hindu motifs into their practices. Paradoxically, incorporating foreign religious motifs or practices seemed to be easier in the case of polytheistic Hinduism, just because Hinduism had no links with, and no claims against Judaism – in contrast to the two successor religions. Such cultural bridge building also reassured Hindus that the Jews, in contrast to the conquerors from other faiths, respected them and did not intend to convert them.

This is how the Jews of India became a bridge between two civilizations. They were part of India and of world Judaism. They shared this double role with many Jewish diasporas, but their fate varied greatly from the others. All through history Jews tried to develop symbiotic relationships, for example with Hellenistic Alexandria, Christian Spain, and modern Germany. Those three relationships, among the most culturally productive in all of Jewish history, collapsed after one, two, or three hundred years. The Greeks, Spaniards, and Germans wanted no symbiosis; they wanted the Jews out. India was different. Hindu India did not seek conversion of other believers, was not jealous of Jewish success, and carried no negative religious memories in regard to Jews.

Indian Jews first became aware of Zionism in the 19th century. Zionist representatives established contacts with India's Jewish community and invited the Bene Israel to send delegates to the first Zionist congress in Basel in 1897. The Bene Israel decided not to participate because they believed the return to the ancestral homeland should be accomplished through miraculous divine intervention rather than human endeavor. Still, after World War I a member of the London-based World Zionist Organization (WZO), Paul Tolkowsky, wrote a letter to the Bene Israel community in Bombay inquiring about their attitude toward Zionism and settlement in Palestine. He suggested that Indian Bene Israel farmers and other workers might play a significant role should they decide to return to the Jewish homeland. The letter sparked off a public debate among Indian Jews and led to the establishment, in 1920, of the Bombay Zionist Association and the Bene Israel Zionist Association.

Until 1948, however, there was almost no Jewish immigration from India to British Palestine. Indian Jews made no known interventions in Indian politics or high-level public declarations to support Zionism and the State of Israel. In general, they kept away from Indian domestic politics and foreign policy. They were too few to get involved in the often-violent struggles that accompanied India's rise: Indians against the colonial power, Muslims against Hindus, and "Untouchables" against all others. Finally the Indo-Jewish symbiosis, which had lasted for centuries, came to an end with India and Israel's independence in 1947 and 1948 respectively. No discrimination, persecution, or hostility put an end to India's Jewry and their symbiosis. There were other reasons. India's caste system had separated Indians into closed groups that did not intermarry. In this sense, the Jews of old India, the Bene Israel, Cochinis, and Baghdadadis, were like castes. Their identity was protected and they did not intermarry. But long before independence, Gandhi and other leaders attacked the injustices the caste system had yielded and called for its abolition.

When the caste system began to weaken after independence, Jewish leaders understood that it would become difficult to preserve the identity of their small communities. Apart from the attraction of the old Biblical

homeland and economic hardship in some cases, identity protection was the main reason Jewish leaders and parents with young children called for emigration to Israel.³ The large majority of Indian Jews left for Israel. They became Israelis but kept their love for India and all things Indian. Some of them helped create links between India and Israel, generally in economic fields, but very few succeeded to enter Israel's elites and they had no influence on Israel's India policies. Was this the final end of the symbiosis? India's own leaders and diplomats do not seem to think so. On India's Independence Day and on Republic Day, the Indian ambassador to Israel hosts a public reception for Indian Israelis, and has done so for many years. Large numbers attend. In 2015, he went further and called on Indian Israelis to step up and begin to play a more active role in strengthening the growing links between India and Israel. Perhaps Indian Jewry has not spoken its last word, and the old symbiosis will emerge again in a new, Israeli form.

The story of India's Jews is significant for two broader historical reasons. Their survival, creativity, and prosperity across 2,000 years, without external adversity, disproves Western theories that ascribe the survival of Judaism to external pressure and the hostility of Christians and Muslims alone. The historian Arnold Toynbee proposed his "Challenge-and-Response" model of history to explain Jewish longevity,⁴ and so did the French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre in a much discussed 1946 book, *Reflections on the Jewish Question*, in which he argued that Jews have remained Jews only because others regard them as such. In addition, the Indian-Jewish symbiosis invites thought on how Judaism and the Jewish people would have evolved had the overwhelming majority of them not come under Christian and Muslim rule. This is a "virtual history" speculation.⁵ The American Jewish philosopher Abraham Joshua Heschel has considered this question: "Had Jerusalem been located at the foot of the Himalayas, monotheistic philosophy would have been modified by the tradition of Oriental thinkers. Thus, our intellectual position situated as it is between Athens and Jerusalem is not an ultimate one."⁶

The 20th Century: World Judaism Reaches out to India

The pre-independence years: World Jewry's outreach and failed attempts to obtain Indian support for Zionism

From the early 20th century on a small number of Jewish leaders and intellectuals established contacts with India's most prominent thinkers and leaders and also with the Jewish community there. Idealism played an important role in Jewish outreach, especially to Mahatma Gandhi and the poet Rabindranath Tagore. Many Jews were drawn to these two and others, their struggle for freedom, and their philosophy of non-violence. But pragmatic considerations were also a reason for Jewish outreach. Some Jews, particularly the Zionists, assumed that India's support could one day become crucial for Jewish political aspirations in Palestine. At that time, few Indians thought much of their country's prospective future global power role, but, evidently, some Jewish leaders did.

First connections of Zionist leaders with India

Zionist outreach initially took the form of contacts established with India's Jewish community, not with India's nationalist leaders.

In addition to Paul Tolkowsky's just mentioned letter, in 1920 a Zionist emissary, Israel Cohen, went to Asia for the first time. He visited Asian cities with substantial Jewish communities, including Kolkatta (Calcutta) and Mumbai (Bombay). The primary purpose of his visit was to raise funds and forge links with local Zionist circles. Although no effort was made to reach out to India's leaders, Cohen's trip marked a turning point because it put India and other Asian countries on the "Zionist map."

It was only in 1930 that another Zionist envoy, Gershon Agron, attempted for the first time to contact Indians outside the Jewish community. Agron arrived in Mumbai just a few days before the All-India Conference on Palestine Affairs and seized the opportunity to meet several Indian Muslim leaders. Although he came to the conclusion that a large majority of Indian Muslims was either ignorant of, or indifferent to, the events

unfolding in Palestine, he warned that the Palestine question could still be exploited by a minority as a powerful rallying point for Indian Muslims. Agron's visit marked a second important turning point in the Zionist outreach to India, but he made no effort to engage with the Hindu leaders of the Congress Party, Gandhi and Nehru. Unfortunately for the Zionist cause, the radical anti-Jewish Palestinian leader Haj Amin al-Husseini, Grand Mufti of Jerusalem and later friend and supporter of Hitler, had understood the importance of India even before the Zionists did and acted quickly to preempt them. As soon as he was appointed by the British (1921), he sent three representatives to India to collect funds for the al-Aqsa mosque and seek Muslim contacts. During his *hajj* pilgrimages to Mecca in 1924 and 1926, he established close personal links with two of India's most important Muslim leaders and invited them to Jerusalem. P.R. Kumaraswamy writes that early Zionist efforts towards India were more extensive and far-reaching than generally believed, but, in the end, the parts of the world where most Jews lived were more important for Zionism. "India was not paramount. This indifference came up against a more powerful force that worked against the Zionist interests: India's Muslim population and its involvement in the Palestinian question."⁷

Initial Zionist outreach to Gandhi: the role of Gandhi's South African Jewish friends

In October 2015, India's President Pranab Mukherjee visited Jordan one day before his first state visit to Israel when he extended India's friendship to the Jewish state. In Amman, he quoted verbatim what Gandhi had written in 1938, namely that Palestine belonged to the Arabs like England belonged to the English, France to the French etc.⁸ Later, in Israel, he recalled Narendra Modi's first visit to Israel years before he became India's prime minister. He revealed that Modi was touched when he discovered a photo of Gandhi in the bedroom of Israel's founding father, David Ben-Gurion, in Sde Boker, the Negev kibbutz where Ben-Gurion spent the last years of his life.

Gandhi, India's founding father, remains deeply respected in India even if his country has not taken the road he had wanted. His words are still

remembered. Israel's enemies, in and outside India, routinely deploy some of Gandhi's statements to justify their hostility to Zionism and Israel, often quoting him out of context and without explaining his motives. This is why it is still important to study and understand his position on the Palestinian issue. Quite a few Western Jews admired Gandhi and sought his friendship and advice. It was not Palestine that interested most of them. Gandhi knew the spiritual attraction that India and his own beliefs exerted on some Western Jews. While he was deeply involved with one, Hermann Kallenbach, he kept others at bay. When a Jewish woman from England pressured him to convert her to Hinduism, he scolded her gently and told her with deep psychological insight: "You do not need to be a Hindu to be a true Jewess. If Judaism does not satisfy you, no other faith will give you satisfaction for any length of time. I would advise you to remain a Jewess and appropriate the good of the other faiths."⁹

Early on, Gandhi expressed his strong opposition to Jewish political aspirations in Palestine. In his first comments on the issue in 1921, he explicitly denounced the Balfour Declaration, explaining that "Palestine must be under Mussulman control," and that giving it to the Jews would constitute "a breach of implied faith with Indian Mussulmans in particular and the whole of India in general."¹⁰ In another statement on Palestine written in *Young India*, he said, "[t]he [Indian] Muslim soldiers did not shed their blood in the late War for the purpose of surrendering Palestine out of Muslim control."¹¹ Few remember today what Gandhi knew in 1921. There is a British Commonwealth War Cemetery in Jerusalem's Talpiot district where Muslim soldiers from British India are buried in a mass grave. They fought with the British army in Palestine against the Ottoman Turks and fell in battle in 1917. An inscription in Urdu commemorates their sacrifice. Based partly on his memory of this and similar sacrifices, Gandhi was the first non-Muslim leader to dispute Jewish claims on the basis of Muslim sovereignty over Palestine. Gandhi's motives were clear from the beginning and they did not change, at least until after the Second World War (more on this later in the chapter). Gandhi's most fervent wish was to keep India whole, in its century-old borders, and to prevent the country's

partition into a Hindu and Muslim state. This required that the Muslims felt at home in India, and this meant, in turn, that India had to defend the causes nearest their hearts. Unfortunately for Zionism, Palestine was high on their list of grievances.

Although Gandhi strongly opposed Zionist aspirations in Palestine, he was no stranger to Jews and to their long history of persecution and discrimination. While in South Africa in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, he became closely acquainted with several Jews, including, first and foremost, Hermann Kallenbach, and also Henry Polak. Arguably, Hermann Kallenbach was the historically most important Jew attracted by Indian spirituality. Through his close friendship and work with Mahatma Gandhi, Kallenbach had an indirect influence on India's history no other single Jew could match.¹² Kallenbach, a Lithuanian Jew who immigrated in 1896 to South Africa, had a successful career as architect and businessman. His encounter with Mahatma Gandhi changed his life. He turned from a hedonist to an ascetic and joined Gandhi's *Satyagraha* (nonviolent) struggle against the racism and discrimination suffered by South Africa's Indian community. He played a leading role in this struggle and put his fortune and considerable organizational talent at Gandhi's disposal. For many years the two lived together, bound by an enduring friendship, "soulmates" as Kallenbach's biographer and Gandhi's researcher Shimon Lev calls them. Gandhi showed his immense gratitude and deep affection for Kallenbach not only in the many letters that have been preserved, but also in public statements.

When, in the early 1930s, Zionist leaders sought to establish direct contact with Mahatma Gandhi, his South African Jewish friends provided help. Through their introduction, Gandhi met with two Zionist leaders in London during his visit to a round table conference on India organized by the British government. It was the first formal contact between Gandhi and the Zionist leadership. The objectives of the meeting were limited, aimed at convincing Gandhi to help keep the Palestine issue out of Indian politics, rather than shaping Gandhi's view on the matter.

Only in 1936, in reaction to major Arab riots against the Jews of Palestine, did the Zionist leadership step up its efforts to reach out to Gandhi and secure his endorsement of Jewish political aspirations in Palestine. Eliahu Elath (Epstein), a senior Jewish Agency official, stressed in a secret memorandum that antagonism to Zionism had now spread in India largely beyond Muslim circles: “We face great danger from the same ignorance and distortion regarding Zionism and its activities in Israel striking roots in the circles of the national intelligentsia and the Indian Workers’ Movement.... The great political future awaiting India in the East ... necessitates our comprehensive action in order to begin wide propaganda immediately and strengthen the connections between Jewish Israel and India.”¹³

Moshe Shertok (later Sharett), the head of the Jewish Agency’s political department wrote to Kallenbach: “The fact remains that by virtue of your signal service to the Indian cause in South Africa and your close personal connection with the greatest of living Hindus – a connection which I know has its ramifications – you are in a unique position to help Zionism in a field where the resources of the Jewish people are so meager as to be practically non-existent It is clear that our political future as a nation returning to its home in Asia must ultimately depend in a large measure on the amount of goodwill and solidarity which we shall succeed in evoking on the part of the great Asiatic civilizations.”¹⁴ Kallenbach agreed to help and recommended the Jewish and Zionist Sanskrit scholar Immanuel Olsvanger to Gandhi. Olsvanger went to India where he had a brief discussion with Gandhi and met with Nehru several times. These meetings were politically disappointing but they allowed Olsvanger to raise money for the Zionist cause and to forge cordial links with the poet and politician Sarojini Naidu, and with the remarkable Bengali poet and novelist Rabindranath Tagore, the two most prominent of the few committed friends of Judaism and Zionism in India.

Kallenbach visited India twice in the following years, in 1937 and 1939, and spent a lot of time with the Mahatma, whom he had not seen for over twenty years. He devoted much energy to convincing Gandhi to support Zionist goals in Palestine, with little success. Even though it

remained essentially a private declaration, the final statement on Zionism he obtained from Gandhi was very timorous and clearly a disappointment to the Zionist leadership. Gandhi asserted “The Jews should disclaim any intention of realising their aspiration under the protection of arms and should rely wholly on the goodwill of Arabs.”¹⁵ Gandhi also entrusted Kallenbach with an offer to the Jewish Agency to help mediate the Jewish-Arab conflict in Palestine, together with Jawaharlal Nehru and Congress party President Abul Kalam Azad, but nothing came of this proposal.¹⁶

Until recently, few Jews and even fewer Indians were aware of Kallenbach’s importance in Gandhi’s life and struggle. The literature on Gandhi mentions him but underestimates his impact. Kallenbach’s support was critical for the success of Gandhi’s struggle in South Africa, which, in turn, was the model Gandhi later applied in his passive resistance movement in India. Through this movement Gandhi unified India and gained its independence. Besides, there is little doubt that Gandhi learned a lot about the history and traditions of the Jewish people and Judaism through his companionship with Kallenbach (as well as other South African Jewish friends). But the latter exerted little initial influence on the Mahatma’s view on Zionism. Maybe Gandhi did not see the link between the Jews’ history of humiliation and persecution and their quest for political sovereignty, in addition to his concern for India’s Muslims. He considered Judaism as a religion only, not as a nation. He expressed in the most explicit fashion his hostility to Zionism in an article written for the *Harijan* newspaper in late 1938.¹⁷

Gandhi’s 1938 *Harijan* article and reactions of Martin Buber, Judah Magnes, and Hayim Greenberg

Apart from an interview given in 1931 to the London Jewish Chronicle where he restated his traditional position on the Palestine question – his “great sympathy” for Jews but hostility toward political Zionism, Gandhi was reluctant to discuss the Palestine issue.¹⁸ For good reason: his sympathy with Jewish suffering and his obligation not to hurt Muslim sensitivities in India could not be reconciled. At the pressing request of

Jewish friends he finally accepted to break his silence in the November 26, 1938 issue of *Harijan*. Although Gandhi did not argue this time that Muslim sovereignty was to prevail over Palestine, and while continuing to express deep sympathy for the Jews and empathy for their suffering, he also continued to reject Zionist claims on Palestine: “Palestine belongs to the Arabs in the same sense that England belongs to the English or France to the French.” He was adamant that Jews had to settle in Palestine “only by the goodwill of the Arabs” and through “the way of non-violence.” Gandhi and the Indian national movement’s double standard emerged now more starkly than ever before: Arabs were forgiven for using force against Jews, but Jews were not allowed to use force. Gandhi’s 1938 *Harijan* article – triggered, let it be said again, by relentless Jewish pressure – raised a storm of criticism and led to widespread disappointment in the Jewish world. Several of the most prominent Jewish intellectuals of the time wrote to Gandhi in response. Letters by Martin Buber, arguably the most famous German Jewish intellectual who had fled to Palestine in 1938, and by Judah Magnes, the first president of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, were published in 1939 and widely read in the Jewish world.¹⁹ Gandhi however never received and read these two letters.²⁰ Hayim Greenberg, an American Jewish and Zionist leader, also responded to the *Harijan* article in an open letter to Gandhi published in his journal *The Jewish Frontier*.²¹ All three acted spontaneously and not on behalf of any Zionist organization.

Buber, Magnes, and Greenberg were known pacifists and fervent advocates of peaceful coexistence between Jews and Arabs in Palestine. They expressed outright criticism of Gandhi’s assertion that Palestine belonged to the Arabs. Buber stressed the uniqueness of the Jewish bond with the Land of Israel, a bond both religious and historical. He expressed surprise that Gandhi seemed to attach more value to conquest by force – Muslim force – as a right to land ownership, than to “settlement such as the Jewish one - whose methods [were] far removed from those of conquest.” Magnes and Buber concurred with Gandhi that Jews had to settle in Palestine “with the goodwill of the Arabs,” rather than through

the use of force and “under the shadow of the British gun.” Still, both men blamed Gandhi’s double standard as to the use of violence by Jews and Arabs in Palestine. “Will you not speak to the Arabs in terms of Satyagraha [non-violent resistance]? That would also have a profound influence upon the Jews,” pled Magnes. “[Y]ou cast a lenient eye on those who carry murder into our ranks every day without even noticing who is hit,” accused Buber. Moreover, all three Jewish intellectuals tried to convince Gandhi that Jewish settlement in Palestine was not detrimental to the interests of the local Arab population, quite the contrary. “[O]ur movement has in no way injured the Arab people, that, on the contrary, the mass of the Arab population has profited socially, economically and culturally from Jewish immigration ... the Arab standard of living has risen significantly due to the peaceful, progressive methods of Jewish reconstruction,” said Greenberg. However, in emphasizing to Gandhi the beneficial Jewish contribution to the Arab standard of living, all three missed the point completely. They were Westerners and did not appreciate that Gandhi’s personal life and his philosophy were ascetic. He despised the achievements of Western materialism and technology. Gandhi had scolded his friend Kallenbach for buying a car. He told him that the car was an “invention of the devil” and forced him to sell it.²² Gandhi understood that the conflict in Palestine went deeper than material gain.

In his open letter to Gandhi, Hayim Greenberg wrote that Gandhi’s view of the Palestine issue was far from being guided only by moral and ethical considerations. He claimed that it was in fact deeply influenced by the propaganda directed against Jews and Zionists “among fanatic [Indian] pan-Islamists” and by his utmost concern for maintaining “a united front with the Mohammedans.” And although he judged this concern “understandable and praiseworthy,” he could not but urge Gandhi to break his silence and raise his voice against this “false propaganda” widespread amid Indian Muslim leadership and communities. In fact, it was not the first time that Greenberg called upon Gandhi in these terms. In an earlier open letter published in 1937 in *The Jewish Frontier*, he had already urged the Mahatma to “end the venomous anti-Jewish propaganda amid the

millions of Mohammedans in India.”²³ Many of the emotions, events and arguments of the 1930s survived in India, in Indian public opinion, and Indian policies through the 20th century.

A Jewish passion for Rabindranath Tagore²⁴

Apart from Gandhi, no Indian of the 20th century attracted as much Jewish interest and passion as Rabindranath Tagore. This Bengali patriot was India’s most famous 20th century writer and poet, and the first Asian to, in 1913, receive a Nobel Prize. Tagore was like Gandhi, a symbol of India’s awakening and freedom struggle. Few remember today how passionate some Jews were about Tagore. They were among the very first to admire and translate him. When Tagore visited London in 1912 and 1913, he was hosted by a Jewish admirer, the artist William Rothenstein. Rothenstein gave Tagore’s poetry collection *Gitanjali* to William B. Yeats, and it is for Yeats’ English translation that Tagore received the Nobel Prize. In Russia, Tagore’s translators were Jews. Apparently, the poet struck a particular chord with Russia’s Jewish intellectuals. And last but not least, David Frishmann, who visited Ottoman Palestine in 1911 and 1912, began in 1915 to translate Tagore into Hebrew. The first Hebrew version of the *Gitanjali* was published in 1917 – this was one of the first translations of the poet – maybe the first – into any non-Western and non-Indian language. Tagore, in turn, expressed his sympathy for Judaism and the Jewish people openly. He maintained life-long or occasional friendships with famous and less famous Jews: Einstein, Martin Buber, the Zionist emissary Immanuel Olsvanger, French Jewish Sanskrit scholars, a Yiddish poet, and a Hebrew kindergarten teacher from Jerusalem. Tagore supported the Zionist aspirations – a lonely and courageous voice among the most prominent Indians in his time. He emphasized that the agricultural achievements of the Jewish pioneers could help India. He knew of the opposition of the Palestinian Arabs and invited the Jews to accommodate Arab rights and concerns. “What we poets have dreamt, the Jews can create in Palestine if they free themselves of the Western concept of nationalism.”²⁵ His views at that time were virtually identical to those of Albert Einstein before the Holocaust. The

two corresponded and met a few times.²⁶ Tagore's sympathy for Zionism remained isolated and had no visible effect on India in his time.

The Einstein-Nehru correspondence²⁷

As British India was about to become independent, partitioned into two separate countries, the United Nations started to look into the possibility of partitioning Palestine into a Jewish and an Arab state. Zionist leaders sought to secure support for a Jewish state from Jawaharlal Nehru, who would soon become India's first prime minister. Albert Einstein, who had escaped Nazi Germany for the United States, played a singular role in these efforts. Before the war, Einstein was closer to the cultural stream of Zionism heralded by Ahad Ha'am than to Herzl's political Zionism. Then, he would have preferred a bi-national state of Jews and Arabs living together and was not comfortable with the idea of a "Jewish state with borders, an army and a measure of temporal power."²⁸ The war and the annihilation of most of Europe's Jews by the continent's most advanced nation changed his mind. He never forgave the Germans and refused to ever set foot on German soil again. For him, as for others, the moral right of the surviving Jews to create a state of their own in their old homeland, where for the first time since centuries they could defend themselves, superseded any other right. "In the august scale of justice, which weighs need against need, there is no doubt as to whose is more heavy."²⁹ Further, in 1947, the argument that Palestinian Arabs should not have to pay for the crimes of the Nazis had little weight. The foremost Palestinian leader, Haj Amin al-Husseini, had spent the war years as Hitler's guest in Berlin where he was aware of, and apparently encouraged, the Nazi's murderous actions. He was still alive and well, and his alliance with Hitler was widely known in 1947-48. Einstein's extraordinary personality and eminent stature as the world's greatest scientist made him an ideal choice to approach Nehru. It was known that the latter greatly admired Einstein.

Einstein's letter to Nehru, sent in June 1947, primarily focused on moral and historical arguments. Einstein reminded Nehru of the history of persecution and discrimination suffered for centuries by the Jews

and drew a parallel with the situation of the untouchables in India. He called upon him, as a “consistent champion of the forces of political and economic enlightenment,” to endorse the aspirations of the Jewish people in Palestine and pled for his sense of “justice and equity.”³⁰ “Long before the emergence of Hitler I made the cause of Zionism mine because through it I saw a means of correcting a flagrant wrong,” he wrote, and added: “Through the return to the land to which they were bound by close historic ties ... Jews sought to abolish their pariah status among peoples.”³¹ Like Martin Buber, and others before him, he also mentioned the positive effect of Jewish settlement in Palestine on the life of its Arab inhabitants. At the end of his letter, Einstein appealed to Nehru to brush aside “the rivalries of power politics and the egotism of petty nationalist appetites,”³² implying that he was well aware of the domestic constraints weighing on the Indian nationalist leader’s policy. In fact, Nehru’s letter of reply a few weeks later underlined right at the beginning the primacy of India’s national interests over all moral considerations. Nehru admitted that he was “unfortunately” restricted to a policy that was essentially “selfish.” “Each country thinks of its own interest first,” he recognized. If an international policy (such as the proposal to partition Palestine) fits in with national interests, then a nation will use “brave language about international betterment.”³³ But, he continued, with disarming candor, if this “seems to run counter to national interests or selfishness, then a host of reasons are found not to follow that international policy.” Nehru admitted also that the Jews “have done a wonderful piece of work in Palestine.”³⁴ While he did not clarify explicitly what national interests weighed on his attitude toward the Palestine issue, it is obvious that Nehru had the ongoing troubles in India with its large Muslim minority, which was hostile to Zionism, on his mind. Muslim hostility would require India to garner as much global support as possible, including from Muslim and Arab countries. In any event, Nehru’s letter is a rare document in the history of 20th century public diplomacy related to the Middle East. Its honesty and absence of hypocrisy sets it apart from the moralizing that bedevils other discussions of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and covers up not always admitted interests and motives.

Was Gandhi beginning to change his mind?

The Jewish initiatives to reach out to India in the pre-independence years failed to change Gandhi's and Nehru's public opposition to Jewish nationalist aspirations in Palestine. It was too little, too late, particularly in comparison to the solid ties of friendship that had been forged long before between the Indian and Arab nationalist movements on the basis of shared hostility to Western, especially British, colonialism.

To an extent, the realization of the full extent and horrors of the Holocaust after World War II may have led Gandhi to soften his position on Zionism. A reference to the extermination of European Jews by the Nazis, "the greatest crime of our time,"³⁵ appears in a biography written by American Jewish journalist Louis Fischer.³⁶ Also, Fisher reported that Gandhi met in the first half of 1946 with Anglo-Jewish Member of Parliament Sydney Silverman and President of the World Jewish Congress Honick, and apparently told them that the Jews too had a good claim to Palestine. Fisher sought confirmation from Gandhi himself in June 1946. He reported Gandhi telling him: "The Jews have a good case. I told Sidney Silverman, the British M.P., that the Jews have a good case. If the Arabs have a claim to Palestine, the Jews have a prior claim because they were there first."³⁷ In spite of a lack of published corroborating evidence from Silverman himself, Gandhi researchers such as Panter-Brick,³⁸ Kumaraswamy,³⁹ and Shimon Lev,⁴⁰ regard Fisher's report as authentic. This does not mean that Gandhi agreed now wholeheartedly to the creation of a Jewish state against Arab opposition. But it does seem to contradict Gandhi's pre-war statement that "Palestine belongs to the Arabs like England belongs to the English etc." Why then were Gandhi's words as reported by Fischer on such a sensitive and controversial issue not better known? First, Gandhi did not wish his conversation with Silverman to be public. Kumaraswamy also explains that the Congress Party suppressed references to Gandhi's change of views because they could have "eroded" the main moral justification of the Party's hostility to Israel. In turn, the Zionists, engaged in the beginning life-and-death struggle for a Jewish state, paid no longer any attention to Gandhi. Their mind was focused on the United States and the United Kingdom.

In any event, whatever Gandhi thought, neither he nor the Zionists could overcome the weight of the Muslim constraint. For the first time, during his meeting with Silverman, Gandhi hinted very explicitly at this “real-political” basis of his posture vis-à-vis Zionism: “Unless you can gain the ear of the Indian Mussalmans and their active support, I am afraid there is nothing that can be done in India.” Gandhi further suggested that they “try to gain the sympathy” of two prominent Indian Muslim leaders, Congress President Maulana Azad and the leader of the All-India Muslim League Mohammed Ali Jinnah (who was to become Pakistan’s first governor-general in 1947 after partition). The significance of the Muslim political constraint on Gandhi’s public attitude toward Zionism is particularly apparent in the fact that he did not show hostility to Zionism privately. Gandhi’s private correspondence with Kallenbach attests to this gap between his public antagonism to Zionism and his personal views.⁴¹ When Kallenbach wrote his last will and testament, he wanted to bequeath all his fortune to India. But Gandhi refused. He asked his friend to use his money to save his own people, the Jews of Palestine, soon to be Israel.⁴²

The partition of India on August 15, 1947 left no doubt that Gandhi’s life-long struggle for a unified India had failed. Might the end of his dream have led him to reconsider his opposition to a partition of Palestine? We shall never know. The time left to him until his assassination in January 1948 was too short, and his most urgent concern during the last few months of his life was how to stop the widespread bloodshed that engulfed the country after partition.

Recognition without Normalization: American Jewish Interventions

India and Israel’s independence in 1947 and 1948 respectively coincided with the disappearance of India’s greatest spiritual leaders, with whom Jewish admirers and representatives had been in contact. Rabindranath Tagore died in 1941, Gandhi in 1948, Sri Aurobindo Ghose in 1950. Moreover, within a few years the overwhelming majority of India’s Jews left their country of birth and settled in Israel. For the next three decades

India focused its relations increasingly on the Third World and the Soviet Union. Now it was American Jewish politicians, leaders and organizations that maintained the link between the Jewish people and India, and the main theme of their discussions was Israel.

Initial efforts of American Jewry to encourage India's recognition of Israel and normalization of relations

In contrast to the United States, the Soviet Union and nearly all Western, Communist and Latin American countries, which recognized Israel shortly after its declaration of independence on May 14, 1948, India's Prime Minister Jawarhalal Nehru announced recognition of the Jewish state only in September 1950, more than two years later. Between 1948 and 1950, the Indian government had received many Israeli requests to proceed with recognition. In addition, important Jewish politicians, too, exerted pressure on India. In particular, Emmanuel Celler, a prominent Jewish U.S. congressman known for his pro-India sentiments, played a significant role in lobbying the Indian government to recognize Israel.⁴³

Even after granting formal recognition, India refused to establish normal diplomatic relations with Israel, which was quite unusual in the annals of international diplomacy. Again, Israel launched several unsuccessful initiatives to bring India around, and again, important Jewish politicians participated in these efforts and cultivated contacts with the Indian leadership. In 1957, for instance, after Israel's participation in the Suez campaign against Egypt, which exacerbated India's hostility, the chairman of the World Zionist Organization, Nahum Goldman, met with Prime Minister Nehru, in an attempt to comprehend, if not influence, India's stance on normalization.

American Jewry's advocacy for Indo-Israeli normalization in the 1980s and early 1990s

Rajiv Gandhi became prime minister in 1984 after the assassination of his mother, Indira Gandhi, and remained in office until December 1989. The beginning of the breakup of the Soviet Union in the late 1980s prompted

him to envisage policy changes in different areas, including the Middle East. Around that time, he also came under intense pressure from American Jewish groups to normalize relations with Israel. In an early move, the president of the World Jewish Congress (WJC), Edgar Bronfman, traveled to India to argue for normalization of diplomatic relations and development of commercial ties between India and Israel. After additional meetings between American Jewish organizations and the Indian prime minister (notably in New York in 1985 with the Anti-Defamation League, and in New Delhi in 1988 with other senior representatives of American Jewry), India began to relax the restrictions imposed on the Israeli Consulate in Bombay (Mumbai) and took a number of additional confidence building measures to convince American Jews that it was moving in the direction of softening its policy toward Israel.

Stephen Solarz, chairman of the Congress sub-committee for Asia and the Pacific and a staunch supporter of India, made an enormous contribution to the rapprochement between Delhi and Jerusalem. After the newly elected Indian Prime Minister Narasimha Rao announced the normalization of relations with Israel in January 1992, both India and Israel praised Congressman Solarz publicly for his key role in helping achieve this historic change.

American Jewish leaders: key instruments of leverage

In their meetings with Indian government officials, representatives of the American Jewish community certainly underlined the anomalous character of India's Israel policy at the time when most non-Muslim powers and even Egypt, the largest Arab country, already had full diplomatic ties with Israel.

But first and foremost, their key argument was to stress that if India maintained its anti-Israeli posture and refused to normalize relations with the Jewish state, it would disappoint Israel's friends in the United States and, in turn, negatively affect U.S. policy toward India. In other words, the American Jewish leadership began to "play hardball" with India. In 1987, the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) released its report, *India's campaign against Israel*, which harshly condemned India's overall anti-Israeli policy.

The report's primary objective was to persuade India to let an Israeli tennis team participate in a Davis Cup tennis tournament in New Delhi. But the report also played a significant role in the subsequent decision of the U.S. Congress to reduce Washington's foreign aid to New Delhi by almost half.

In late 1991, a delegation of the World Jewish Congress visited New Delhi in another attempt to convince India to normalize relations with Israel. A senior member of the WJC delegation told Prime Minister Narasimha Rao quite undiplomatically that "the leaders of the American Jewish community ... would regard him as no different from the Head of Iraq or another Third World country if he continued with the hypocrisy of refusing to recognize some sort of normalization of relations with Israel."⁴⁴ There is no way to determine the extent to which this discussion contributed to Rao's decision to normalize relations with Israel. Many other factors intervened in the process. India entered a period of political and intellectual turmoil when many of its traditional domestic, economic, and foreign policy principles were subjected to critical reexamination. The novelist V.S. Naipaul called this intellectual upheaval "A Million Mutinies Now."⁴⁵ Still, the imperative for India to build sound relations with the U.S., the sole superpower in the new international system, was one of the key factors – if not the most determinant one.

In late January 1992, Indian Prime Minister Rao was preparing to visit the United States to meet for the first time with President George H.W. Bush and solicit help from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund for India's shaky economy. India, like China in the same years, believed that the American Jewish lobby had a major influence on Washington's foreign policy decisions, and that improving relations with Israel would not only enhance India's standing vis-à-vis the American Jewish community but also, in turn, help advance links with the United States. It is certainly not coincidental that on January 29, 1992, only hours before he flew to the U.S., Prime Minister Rao officially announced the normalization of ties with Israel. American Jewish assistance and discrete interventions to advance relations between India and Israel continued even after the establishment of diplomatic relations. It would be an error

to assume that Prime Minister Modi's more favorable policy toward Israel will make American Jewish support redundant. Not everyone in India's large administration shares Modi's views. The weight of the American Jewish Community will in all likelihood continue to be helpful to Israel in the future.

Ties between Jewish and Indian Diasporas

The rise of the worldwide Indian diaspora

The rise of a global Indian diaspora in the 20th century has had unpredicted, often positive implications for the links between India, Israel, and the Jewish people and could have many more in the future if the right policies are pursued.

Today, India has the world's second largest diaspora after China, estimated at about 30 million and spread across every region of the world. More or less precise figures exist for the West, but not for the many Asian countries, particularly India's neighbors, where Indians form a considerable proportion of the total population. Hence, the figure of 30 million could turn out to be a substantial underestimation. While overseas, Indians do not form a homogenous community but represent different religions, languages, and regions, a reflection of the diversity and multiculturalism of India. This is why India and Israel relate differently to their respective diasporas. Indian states and their politicians maintain links primarily with oversea Indians from the same states, and who speak the same language. Israel relates to World Jewry as a single diaspora.

At least in the West, Indians are among the most educated, integrated, and successful minorities within their host countries. Their contributions in their countries of residence to innovation, knowledge-creation, and economic growth are also widely recognized and admired.

The contribution of Indian diaspora communities to India's economic growth and development is also very significant. According to World Bank estimations, total remittances to India have grown from a little

over \$2 billion in 1990 to close to \$70.4 billion as of 2014. Today, India is the top recipient of remittances among developing countries, receiving approximately 16 percent of all remittances to developing countries and has overtaken China (\$64 billion). Remittances represent 4 percent of India’s total GDP, are an important supply of hard foreign currency, and offset India’s growing trade deficits, particularly with the Gulf countries. The Gulf Region is the greatest source of remittances to India (52 percent), followed by the North America (20 percent).⁴⁶

Significantly, large Indian communities are present in several countries that are also home to substantial Jewish communities as Figure 4 shows.

*Figure 4: Indian and Jewish diasporas in selected Western countries (estimations)*⁴⁷

	Indian Diaspora	Jewish Diaspora	Total Population (2010)
United States	~ 3.2 million	5.7 million	321.7 million
Canada	~ 1 million	385,300	36 million
United Kingdom	~ 1.8 million	290,000	64.7 million
Netherlands	~ 225,000	30,000	17 million
France	~ 108,000 ~ 362,000 Indians in France’s overseas departments (Reunion, Guadeloupe, Martinique, French Guyana)	475,000	64 million
South Africa	> 1.5 million	70,000	54.5 million
Australia	~ 486,000	112,500	24 million

Understanding that they could benefit from sharing their experiences as minorities, the Indian and Jewish diaspora communities in the United

States and the United Kingdom, have forged links in recent decades, and often cooperate on issues of common interest.

Jewish outreach to the Indian diaspora in the United States

The rise of the Indian diaspora in the United States

In the 1920s, fewer than 10,000 Indians resided in the United States. In 1946, the U.S. Congress passed the Luce-Celler Act, which established an immigration quota of 100 Indian nationals per year. It was sponsored by Clare Booth Luce, a Republican, and by the already mentioned Democrat, Emmanuel Celler, a Jewish Congressman well known for both his pro-Indian outlook and his support for Jewish concerns. Later, he would play an important role in encouraging the Indian government to recognize Israel. In 1965, the U.S. Congress lifted quotas on Indian immigrants completely, leading to a significant increase of Indian migration to the U.S. from the late 1960s onward.

Today, there are approximately 3.2 million Indians in the United States, representing about one percent of the country's total population. Indian Americans are the 3rd largest Asian group in the United States, after Chinese Americans (4 million) and Filipino Americans (3.4 million).⁴⁸ The majority of Indian Americans (51 percent) are Hindu. Christian Indians, who constitute only 3 percent of India's population, are over represented at 18 percent, 10 percent are Muslim, and the remaining are Sikh, Jain, Buddhist or unaffiliated.⁴⁹

Indian Americans are among the best educated and highest earning minority groups in the United States.⁵⁰ Seven-in-ten Indian-American adults aged 25 and older hold a college degree, compared with about half of Chinese, Japanese, Korean or Filipino Americans, and about a quarter of Vietnamese Americans.⁵¹ This exceeds the matriculation rate of American Jews, of whom close to 80 percent have some college education but only 60 percent hold a college degree.⁵² Hindu Indians are significantly more likely to hold post-graduate degrees (58 percent) than their non-Hindu (mainly Muslim) counterparts (36 percent).⁵³

This educational attainment is reflected in family income and occupational status. The median Indian household income is \$88,000, which is significantly higher than that of all other Asian minorities and the general U.S. public (about \$50,000). Again, the situation of Hindu Indians is markedly better than that of non-Hindu Indians: 51 percent of Hindu-Indian adults live in households earning at least \$100,000 yearly, compared with 34 percent of non-Hindu Indian Americans. Among American Jews, the figure is 46 percent.⁵⁴ Indian Americans are over-represented in several highly skilled professions: although only 1 percent of the total U.S. population, they constitute 3 percent of the country's engineers, 7 percent of its IT workers, and 8 percent of its physicians.⁵⁵ Indian American success in Silicon Valley is particularly striking.⁵⁶ In the last two decades, Indian Americans have come to the forefront of immigrant-led entrepreneurship. The proportion of Silicon Valley's immigrant-founded start-ups launched by Indian entrepreneurs rose from 25 percent in 1995-2005 to 32 percent in 2006-2012, largely overtaking Chinese entrepreneurs (who decreased from 12.8 percent to 5.4 percent in the same period). And whereas the proportion in Silicon Valley of immigrant-founded start-ups has decreased from 52.4 percent to 43.9 percent since 2007, the rate of Indian-founded companies has increased slightly, from 13.4 percent to 14 percent.⁵⁷

The awarding of two science Nobel Prizes to Hindu-Indian Americans (1968 and 1983) – as well as the presence of four Indian Americans on Forbes' 2015 list of the 400 richest Americans, further attests to the remarkable rise and achievements of the Indian American community.

Indian Americans are also increasingly integrating into U.S. politics.⁵⁸ It is only in the last two decades that Indian Americans have started to organize themselves politically, via the creation of several prominent advocacy groups and lobbies, and to build behind-the-scenes strategic influence. In the past several years, they have been entering public service and political life in growing numbers. So far, three Indian Americans have been elected to the House of Representatives, one of whom, Bobby Jindal, later became Governor of Louisiana. Nikki Haley (born Nimrata Nikki Randhawa) was elected governor of South Carolina in 2011, the first

woman to hold that office. In 2017, President Donald Trump appointed Haley U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations.

The second Obama administration invited a record number of Indian Americans to high-ranking positions, from the White House to the Departments of State, Defense, and Treasury. Indian Americans, like Jewish Americans, prefer the Democrats to the Republicans (65 and 66 percent respectively, compared to 49 percent of the general public).⁵⁹ Interestingly, both Jindal and Haley are Republicans.

Apart from the plethora of day-to-day contacts between American Indians and Jews, the Indian rise in the United States will likely have wider implications for the relationship between the Indian and Jewish peoples as well as for India and Israel. These implications have so far been barely analyzed.

The formation of strong political ties between the Jewish and Indian leaderships and communities in the United States

In the last two decades, American Jewish groups have been very active in cultivating strong political links between the Jewish and Indian leaderships in the U.S., and between the Indian, American, and Israeli leaderships. Senior representatives of AIPAC and of the American Jewish Committee (AJC), among others, visit New Delhi on a regular basis and bring frequent delegations of Indian policy makers, think tank members, and journalists to the United States and Israel to discuss issues of common concern. In addition, the AJC has been at the forefront of endeavors to build bridges between Indian Americans and Jewish Americans. It has carried out a series of initiatives on the national and regional levels to expand dialogue and mutual understanding with the Indian community, as it has done in the past with the Latino and African American communities. It has also endeavored to forge business links between Indian Americans and Jews. In addition, AJC sponsored and participated in the interfaith dialogue of Jewish and Hindu leaders, and it coordinated several delegations of Indian Muslim leaders to Israel (more about this later).

American Jewish lobbies as models and partners of Indian lobbies in the United States

As Indian Americans recognized the success of American Jewish organizations in the political and other arenas, they began to look to these organizations as models and partners, and Jewish organizations were happy to respond. American Jewish lobbies have actively supported and contributed to the formation and success of Indian lobbies and have often served as organizational and developmental models. The Congressional India Caucus, now the largest caucus in Congress, the U.S. India Political Action Committee (USINPAC), the first and leading Indian lobbying group in the United States, and the Hindu American Foundation were all founded with the close support and encouragement of AJC and/or AIPAC. USINPAC continues to rely on many of the same methods and tactics used by AIPAC when lobbying Congress – including, for instance, letter writing campaigns and donations to targeted Congressional candidates. The Hindu American Foundation is also looking to ADL and the Simon Wiesenthal Center for guidance in advocacy and lobbying. Emulating the Simon Wiesenthal Center’s work against anti-Semitic hate speech, the Hindu American Foundation released its own report in 2007 about online hatred and bigotry against Hindus.⁶⁰ It also runs an internship program giving Hindu university students the opportunity to take their first steps as Congressional lobbyists in defense of Hinduism and global Hindu challenges. Other organizations, such as the American Association of Physicians of Indian Origin (AAPI) have benefited from AJC and AIPAC support. In addition, the Indian community has emulated Jewish organizations at the grassroots level. India Community Centers, like Jewish Community Centers, offer a large number of educational, cultural, identity-building, and recreational programs to Indian communities.

Rationale for cooperation

If it is primarily the real or perceived Jewish influence on American politics and society that has attracted the interest of Indian Americans,

Jewish organizations have come to view providing support and assistance to the Indian American community as an investment in the future. They are convinced that the Indian lobby and Indian Americans generally will become increasingly powerful in America and may, in turn, play a significant role in helping to defend not only Indian, but also Jewish and Israeli interests. Nobody would have predicted a half century ago that Evangelical Christians would become Israel's most committed non-Jewish supporters in the United States.

Two other factors encourage cooperation between Indian and Jewish Americans. First is a strong perception of commonality between Jews and Indians. Both are small minorities that enjoy comparatively high levels of education and wealth. Both also have similar value systems, particularly their commitment to education, family ties, and respect for tradition. Moreover, both have had to cope with prejudice and discrimination, against which Jews have fought successfully.

The second major factor driving cooperation are shared concerns and interests. In particular, both sides (at least a part of the Jewish community) support medical-malpractice reform, the development of hate crime legislation, and improvement of immigrant rights. Although the latter is no longer a particular Jewish concern, American Jews, who remember the price the Jewish people paid when America's doors were closed during World War II, are ready to assist the Indians. But the key driver of Indian-Jewish cooperation in the United States, and its most visible and far-reaching results so far are found not in domestic, but in foreign, defense and nuclear policies.

Indian-Jewish cooperation to support common security and defense interests: Islamic terrorism, Israel's Phalcon deal with India and the U.S.-India nuclear deal

Foremost among the shared concerns of the two communities is the fight against Islamic radicalism and terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East and South Asia, which are serious challenges for both India and Israel. Jewish and Indian groups in the

United States support the formation of deeper Indo-Israeli-U.S. ties to combat the spread of Islamic fundamentalism and militancy. American Jewish lobbies have consistently supported Indian concerns within the U.S. political establishment. They have helped garner U.S. support for India on the Kashmir issue. In 2003, for instance, they joined Indian voices in the Congress requesting an amendment to a \$3 billion U.S. aid package for Pakistan. The amendment, which was adopted, called on Pakistan to cease the transfer of weapons of mass destruction and related technologies to any third country or terrorist organization, and to stop cross-border attacks on India.

In addition, American Jewish and Indian advocacy groups and lobbies have worked together to pressure the U.S. administration to endorse Israel's sales of "sensitive" weapons systems and technologies to India. In particular, whereas in 2003 USINPAC, AJC and AIPAC failed to convince the U.S. administration to let India purchase Israel's Arrow anti-ballistic missile defense system, in 2004 the role of joint Indo-Jewish lobbying was instrumental in obtaining the Bush administration's approval of Israel's sale of the Phalcon aerial reconnaissance aircraft to India.

Finally, the assistance of American Jewish lobbies was essential for securing the U.S.-India Civil Nuclear Agreement, colloquially called the "U.S.-India Nuclear Deal." The framework for this agreement was a July 18, 2005 joint statement by Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and U.S. President George W. Bush, under which India agreed to separate its civil and military nuclear facilities and to place all civil nuclear facilities under International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards; in exchange, the United States agreed to work toward full civil nuclear cooperation with India. This U.S.-India deal took more than three years to complete as it had to go through several complex stages, including amendment of U.S. domestic law, adoption of a civil-military nuclear separation plan in India, conclusion of an India-IAEA safeguards agreement and grant of an exemption to India by the Nuclear Suppliers Group, an export-control body that had been formed largely in response to India's first nuclear test in 1974. The deal represented a watershed in international relations, not

only because it ended India's international isolation in certain scientific and technological fields, but even more because it signaled the U.S. decision to treat India henceforth as a major power on par in nuclear matters with other permanent members of the UN Security Council. This meant that in the future, India was no longer to be judged by the criteria applied to Pakistan, Israel, North Korea, or Iran who refused to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty or had broken it. However, important members of Congress whose support was critical were still skeptical. As these members were also friends of Israel, American Jewish advocacy groups put considerable energy into lobbying individual Congress members and persuading them of the benefits to the U.S. of such an agreement with India. The deal was finally approved in 2008. Neither Israel nor American Jewry has asked India for a quid pro quo for its political support. Thus, American Jewish organizations hope that their support in this particular case too would be an "investment in the future."

Jewish outreach to the Indian diaspora in the United Kingdom

The rise of the Indian community in the United Kingdom

Indian migration to the United Kingdom, primarily a by-product of the British Raj, began in in the 19th century, long before Indian migration to the United States. According to the 2011 UK Census, in England and Wales alone, Indians number approximately 1.4 million – 2.5 percent of the total population (others maintain that the true figure exceeds 1.8 million). They constitute the single largest ethnic minority group, followed by the Pakistanis. The number of Jews is less than 300,000.⁶¹

The Indian community has become one of the most educated and highest earning ethnic groups in the UK. British Indians occupy important positions in the media and entertainment industries, in business and in cutting-edge science and technology sectors.

In contrast with Indian Americans, British Indians have a long tradition of involvement in public service and political life. As early as 1892, a Parsi

Indian, one of the key initiators of the Indian National Congress, was elected to the House of Commons. Since the late 1980s, the number of British Indian Members of Parliament has been growing. Eight were elected in 2010, compared to 24 Jews, which shows that the Indians still have a way to go. British Indians have also been actively participating at the local level of government, notably as elected mayors and council members.

Similar to Indian Americans and Jews who mainly support the Democrats, British Indians have traditionally supported the Labour Party over the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats – although some suggest that this may be changing. All three national political parties, have established “Friends of India” groups to promote ties with the British Indian community and win their votes. The Liberal Democrats have even chosen a British Indian as their chairman in the House of Lords.

Links between the Indian and Jewish communities in the United Kingdom

In 1996, leading members of the British Hindu and Jewish communities founded the Indian-Jewish Association, thereby formalizing a friendly relationship that had already been flourishing for two decades. The association not only includes Jews and Hindus, but also Indian Sikhs and Muslims. Its main mission is to advance links and stronger bonds between the Indian and Jewish communities in the United Kingdom, and it has done so through the organization of a wide range of activities, from seminars and lectures to receptions and film screenings.

Beyond educational and cultural activities, the association has also promoted a number of programs on domestic issues of common concern to the two communities. For instance, a group brings Indian and Jewish students together to discuss shared challenges of racial and religious discrimination and harassment on university campuses. Indian and Jewish professionals also meet regularly to discuss common legal and human rights concerns, education and welfare issues, and security matters. However, these links are still weaker and less significant than

U.S. Indo-Jewish cooperation. There is little or no cooperation between formal Jewish and Indian advocacy groups seeking to gain influence in the British Parliament or affect government policies, domestic or foreign, particularly those pertaining to Israel and the Middle East. One reason for this is a more passive or more complacent political attitude of British Jews in comparison to their American counterparts, partly born of a suspicion that British Jewry is losing political clout.

The close links forged between U.S. Jewish and Indian lobbies and advocacy groups have no parallel elsewhere. The United States may be a unique case, as the separation of powers in its system of government makes the legislature infinitely more responsive to grassroots lobbying and advocacy than in traditional parliamentary systems. Nevertheless, developing similar links and friendly bonds between the Indian and Jewish communities in countries such as Canada, Australia, South Africa, and France, where there are substantial Jewish and Indian communities, should be strongly encouraged and pursued. This would require, among other things, an Israeli initiative, and at least some cooperation between Israel's Foreign and Diaspora Ministries.

The links between Israel and the Jewish Diaspora: examples India might follow

The quantitative importance of the rapidly growing Indian diaspora and the substantial impact of diaspora remittances on the Indian economy was discussed earlier. Qualitative issues are no less important. For a country like India, one of the main challenges the formation of a diaspora raises for the homeland is the brain drain, the cost of losing skilled and highly skilled professionals. On the other hand, the benefits a diaspora brings to the homeland, in this case India, include not only remittances, but also the promotion of trade, investment, and other ties between the country of residence and India. These allow for the exchange of knowledge and expertise. Furthermore, such ties can be a major source of political support worldwide. The success in leveraging the opportunities offered by overseas Indian communities is greatly

dependent on the latter's willingness and ability (in particular, of second- and third-generation migrants) to preserve a distinct Indian identity and maintain a strong attachment to India. This, in turn, requires policies to establish partnerships between India and its global diaspora. This is a new challenge for India, which has no historical experience on which it might base such policies. Since 2000, India has begun to recognize the importance of relations with its diaspora. Therefore, in 2004, the Indian government established a ministry dedicated to the issues and interests of the community of people of Indian origin worldwide – the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs.

By 2000, India had become convinced that it could learn from the Israel-Diaspora partnership. The executive summary of a 2001 report produced by the Indian government's High Level Committee on the Indian Diaspora highlighted that "the contribution of the Diaspora to Israel in the economic, political and cultural spheres contained important lessons for India. The activities of Jewish lobbies outside Israel, particularly in the U.S. Congress, their extensive fund-raising abilities, large-scale funding for the scientific and technological development of Israel, their global networks which link Jewish associations and organizations worldwide as well as with the State of Israel, could serve as an example."⁶² The report devoted nearly ten pages to the Jewish Diaspora, including a description of the specific "schemes" and "incentives" put into place by Israel "for fostering close links" with the Diaspora, a detailed account of the organizational structures dealing with Diaspora affairs, and the "relevance of Israeli experience in the Indian context."⁶³ Curiously, Israel and the Jewish people have barely noticed that their historical experience has provided them influence or soft power with India, and that this soft power could be used to strengthen links between India, Israel, and the Jewish people.

While the Israel-Diaspora relationship is unique in the sense that Diaspora communities comprise Jews who for the most part have no direct experience of having lived in Israel, rather than Israeli migrants, it provides useful lessons for other homeland-diaspora cooperative projects. Many Jews, even those who have never been to Israel, have a

feeling of attachment to the Jewish state, which translates into political, economic, philanthropic, and academic support for Israel. This support is channeled through a complex infrastructure with efficient mechanisms that involve governmental, non-governmental, and private actors both in Israel and abroad.

The Center for International Migration and Integration (CIMI), a Jerusalem-based organization founded by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (the JDC, commonly known as the Joint), provides advice and expertise to governments as well as non-governmental and international organizations on how to develop and strengthen homeland-diaspora ties and leverage the opportunities for a strong partnership. The Israel-Diaspora relationship and its existing organizational structure and mechanisms are used as a case study. CIMI has already undertaken several projects for Eastern European and South American countries, including the Moldova and Serbia Homeland-Diaspora Projects and the Migration and Diaspora for Development initiative in El Salvador. These programs could serve as a basis for similar programs conducted in partnership with the Indian government and Indian organizations. There are three key areas in particular where India can draw upon the extensive experience of the Israel-Diaspora partnership.

How to mobilize political support from Indian diaspora communities worldwide on issues of vital concern to India

The 2001 report of the Committee on the Indian Diaspora noted: “Based on its economic strength and political influence, the Jewish Diaspora had a positive impact in promoting the concerns of Israel and of Jewish communities worldwide in fostering close and friendly bilateral relations between the host countries and Israel” and suggested that the Indian Diaspora “take its cue from the Jewish example.”⁶⁴

In fact, as already described, in the United States, Jewish and pro-Israeli advocacy groups and lobbies have served as organizational and developmental models and have provided strong support for the formation of Indian organizations and lobbies. There is potential for

similar partnerships between the Jewish and Indian diaspora communities in other countries, such as the United Kingdom, Canada, or Australia, as well as for dialogue and cooperation on this subject between Indian and Israeli authorities.

How to increase diaspora communities' philanthropic contributions to India

The 2001 report on the Indian diaspora stressed: “The Jewish Diaspora’s special role in the economic development of Israel is worthy of adaptation and emulation in the Indian context,” expressly mentioning the relevance of the funds and technical expertise channeled from overseas Jewish communities to Israeli science and technology research institutions and projects, as well as to Israel Bonds. Diaspora Jews, and to a lesser degree Israeli expats, raise millions of dollars each year for Israel, much of it through annual fundraising campaigns. These funds help to support universities, research institutes, forests, museums, hospitals, and more.

How to strengthen the diaspora’s and, in particular, young diaspora Indians’ attachment to India

The 2001 report on the Indian diaspora took special note of the Taglit-Birthright Israel program. This program, initiated in 1994 by two prominent Jewish philanthropists in cooperation with the Israeli government, the Jewish Agency, and several other Jewish organizations, has already brought to Israel hundreds of thousands of young Jews from the Diaspora. The program aims at strengthening the young participants’ Jewish identity, sense of belonging to the Jewish people, and feeling of attachment to the Jewish state. Following the model of the Taglit program, the Indian Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs established in 2002 an “Internship Programme for Diaspora Youth,” which has since been named the “Know India Programme.” It is a three-week trip designed to expose young diaspora Indians to India’s society, culture, and economy to promote closer bonds between India and its diaspora. The program includes visits to historical sites and Indian villages, interactions with senior government

officials, journalists and NGOs, as well as a series of cultural activities. By 2013, over 600 young diaspora Indians had participated.

There are several other programs and mechanisms set up by the Israeli government to strengthen links with and between young Jews worldwide. Many of them could be emulated by India.

Encouraging an Indian-Israeli-Jewish dialogue on how to maintain identity

The Indo-Israeli-Jewish interaction on diaspora affairs should not remain a one-way dialogue. The Indian and Jewish diasporas worldwide face a number of common challenges. A central concern of the two communities and their countries of historical origin is the loss of identity, growing intermarriage, and complete assimilation into the host society. According to Pew Research Center data, just three-in-ten Indian Americans (29 percent) see as important that future generation of Indians living in the United States will speak Hindi or another Indian language. And although the intermarriage rate of Indian Americans is just 14 percent, much lower than that of the Jews and other ethnic groups in the United States, including the Chinese and Filipinos, there is some Indian concern that the rate will grow in the coming years.

Another matter of reflection common to the two communities is the question of whether overseas diaspora communities should enjoy citizenship and benefit from political rights in their homeland. Jews from any country, whether they have or have not lived in Israel, can acquire Israeli citizenship under the Law of Return. However, the right of absentee voting does not exist under Israeli law and, therefore, an Israeli citizen can only vote if he or she is physically present in Israel. There have been recent calls to soften this legislation, opening the possibility for first-generation migrant Israelis to continue voting in legislative elections in the first four years after leaving Israel, which could contribute to “strengthening and preserving their attachment to Israel.”⁶⁵ As for Indians, they do not even enjoy the right of dual citizenship. Once they acquire the citizenship of another country, Indians automatically lose their Indian citizenship and

voting rights. The long-standing demand of the Indian diaspora to change this has to date been rejected. Still, the Indian government has tempered the prohibition of dual citizenship by issuing Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) cards, available since 2005. OCI cards confer to Indian nationals unlimited lifetime entry into India and a host of economic privileges, such as the right to own property and hold investments there.

Religious Dialogues: Hindus and Jews; Indian Muslims and Jews

Jewish-Hindu dialogue

India presents itself as a secular state, but its people are deeply religious, more so than most Westerners, including, in part, Israelis. Many modern, Westernized Indian businessmen or scientists continue to perform the daily religious ceremonies of the Hindu faith in their homes. In the early 1990s American Jewish organizations began to reach out to Indian Americans in an effort to form and strengthen links. Several interfaith programs bringing Hindus and Jews together were initiated. In the United Kingdom too, a dialogue between the sizeable Hindu and Jewish communities is underway. In 2005, the UK chief rabbi met with the secretary general of the Hindu Forum of Britain (the largest representative body of British Hindus). Alongside this historic meeting, British Hindu and Jewish religious and political leaders, scholars and intellectuals gathered to discuss cooperation between the two communities.

But the most significant initiative to date has been the holding of Hindu-Jewish summits successively in New Delhi (2007), Jerusalem (2008) and Washington (2009). The Hindu delegation included prominent religious and spiritual leaders from the Hindu Dharma Acharya Sabha, an organization with influence over millions of worshippers in India and around the world. The first meeting was attended by one of Israel's chief rabbis and other members of its Rabbinate. Members of the U.S. Congress and administration joined the third meeting.

The religious leaders agreed on a number of common principles, the most important of which was the agreement of both parties that there is “One Supreme Being who is the Ultimate Reality, who has created this world” (First Declaration). The Second Declaration explains that the Hindu does not worship “gods” and “idols” but “relates to only the One Supreme Being when he/she prays to a particular manifestation.”⁶⁶ By positioning Hinduism as monotheistic, the Hindu delegation allowed the Orthodox rabbis to co-sign a statement of spiritual compatibility. At the same time, the Hindus, who had been under Muslim and Christian pressure for centuries, were satisfied to receive confirmation from representatives of the first monotheistic religion that Hinduism, too, could be expressed in a monotheistic language.⁶⁷ The fact that neither Judaism nor Hinduism is a missionary religion, is another important point of commonality.

The First Declaration also recalled a shared memory of “painful experiences of persecution, oppression, and destruction” – a reminder that the driving force behind this effort to establish affinities was political and strategic at least as much as spiritual. On the Jewish agenda was the obvious concern about the growing wave of anti-Semitism and de-legitimization of the Jewish state. Thus, a Hindu recognition of the legitimacy of the Jewish people and state was timely and welcome. Bawa Jain, Secretary General of the World Council of Religious Leaders and a main initiator of the Hindu-Jewish dialogue, responded well to the Jewish concern: “In the coming together of the world’s two oldest religions, I see great prospects for furthering strategic relations between India-Israel and India-Israel and the U.S.” The Hindu delegation hoped that a rapprochement between Hindus and Jews would result in some political benefit for India in Washington, considering the perceived Jewish influence in the United States. Jewish representatives had hopes similar to those of Bawa Jain. As Rabbi David Rosen of the AJC, one of the main organizers of the meeting, once said, “diplomatic and political relations are by definition transient and can be superficial.”⁶⁸

Hindu and Jewish leaders in India, Israel, and the United States expressed their satisfaction with the beginning dialogue, and it was reported that

the first meeting in New Delhi had a resonant echo among India's Hindus. No similar echo came back from the Jewish and Israeli side. Jews did not grasp the long-term geopolitical importance of possible friendship links with the more than one billion Hindus in India and across the world. Most were indifferent, and strictly Orthodox Jews were hostile to any relations with a non-Jewish religion.

Still, these meetings opened a discussion of Hinduism by a few Orthodox Jewish scholars guided by traditional Jewish law, the *halacha*. According to halacha, non-Jews must abide by the "Seven Noahide Laws" to avoid being branded as "idolatrous." Rabbi Alon Goshen-Gottstein, who is knowledgeable about Hinduism, quotes the opinion of Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz that Hinduism and Buddhism are "adequately monotheist, adequately non-idolatrous, and at least adequately ethical." Hence, according to Steinsaltz, they qualify as compliant with the Noahid laws.⁶⁹ It must be added that this conclusion applies to Hindu theology, not necessarily to all practices or beliefs of individual Hindu worshippers. Further, it does not apply to Jews: they are subject to stricter anti-idolatry rules than non-Jews. Rabbi Steinsaltz and other rabbinic scholars came to this conclusion by using the same criteria that Rabbinic authorities of Medieval Europe had used to exempt Christianity from the charge of idolatry. Such exemption was necessary lest Jews be precluded from trade with Christians. Thus, according to this opinion, what applies to Christianity applies to Hinduism as well. Even if most Orthodox scholars and decision makers are unlikely to support this view today, at least a critical theological debate can now begin. It has to begin in view of India's growing importance for the world, and for Israel.

However, if the Jews did not understand the potential strategic significance of these meetings, the Muslims did. The meetings sparked violent protests by Muslims in and outside India because they suspected the emergence of an anti-Islamic alliance. Hostile comments were widespread in India's Muslim media. This was certainly one of the main reasons why the Indian government, always fearful of possible inter-communal violence, did not encourage a continuation of such meetings. No further summit of Hindu

and Jewish leaders has taken place since 2009. There could be additional reasons. Some statements by Hindu representatives seem to indicate a trend toward greater Hindu self-assurance. These statements do not seek affinities with monotheistic religions, but speak of the self-evident superiority and universalism of Hinduism.⁷⁰

Irrespective of changing government concerns, Jews and Israelis who do not speak for the government should continue to seek dialogue with Hindu representatives and look for common ground. Some Orthodox Jewish scholars of religion are taking a new look at Hindu theology, rather than Hindu practice.⁷¹ If the current time is deemed to be inappropriate for public meetings between religious leaders, then at least there should be a regular dialogue between Hindu and Jewish religious scholars. Non-governmental Jewish organizations in Israel, in the U.S. and in the UK should take the lead, not the Israeli government.

Jewish-Muslim dialogue

Many references in this book emphasize the decisive influence the internal and external Muslim factor has had on India's Israel policies. Furthermore, the influence of India's Muslims goes beyond India. They have many personal, spiritual, and political links with other South Asian Muslims. There are more than 600 million Urdu-, Bengali- and other Indian language-speaking Muslims in this region. As emphasized earlier, there is no uniform Muslim hostility to Israel in India. Although many Muslims are hostile, many others do not know or care about this or any other foreign policy issue. Some seek peace and express a more balanced view of Israel. For longer than 1,000 years, until the late 20th century, Indian Jews and Muslims lived together in peace and generally maintained friendly relations, even during the 300 year-period when most of India was ruled by the Muslim Mughals. In no other country in the world did peaceful relations between Jews and Muslims last so long. The deterioration of these ties in the early 21st century, especially since the 2008 Mumbai attacks, is a small historical tragedy within the greater tragedy of the global rift between Muslims and Jews. In Mumbai, many

Jews do no longer feel safe in Muslim neighborhoods and have, in recent years, moved out to settle in other neighborhoods.

Still, not all Indian Muslims were equally critical of the three recent Hindu-Jewish summits discussed above. Some Muslim leaders and organizations responded positively, seeing the arrival of a Jewish delegation in India as an opportunity to approach Jewish religious leaders. A gathering of senior representatives from all religions present in India was organized on the margins of the summit in New Delhi. It was the occasion for a rare and significant meeting between the Jewish delegation and senior Muslim religious dignitaries, including the president of the All India Council of Mosques and Imams (AICMI). The AICMI claims to have influence over almost two hundred million Sunni Muslim adherents. Jewish and Indian Muslim leaders issued a joint statement emphasizing the common values and history shared by Muslims and Jews, and pledged “to promote the sanctity of life and to advance justice and peace.”⁷² This initial exchange resulted in two high-profile visits of Indian Muslim leaders to Israel, facilitated by the American Jewish Committee and the Australia Israel Jewish Affairs Council. In 2007, the son of AICMI’s president visited Israel in his invited father’s stead after the latter yielded to protests by Indian Muslims and the Muslim press. In 2008, and protests notwithstanding, the AICMI president finally made a five-day visit to Israel where he met with political and religious leaders. One can thus say that the meetings between rabbis and Indian Muslim leaders developed as a spin-off of the Hindu-Jewish summits.

Zionist leaders, as mentioned earlier, were aware of the importance of India’s Muslims long before Israel’s independence. Chaim Weizmann, for instance, reached out to Indian Muslim leaders before he tried to engage with the leadership of the Indian National Congress.⁷³ Jewish and Israeli efforts to establish ties with the Indian Muslim community and improve mutual understanding had and still have a double-aim: to allow friendship between India and Israel by reducing the negative impact of the Muslim factor on India’s Israel policies, and to fracture the wall of global Muslim hostility that Israel’s Arab enemies have endeavored to build around Israel.

In recent years, Israel has increased its efforts to reach out to India's Muslims. In 2008, the Israeli Embassy in New Delhi launched a website in Hindi and Urdu, the language most commonly spoken by Indian and Pakistani Muslims, offering a wide range of information on Israel. Israel also attempts to reach India's Muslims through the press. The Embassy provides Urdu newspapers with short articles on Indo-Israeli cooperation in such areas as technology, and agriculture, and sometimes these articles also appear in the Urdu press. A visit by Israel's ambassador to the Ajmer Sharif Darga, the most holy Muslim site in India, during Ramadan in 2010 was another effort to convey a message of peace and tolerance to India's Muslims. This visit was covered widely in India's Urdu, English, and Hindi press.

It is clear that current Indian Muslim hostility to Israel and the Jewish people is not entirely homegrown. It is stoked by advice, propaganda, and money flowing in from some of the Middle East's oil-rich Muslim states. There is no way Israel alone could compete with these efforts, neither in money nor in personnel. World Jewry, in particular American, European, and Australian Jews have a very important role to play in reaching out to India's Muslims. Jews can do what Israel cannot do, or cannot do alone. For Indian Muslim organizations and leaders who would agree to contact, it is always controversial, and sometimes outright dangerous to be seen linking up with Israel. So far, world Jewry has provided modest support, but more is needed.

Jewish NGOs and India's Civil Society

Several international (primarily American) Jewish organizations, including the Joint, the World Organization for Educational Resources and Technological Training (World ORT), and AJC have a permanent office or a resident representative in Mumbai, where most of the Indian Jewish community lives today. The Joint and World ORT are not newcomers. Their presence in India dates back many decades. The Joint launched its India operation in 1964 and has since developed a broad spectrum of activities, including welfare programs for poor and elderly Indian Jews, as well as educational, cultural, religious and social initiatives.

Many programs supported in India by international Jewish organizations are primarily designed to serve the needs of the small Jewish community. They are aimed at ensuring the continuity of Jewish life in India and empowering the young generation. Still, some programs are not only for Jews, but for other religious groups as well. The Indian branch of World ORT, for instance, offers Jewish education and Jewish-oriented activities, but also many technical training courses (computer, childcare, hairdressing, sewing, etc.) that are also attended by Muslim and Hindu pupils.

Moreover, on numerous occasions international Jewish organizations have provided emergency humanitarian aid to India's needy populations, whether Jewish or not. In 2001, after the Indian state of Gujarat was devastated by a strong earthquake, the Joint and AJC offered relief assistance to numerous villages, including for rebuilding damaged Hindu and Muslim schools. International Jewish organizations also supplied relief funds and support after the 2004 tsunami. At the time, AJC reached out to Indian and other South Asian religious and ethnic organizations across the United States to help raise relief funds. In addition, several international Jewish organizations participate in longer-term development programs for India's most vulnerable and poor communities. The American Jewish World Service (AJWS) supports about 50 development programs in India alone, in fields ranging from women's empowerment and tribal self-governance to sustainable agriculture and food security.

The significance of civil society development work in India by Jewish NGOs should not be ignored. Beyond following the Jewish tradition of *tikkun olam* ("mending the world") this work contributes to building bridges with the country's non-Jewish communities. Furthermore, some development projects in India have been undertaken by Jewish NGOs in cooperation with Israeli experts, NGOs, and governmental organizations. Thus, in 2011 three experts from the Israeli Trauma Coalition participated in a workshop on emergency preparedness organized by the Joint at Mumbai's King Edward Memorial Hospital. The Joint has also cooperated regularly with MASHAV, the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs agency for

international development cooperation. Such initiatives allow India to benefit from Israel's experience and expertise in emergency and disaster management. This too may strengthen the links between India, Israel, and the Jewish people. Many Jewish and pro-Israel NGOs have also been actively providing information on Israel, the Middle East, and Jewish issues to Indians. The Washington D.C.-based The Israel Project (TIP), in particular, had done important and valuable work reaching out to the Indian press, policymakers, and general public. TIP closed its operations in India in 2012.

Crosscurrents in 20th Century Literature: Jews in Indian Fiction and India in Jewish Fiction

Jews in Indian-language writings

For centuries, Indians and Jews have met in person, communicated through trade or “imagined” each other as in Hellenistic and Medieval times (discussed more fully in the next chapter).

Hindu Indians first heard of Judaism as a world religion in the 19th century.⁷⁴ In writings of the time one can find both respect for and rejection of Judaism. What was known in India was unrelated to the Jews of India but was spread by British Protestant missionaries. Some Hindu polemics against the Bible were meant to counter Christian missionary pressures. Even in the 20th century, some Indians, including Gandhi, wrote about Judaism in ways that showed that they saw Judaism through the prism of Christianity.⁷⁶ Other Hindu reactions to Judaism were positive which facilitated the three meetings between Hindu and Jewish religious leaders in 2007 and the following years described earlier.

As far as is known, the first Indian language novel with a Jewish theme appeared in 1939. The Marathi writer Vishram Bedekar (Marathi is the language of the State of Maharashtra and its capital Mumbai/Bombay) published a novel on the problematics of Jewish immigration to India.⁷⁷ It illustrates a particular issue of that time. Before World

War II, Gandhi, Nehru, and Indian intellectuals discussed the plight of Europe's persecuted Jews and the possibility of their immigration to India, but the British colonial authorities closed India's doors to fleeing Jews. A second, shorter novel, *Mozelle* was written after the war in another Indian language, Urdu. The writer Saadat Hassan Manto who moved from India to Pakistan in 1948 captured the violence of partition through the story of a Jewish woman in Bombay who saved the life of her former Sikh lover and his fiancé. *Mozelle* has been translated into English and French. Finally, in 2013, Sheela Rohekar, currently the only Hindi-language Indian Jewish writer, published her much anticipated novel *Miss Samuel: Ek Yahudi Gatha*. Rohekar describes the life of India's Bene Israel community 60 years after most had left for Israel. These three novels are not much known in India. Widely known in India, however, is the work of the country's most prominent Jewish poet, Nissim Ezekiel (1924-2004). He has been called the Indian-English poetry's "Father of Modernity." At least two of his poems allude to his experience as a young Jew in India. Ezekiel's allusions opened the way for a new Indian literary tradition.

Jews, Judaism, and Israel in India's Contemporary English-Language Fiction

In the late 20th century, 150 years after Jews had appeared in Western and Russian novels, they also became visible in Indian English-language literature. These books were more widely read, in and outside India. At least seven percent of the Indian population, approximately 100 million people or more, are estimated to read English, including a large proportion of the elites and many young professionals.

Today, India is blessed with many outstanding and internationally respected English fiction writers. For this chapter, 25 books have been reviewed. The authors are Aravind Adiga, Chetan Bhagat, Anita Desai, Amitav Gosh, V.S. Naipaul, Arundhati Roy, Salman Rushdie, Vikram Seth and Vikas Swarup. Most of these names appear on "ten most important Indian writers" lists found on the Internet.⁷⁸ Many of these authors have spent part of their lives outside India, mainly in America or Britain,

some live permanently there, and one, Naipaul, has never lived in India. Thus they have a foot in both worlds, the West and India, yet they are quintessentially Indian. They focus on Indian problems and want to speak to the Indian public. By 2013, four of these authors have published five books with major Jewish characters and themes. In addition, there are at least five more books by these and other authors containing important references to Jews or Judaism. A comprehensive list of the main works by all nine authors reviewed comprised more than 60 titles in 2013. Thus, five books about Jews and Judaism is not insignificant, considering that Jews have never played a critical role in Indian history.

***Four 20th Century Classics: Anita Desai, Amitav Gosh, Salman Rushdie, Vikram Seth*⁷⁹**

The first English-language book written by an Indian mainstream author with a Jew at its center is Anita Desai's *Baumgartner's Bombay* of 1988. Baumgartner is a refugee from Nazi Germany who survives in India while his parents perish in the Holocaust. After 1945, he is murdered by a German drug addict he had helped but who needed more money – a senseless, tragic death. Wherever Baumgartner lives he remains a foreigner. Many of Desai's books are about common people who straddle different cultures and are destined to fail.

Vikram Seth's 2005 *Two Lives* is also about the Holocaust. Seth writes about his Indian granduncle who married a German Jewish woman. Her family was murdered in Nazi Germany. Seth goes to Israel and searches the records of Yad Vashem, the Holocaust museum, for details of their deportation and deaths. He describes the silent suffering of his great-aunt with remarkable sensitivity – but ends the book with a two-page polemic against Israel. His combination of deep sympathy for the dead Jews of the Holocaust with equally deep antipathy for the living ones of Israel can be found increasingly in some Western circles.

Amitav Gosh's 1992 *In An Antique Land* is about the life, writings, and wanderings of one of the great Jewish India traders of the 12th century, the Egyptian Abraham Ben Yiju. Gosh learned medieval Judeo-Arabic in order

to read the sources about him in the original. He interspersed this tale with scenes from his own life as a student in Egypt. When he wanted to visit the grave of a Jewish saint buried in Egypt, the local police turns him back. He invests this incident with symbolic significance. He understands that the happy symbiosis of Jewish, Arab, and Indian culture in Ben Yiju's century has been destroyed for good, and that Egypt no longer has a place for Jews and their culture.

Finally, Salman Rushdie has written two novels with Jewish "heroes," if one can call them such. *The Moor's Last Sigh* from 1995 describes a fictional Jew from Cochin in Kerala, Abraham Zogoiby, a descendent of Jews who fled Spain in the 15th century. He is expelled by his community after he marries a Christian and becomes a major criminal, a trafficker of weapons and women. Among other crimes, he finances the nuclear armament of one of Israel's unspecified enemies and is finally blown up by Bombay's most dangerous fictitious Hindu crime syndicates. This is the only Indian novel by a mainstream writer that refers to India's own Jews.

Rushdie's 2005 novel *Shalimar The Clown* is about a fictional American Jew, Max Ophuls, who had escaped Nazi-occupied France. He becomes U.S. Ambassador to India. There he seduces the beautiful wife of a Kashmiri Muslim who murders him 20 years later. In the meantime he was also the U.S. secret anti-terrorism chief and shed a lot of innocent blood. The book reads like a critical metaphor of the perceived anti-Muslim alliance between the United States and the Jews under the Bush administration. Both of Rushdie's fictional Jews are exceptionally brilliant and rich, and both are serial philanderers and law-breakers who meet a violent end. Rushdie is no more anti-Semitic than he is anti-Muslim, anti-Christian, or anti-Hindu, he is bitter and cynical. However, these two novels transplant to India anti-Jewish images born in the West. In his 1988 novel *The Satanic Verses*, his portrayal of Jews is understanding and sympathetic. Rushdie is the Indian author with the broadest knowledge of Jews, both Indian and Western.

Desai, Seth, Gosh, and Rushdie's books reflect, to some extent, the image of Jews some Indian elites and intellectuals had while the Congress Party

was in power. There is sympathy for the victims of the Holocaust but not for Israel, and little understanding of Jewish history or culture.

Two Radical Writers: V.S. Naipaul and Arundhati Roy

There are other, more radical Indian writers, who express contradictory opinions. One is V.S. Naipaul, the most prolific Indian expat writer, and a Nobel laureate. None of his books has more than fleeting references to Jews, but most are full of his rage against Islam and the Arabs who, in his view, have “vandalized” India. He visited several Muslim countries twice, in 1981 and 1995. He reports about the vicious, widespread anti-Semitism he found in each of these countries – a fact that India did not wish to acknowledge during the decades it was hostile to Israel and allied with the Arab world.⁸⁰ Another radical writer is Arundhati Roy, arguably the best-known radical left-wing author of India.⁸¹ She, like Naipaul, is also full of rage – but against the perceived discrimination against Muslims and other “under-dogs” in India, and about the allegedly daily “genocide” perpetrated by Israel against the Palestinians. At least Roy is not a hypocrite. Whereas Seth attacked only Israel, Roy regards both her own country, India, and the United States as no better, if not worse. Neither Naipaul nor Roy seems to be interested in Jews. On the Arabs and Israel, they represent two different Indian opinion trends that have always been present – although today greater numbers are said to support Israel.

New Voices of the 21st Century

Between 2004 and 2014, several new, hitherto unknown Indian English-language novelists emerged on the scene. Aravind Adiga, Vikas Swarup, and Chetan Bhagat are among the most prominent.⁸² Bhagat writes about young Indians, their lives and dreams, but is little known abroad. By 2008, he was India’s best-selling English-language novelist of all time, with 7 million copies of his novels sold. Adiga’s *The White Tiger* from 2008 became world-famous. It is about the life and dreams of a low-caste servant who despises his rich, callous master and finally kills him. Arguably, this is both the most hilarious and most serious book about India ever written by an

Indian. Swarup is an Indian diplomat in active service. He wrote a novel that became the basis for the Hollywood blockbuster *Slumdog Millionaire*. In another book he ridicules a gang of Muslim terrorists who kidnapped an American and end up being killed by the CIA.

These three authors are neither “classical” nor “radical,” they are the new voice of Indian literature. They speak to India’s youth as no novelist has before. They are funny as well as deeply concerned. They flay India’s failings – corruption, incompetence, dirt, theft, cruelty – in a jocular way, kill India’s “holy cows” one by one and mock the “losers,” the governments that have ruled India since independence. Foreign affairs in general and the Middle East in particular do not seem to interest them. These authors are true patriots. They want India to be great, but they know that the country must change profoundly if it wants to rise. Their books preceded Modi’s victory by a few years, and their young readers helped to bring him to power because he promised change. In India as in other countries, literature is not only a reflection of dominant or minority opinion trends, it can serve as a precursor of deep societal and political change.

The Mirror Question: India in Jewish and Israeli Fiction

What is the image of India in Jewish and Israeli fiction? How does this image compare to the image of the Jews in Indian fiction? We have been able to identify only two Jewish novelists who wrote about India in English or Hebrew: the Indian Jewish writer Esther David and the Israeli Abraham B. Yehoshua. In addition, a number of Indian travel books have responded to the allure India has exerted on Israeli and Jewish minds, which began long before there were diplomatic relations between India and Israel. Some of these books are of high literary quality. For example, the India travel book of Azriel Carlebach, one of Israel’s most prestigious early journalists, published in 1956 in Hebrew, or *Spring, Heat, Rains – A South Indian Diary* from 2009 by the Israeli scholar David Shulman.⁸³ But these and others are not books of fiction.

Esther David

Esther David, born to a Bene Israel family in Ahmedabad, the capital of Gujarat, wrote several novels about the Jews of India that are partly fictional and partly autobiographical. Although some of her books have been translated into Gujarati, she has no national following in India comparable to that of the Indian fiction writers mentioned and is not widely known in the Jewish world either.⁸⁴

One novel, *The Walled City*, is about Jewish life in the old city of Ahmedabad at the time of independence (1947). The “walls” evoke not only old Ahmedabad, they are a metaphor for the invisible walls that separated India’s religions, languages, and castes. These “walls” allowed India’s Jews to maintain their identity and avoid assimilation. In 1947, the walls begin to fall. A little Jewish girl, Esther, befriends a Hindu girl who invites her home. She is received warmly but is told that as a “meat-eater” she is not allowed to enter a Hindu kitchen. She has guilt feelings and questions her Jewishness – until her grandmother convinces the entire family to move to the newly created State of Israel. The story describes the dilemmas of India’s Jews after 1947 and the reasons for their emigration. Esther David is not blind to India’s dark sides, but her description of the country’s sounds, smells, colors, and textures, the music, food, spices, and fragrances brings the “magic of India” to life like no other novel. Her love for India and everything Indian appears on each page. Her later book, *Rachel*, describes the life of an old Jewish woman at the turn of the 21st century. She had refused to accompany her children to Israel. Her duty is to clean and guard the now empty synagogue of her village. She is deeply disturbed when “her” synagogue, which no longer has any worshippers, is about to be sold. But the attorney who prepares the transaction papers has a vision one night – the Prophet Elijah appears to him miraculously, which puts an end to the sale. In India, religion still very much informs everyday life. There is a sad atmosphere in this story, which closes 1,000 years of history. Only the affection of Rachel’s Hindu neighbors provides comfort. Still, India’s image continues to shine brightly.

Abraham B. Yehoshua

A.B. Yehoshua is a fifth-generation Israeli novelist of world fame. His 1996 book, *Open Heart*, (in the Hebrew original, *Return from India*), was an instant success.⁸⁵ It was translated into many languages and adapted, in 2002, into an Israeli film. *Return from India* is a complicated love story set in Israel and India. The story is also a discreet homage to the tens of thousands of young Israelis who are deeply attracted to India, but Yehoshua questions their motives. Are they naïve seekers of truth and spirituality who need a respite from Israel? Are they youngsters who could not fulfill their ambitions and look for ways to escape? Two doctors travel to India to bring home a young Israeli woman, an India-lover, who contracted a life-threatening illness. The two are first shocked by the sight of the poor, the sick, and the dying in the streets, but slowly their preconceptions begin to change. Are our Western views about the sense of life and death the only valid ones? Could we not learn something from India's views?

Esther David's and Yehoshua's books contain a dose of enthusiasm, even love for India, but it is unrequited love. No similar love has, so far, been returned by the Indian novelists who have written about Jews, Judaism, and Israel. But it is still early in the day. Indian and Jewish fiction writers have only just begun to discover each other's history and culture.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Many of these poems were collected for the first time, saved for posterity and published in a bilingual Malayalam-Hebrew edition by Israeli and Keralese scholars: *Karkuli – Yefefiah – Gorgeous ! Jewish Womens's Songs in Malayalam with Hebrew Translations*, ed. Scaria Zacharia and Ophira Gamliel, Ben-Zvi Institute: Jerusalem, 2005.
- 2 There was until recently very little research on Western Jews settling in India. The most important contribution is Kenneth X. Robbins and Marvin Tokayer, eds., *Western Jews in India: From the Fifteenth Century to the Present*, New Delhi, Manohar, 2013.
- 3 Maina Chawla Singh, *Being Indian, Being Israeli – Migration, Ethnicity and Gender in the Jewish Homeland*, New Delhi, Manohar, 2009, 106. M.C. Singh is a sociologist (and wife of a former Indian Ambassador to Israel) who carried our extensive research among Indian Jews in Israel. Her interviews brought this motive to light.
- 4 On Toynbee and the Jews, see Shalom Salomon Wald, *Rise and Decline of Civilizations – Lessons for the Jewish People*, Boston, Academic Studies Press, 2014, 77 ff.
- 5 On “virtual history,” see Nial Ferguson, *Virtual History*, London, Penguin Books, 2011
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- 10 *Interview of Gandhi to the Daily Herald*, March 16, 1921. He reiterated this position in two later articles written in *Young India*, a journal he published at the time weekly to spread his ideology and thoughts, especially on issues related to the struggle for independence.
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- 22 Shimon Lev, op. cit. 16.
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- 27 Benny Morris "Einstein's Other Theory," *The Guardian*, <http://theguardian.com/world/2005/feb/16/israel.india>, February 16, 2005. The Einstein-Nehru correspondence surfaced a few years ago in Israeli Archives. The full text of both letters has never been published side-by-side as far as we could ascertain. The historian Benny Morris quotes extensively from both letters and comments upon them.
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CHAPTER FIVE

EXCURSION INTO HISTORY: ANCIENT AND MEDIIEVAL TRACES

Civilizations have touched and influenced each other all throughout history. Written documents, archaeological discoveries, linguistics, or the new field of human genetics can reveal when and where such encounters have taken place. But more often they cannot, and the probability of an early civilizational encounter has to be left to the judgment and intuition of a later generation. But why should a book about geopolitics of the 20th and 21st century, more precisely about India, the Middle East, Israel, and the Jews end with a chapter about long-forgotten history? Earlier chapters have referred more than once to the importance that Israel's founding father David Ben-Gurion, Moshe Sharett and others, and India's leaders, particularly Prime Minister Narendra Modi, attach to the old links between India and the Jewish people. Today, interest in such links, even fascination with them, can be found beyond political or esoteric academic circles, particularly among some Indians. But why is this important today? Some Indian scholars balk at the notion of explaining modern India through the prism of ancient India. They have a point, but when a relationship between two nations is growing deeper, it is often followed and supported by a search for affinities beyond contemporary material interests. Common history, shared values, and affinities have been drivers of history, not only geopolitical and material interests. Listening to the daily political noise emanating from many countries in competition or in conflict, it is clear that values and affinities remain drivers of history.

Hence, the challenge which this chapter tries to take up is “to hear the echoes that connect, however tenuously, two ancient civilizations, each richly endowed with experience of God and of the world,” to quote the Hebrew University scholar Prof. David Shulman.¹ Can Indian and Jewish civilizations have a dialogue on a deeper emotional, philosophical, or religious level? Are there affinities between the two? What can we infer from the many low-key historical encounters between the two?

Indian civilization has touched ancient Israel, Judaism, and the Jewish people in one way or another over 3,000 years or more. India was never more than a minor influence, but it was a continuous one. Apart from India’s old contacts with China, India had few longer lasting contacts with other foreign and still living civilizations than those it had with old Israel and the Jews. The Jewish relationship cannot compare to the enormous history-shaping influence Islam has had on India in the last 1,300 years, but the Jewish link is more than twice as old and has never been problematic. Speaking of “encounters” between the Indian and Jewish civilizations could seem an overstatement, at least until the 18th century. Certainly, there has been a long Jewish monologue on India, but was there a dialogue? Did a response come back from India? Ancient Israel, Jewish civilization, and the Jews of India were receptive to Indian words, ideas, and goods, but there is no evidence of cultural influence flowing in the opposite direction prior to the 18th century – unless the historians have missed evidence of such in the regions where Jews lived for many centuries, the Konkan south of Mumbai and Kerala. There, Jews were well known to the local political powers, which sometimes granted them political and economic privileges. But Indians, apart from Indian Muslims and Christians, of course, did not see “their” Jews as branches of an old, global civilization and it is not known whether they absorbed Jewish cultural symbols or expressions into their own cultures, or they did it only indirectly, through Muslim and Christian influence. This is changing only now, as a consequence of globalization, India’s rise and outreach to the rest of the world and the emergence of the Jewish people as a new political actor in Israel and the Diaspora.

The following chapters are flashlights that try to illuminate a few ancient encounters between the Indian and Jewish civilizations. These chapters are inevitably incomplete and tentative. A comprehensive history of Indo-Judaic encounters has yet to be written and would require several specialized historians.

Comparing Indian and Jewish Civilization: A Western Tradition

Comparing the Indian and Jewish civilizations is an idea born in the West, probably among Hellenistic Greeks of the 3rd century BCE, and it has remained a Western tradition. The Western view has little to do with real encounters between Indians and Jews. It has everything to do with a Western fascination with the mysterious East and with Christian attempts to find early Biblical truth in remote civilizations, such as India or China. This Western tradition of comparing Indians and Jews did have echoes in Hellenistic, Jewish, Medieval Jewish and modern Jewish thought. Its influence on Hindu thought was much smaller and can only be detected in the early 19th century. A prominent case is the influential Hindu reformer Ram Mohan Roy (1772-1833) from Bengal. He rejected popular Hindu polytheism and superstition, preached the “unity of God” as a monotheistic expression of Hinduism, and wanted to learn Hebrew to read the Bible in the original. It is not known whether he met Jews in India or London, but he was influenced by Christianity

In the West, the impulse to compare Indians and Jews never ceased. From the early 18th century on, a number of French and German authors published books speculating about links or similarities between Judaism and Hinduism.² Today, nearly all of their works are forgotten. Not forgotten are two great European philosophers who added significant, but contradictory reflections to this debate. Both represent fundamental strands of European thought. The first is Voltaire, the leading figure of the French Enlightenment. He admired Indian religion and philosophy of which he knew little because no reliable European translations of the old Indian texts were available in his time. He used his imaginary India to vent his spleen against the Jews and Judaism, which he decried as the

source of the hated Biblical religion and Christianity.³ This was Voltaire's argument: if there was a spiritual or historical relationship at all between the Jews and India as other Western authors assumed, it was based on intellectual theft: the "Aryan" Indians had an older, purer monotheistic religion thousands of years before the Jews. The Jews "plagiarized" from India what may be valid in Judaism and degraded it. No scholar ever took Voltaire's views on this question seriously. But his celebration of Indian religion as an alleged historical counterpoint to Judaism and Biblical religion spawned a line of anti-Semitic polemics which continued into the 20th century and sometimes referred explicitly to Voltaire. The Nazi leader who was in charge of the "Final Solution," the extermination of the Jewish people, pretended to admire Hindu and Tibetan culture because they were allegedly "Aryan."

In the 20th century, the anti-Nazi German philosopher Karl Jaspers defended an opposite position. In 1949 he published his book *The Origin and Goal of History*,⁴ a new philosophy of history that had considerable influence in his time. He argued that all our morality and world views trace back to an enormous spiritual paradigm shift which occurred around the 5th century BCE in four different, unconnected places: Greece with its famous philosophers, Israel with its major prophets, India with Buddha, and China with Confucius and Lao Tzu. Jaspers called this period the *Axial Age*, the axis of world history. He emphasized that it was futile to look for sociological explanations for why this breakthrough occurred almost simultaneously in these few, but no other, places. He excluded any mutual influence between these four great civilizations. Yet, this breakthrough generated a spiritual and moral kinship between them and with those that followed in their footsteps, such as the successor religions of Judaism. In Jaspers' own words:

"The axis of world history seems to be the time of approximately 500 BCE ... There lies the most decisive turning point of history. There emerges the kind of human being with whom we live to this day ... Extraordinary developments are concentrated in this period ... What is new in this period in all three parts of the world (Greece, Near East, Asia), is that man becomes aware of his existence as a whole, his self, his limits. He experiences the

dreadfulness of the world and his own impotence. He asks radical questions. Facing the abyss, he craves for liberation and salvation.”⁵

Hence, if Jaspers is right, there are deep spiritual parallels between Israel as it emerged during and after the destruction of the First Temple and India during and after the time of Buddha. Both experienced “the dreadfulness of the world,” their “impotence,” asked “radical questions,” and craved “salvation.” Here, Jaspers chooses terms that apply particularly to many of Israel’s prophets as well as to Buddha and his followers. He claims that civilizations that have experienced an Axial Age can at the deepest level understand each other and communicate with each other. If the encounters between the Indian and Jewish civilizations described in the following chapters have a deeper metaphysical and not only practical content, Karl Jaspers expressed it best.

The question of whether or not there are deep spiritual parallels between the two civilizations emerged again during an event in Jerusalem in 2011. Two contradictory opinions on the subject were expressed. A number of distinguished Indian and Israeli writers met in Jerusalem in order to speak about each other’s books and worldviews.⁶ The discussions paired one Indian and one Israeli, who spoke before a large public audience. Tarun J. Tejpal, regarded as one of India’s brilliant novelists and intellectuals, and also a journalist and editor, sat with the Israeli writer A.B. Yehoshua. As mentioned above, in 1994 A.B.Yehoshua had published his widely acclaimed *Return from India* (*Open Heart* in the English translation) in which he described the people, places, ceremonies, and feelings of India with remarkable accuracy. What attracted him to India, he said, was that he found there the civilization most different and remote from his own. But Tejpal contradicted him saying that the two civilizations are much nearer than Yehoshua believed, and this was exactly the reason he understood India so well without ever having set foot there. Puzzled, Yehoshua did not reply. Later in the discussion he asked Tejpal which author had the deepest influence on him, and Tejpal replied without hesitation: Franz Kafka. Again, Yehoshua was puzzled and wondered how it was possible that the most Jewish of all 20th century writers could have so much resonance with an Indian.

Early Israel and First Temple Period: Echoes from a Far-Off Land (1200 – 586 BCE)⁷

Indian, or better Indus Valley, civilization began to spread across the Middle East more than 4,000 years ago. Indian artifacts have been found in Mesopotamia and Pharaonic Egypt, but not, so far, in the territory of ancient Israel. However, ancient India's marks on ancient Israel are more durable than any artifact: language. Philologists have identified a number of words in Biblical Hebrew that are of Indian – Sanskrit or South Indian, for example Tamil – origin. For the most part they are not common words of daily use, but words that point to important cultural acquisitions and needs. Right at the beginning, the Biblical narrative speaks in a few phrases of the invention of human civilization: “Juval, he was the first of all who handle the harp and the flute.”⁸ *Kinor*, ancient Hebrew for harp, appears dozens of times all across the Bible because the harp, and music in general, were essential components of the religious and secular culture of ancient Israel. Terms similar to *kinor* can be found in many ancient Near Eastern languages, e.g. Akkadian, Ugarit, Syriac, Hittite, but the term exists also in Sanskrit (*kinnara/kinnari*) and ancient South-Indian Telugu (*kinnara*, presumably from the Sanskrit).⁹ When the word first appeared in ancient Hebrew can no longer be known. It could have come from other Near Eastern languages. Or did the word, and perhaps the harp itself, enter the Near East, including ancient Israel, from India? One cannot exclude this possibility. Judging from the available archeological evidence, cultural influence spread early on from India to the Middle East, not the other way around.

No less intriguing, and easier to substantiate, are the links between India and the fragrances, spices, precious stones, and animals found in the Bible. The Bible mentions a religiously significant semi-precious stone, *sapir*, which is not the present-day sapphire, but the deep blue stone lapis-lazuli. Lapis-lazuli does not exist naturally in the Middle East. In ancient times all lapis lazuli came from India or Afghanistan, which was part of India's cultural sphere. Even the word *sapir* is assumed to be derived from the Sanskrit *śanipriya*.¹⁰ The *sapir* stone and its blue color occur all over

the Bible¹¹ because *sapir* has a hallowed connotation anchored in Exodus 24:10; when Moses, Aaron, and the Elders “saw the God of Israel,” they were allowed to visualize Him only indirectly: “Under His feet there was the likeness of a pavement of sapir, like the very sky for purity.” An Indian semi-precious stone and a Sanskrit word for it as the nearest symbolic allusions to the “God of Israel” – can there be a more significant meeting between civilizations, even if the two sides were not even aware of each other, and even if the stone and the word for it might have travelled to Israel through a third party, perhaps Sumer?

The historian Brian Weinstein explored the link between ancient Israel and India by researching the Biblical references to spices and fragrances. He reached the conclusion that “Jews ... were very dependent on India for the products essential for proper worship in the Temple in Jerusalem.”¹² He identified six Biblical (and more Talmudic) fragrances and spices originating from India, two of which with Indian names: *ahalot/ahalim*, the term for the fragrant aloe wood that was derived from Sanskrit *agaru* (of Dravidian origin) or Tamil *akil*,¹³ and a plant oil used in the Temple called *nerd* in Hebrew and nard or spikenard in English, derived from the Sanskrit *nalada*, meaning “smell-giver.”¹⁴ Indian nard was so indispensable as an ingredient of the incense used in the daily Temple service that a large part of the global demand for this fragrance is believed to have originated in Jerusalem.¹⁵ The other Indian import products mentioned in the Bible (and sometimes in the Talmud) were *bdolach* or bdellium, a tree resin used for perfume, *kinamon* or cinnamon, a fragrance, *almog* or sandalwood, and *kneh-bossem* or calamus, a plant for oil used to sanctify the altar.

Animals from India appear in a well-known story of the great trader king Solomon. It reveals one of the ways, arguably the shortest and most efficient one, by which Indian products came to Israel: “For the king had a Tarshish fleet (perhaps meaning large ships) on the sea ... Once every three years the Tarshish fleet came in, bearing gold and silver, ivory, monkeys, and peacocks.”¹⁶ At that time, it was only in South Asia, and particularly India, that elephants, monkeys, and peacocks¹⁷ could be found in the same

place. The last three words in Hebrew in the quote above are *shenhavim ve-kofim ve-tukiim*. For all three words, Indian roots have been identified. Monkey is *koph* in Hebrew, and *kapi* in Sanskrit;¹⁸ peacock is *tuki* in Biblical Hebrew (but parrot in modern Hebrew), *śuka/śukī* in Sanskrit, and *tōkai* in Tamil;¹⁹ and ivory is *shenhav*, or “tooth (Hebrew) of *hav*,” *hav* being ancient Egyptian but derived from the Sanskrit term *ibha* for elephant.²⁰ The reasons that speak for an Indian and not Egyptian etymology of ivory, monkeys and peacocks are overwhelming. There were no peacocks in Egypt, and a three-year hiatus could easily be explained by the monsoon in South Asia, which imposed long waiting periods in both directions, but could not be explained by trade between Israel and Egypt, which was mostly land-based. We know from Babylonian and Indian sources that India did export ivory, peacocks, and monkeys to Mesopotamia,²¹ and there is no reason to doubt that Indian animals and animal products reached old Israel as well. Whether this happened during the assumed period of King Solomon or later is an open question.²²

Weinstein concluded from the – quite limited – evidence at his disposal that the relations between ancient India and Israel were “narrowly commercial.”²³ The great Hebrew language scholar of the last generation, Professor Chaim Rabin of Hebrew University, set out to prove that they were more than that. He was looking for Indo-Aryan loanwords in the Hebrew Bible that implied concepts new to Semitic thought. He found some, all linked to horses, in the famous *Song of Deborah* in Judges 5, which various experts regard as one of the oldest texts of the Hebrew Bible.²⁴ In fact, the horse came from Central Asia, appeared in India around 1600 BCE, and occupies an important place in ancient Hindu religion and texts.

In another publication considered important enough to be included in the Yale University Anchor Bible, Rabin went a big step further. He presented a detailed linguistic and historical analysis of King Solomon’s *Song of Songs*, the most commented upon Biblical poem, which still plays an important role in the Jewish prayer ritual. He assigns the *Song* to the time of Solomon at approximately 950 BCE, in contradiction to the great majority of other

scholars who postulate later dates. Rabin found many similarities with ancient Tamil love poetry of the same period, including shared stylistic features. He claimed boldly: “It is thus possible to suggest that the Song of Songs was written ... by someone who had travelled to South Arabia and South India and had there become acquainted with Tamil poetry.”²⁵ As far as we can see, no other major scholar developed this theory further, and some Indian language scholars have rejected it.²⁶ However, even if Rabin’s conjecture of a direct influence of Indian literature on the Bible is not generally accepted, it is a testimony to an enduring Jewish fascination with India.

Hellenistic Jews: The Idealization of India (300 BCE – 200 CE)

Ancient Israel may have traded with India, but whether its people and elites had any idea of India, or better, Indian civilization, cannot be known. This changed completely in the Hellenistic period. Numerous Greek-speaking Jews who lived not in Judea but in the Eastern Mediterranean, particularly Alexandria, traded with India, and some had a strongly idealized image of it. In this the Jews were not alone. India and its mysterious wisdom fascinated the Hellenistic world. Greek legends had Greek philosophers meeting with famous wise men from the East to gain profound insights into nature. Two early Hellenist authors saw a particular link between Jews and India, a connection of philosophical wisdom. Megasthenes (ca. 290 BCE), who lived in India at the court of the ruling Mauryan dynasty, insisted that the opinions of ancient Greek philosophers about nature were already known in the East, particularly by Jews and Indian Brahmins.²⁷ Clearchus of Soli (ca. 300 BCE), a disciple of Aristotle, went even further and asserted that Aristotle met a Jew of Coele-Syria who was “at once strangely marvelous and philosophical” and who “imparted to us something of his own.” Aristotle is then said to have added that the Jews “descended from the Indian philosophers.”²⁸ There is no trace of these comments in what survives of Aristotle’s work. The historian Louis Feldman regards Clearchus’ story as an invention. But it does reflect a Hellenistic commonplace that linked Jews to Indians.²⁹

Did Jews themselves transmit this commonplace or even help to create it? This is indeed possible, considering the admiration with which the two most famous Greek-speaking Jews of the time, the philosopher Philo of Alexandria (20 BCE – 50 CE) and the historian Flavius Josephus (37 CE –ca. 100 CE) spoke about India. Both presented India as a model that Jews should emulate, but each did so for different reasons; Philo did so implicitly, Josephus explicitly. Jews and Indians have occasionally met, but their most important meeting place was neither India nor Jerusalem nor Alexandria – it was the “country of imagination.” For Hellenistic Jewish intellectuals, such as Philo and Josephus, this imaginary India raised the key question of their time (and ours too) in a new way: how could Jews remain loyal to their tradition and identity while living under a foreign, culturally overwhelming domination?

Although India was not central to Philo’s interests, it was always part of his intellectual baggage. His work includes seven references to India. Some are minor and mention its spices, animals, or customs, but at least one is very significant. Philo’s book *Every Good Man is Free* contains the author’s famous description of the Essenes, the ascetic Jewish sect that lived in the Judean desert. Philo praises their piety, holiness, and sense of justice, and calls them “free from the pedantry of Greek worldliness.”³⁰ The pages on the Essenes are followed directly by the author’s equally enthusiastic praise for the comparable Indian *gymnosophists* (a caste of philosophers (the Brahmins?)) “who make the whole of their life an exhibition of virtue.”³¹ Philo specifically commends the moral rectitude and courage of one of them, Calanus, who daringly resisted the demands of Alexander the Great with the following words: “There is no king, no ruler who will compel us to do what we will not freely wish to do. We are not like these philosophers of the Greeks ... Virtues secure to us blessedness and freedom.”³²

This imaginary Indian, Calanus, does not mention Jews, but the location of the story immediately after that of the Essenes, and the derogatory comments about the Greeks in both stories, leave no doubt that here Philo is not addressing the Greeks but his fellow Alexandrian Jews. He

knew their opulence, pride, and growing assimilation to Greek culture well enough. He shows them the Jewish Essenes and the Indian *gymnosophists* as related exemplars of frugality, courage, and loyalty to their ancient religious traditions, both more worthy of emulation than the contemporary Greek ways. Philo knew his Jews, but what did he know of India? Philo came from a family of rich Jewish traders who were well connected to Roman imperial power. One of his nephews, Marcus Julius Alexander, was a long-distance trader with possible business links to India.³³ Philo may have gained first-hand knowledge of India from him as well as from other Jewish traders. He mentions several cases of religiously-motivated self-immolation of Indian men and of widows who agreed – allegedly freely – to be burned with their dead husbands’ bodies. He does not condemn these well-known ancient Hindu practices although Judaism would strictly forbid them. He never explains the religions of India. This is puzzling because his writings often emphasize the superiority of Jewish monotheism over Greek polytheism. In his time, Buddhism, which was originally without idolatrous practices, was still very strong in India even if it had begun to decline. Does this explain the absence of any criticism of idolatry in India? Apparently Philo had no information about Indian religion that could have tempered his admiration.

Much of the same could be said about Flavius Josephus, the historian who’s *Jewish War* describes the Jewish revolt against Rome and the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE. His work had a profound impact on later generations, both Jews and Christians. Flavius Josephus explicitly presents India as a model Jews should follow when he describes one of the starkest moments in all of Jewish history: the mass-suicide of the last defenders of Masada, who refused to fall alive into Roman hands. Masada was the last fortress resisting the Roman army until 73, three years after the fall of Jerusalem. When the Jewish commander Eleazar understood that the few hundred defenders, including women and children, had no chance to stop or escape the Romans, he reportedly exhorted his men to kill their families and then themselves rather than risk captivity, torture, and certain death. But his men “declared their dissent from his opinion.”³⁴ He then gave a second, stronger speech that included a new argument:

“We ... ought to become an example to others of our readiness to die. Yet, if we do stand in need of foreigners to support us in the matter, let us regard those Indians who profess the exercise of philosophy ... They deliver their body to the fire ... Are not we, therefore, ashamed to have lower notions than the Indians? And by our own cowardice to lay a base reproach upon the laws of our country, which are so much desired and imitated by all mankind?”³⁵

Eleazar’s second speech finally convinced his comrades-in-arms to follow his advice, but is much too long and convoluted to be credible. It could not have been given in a moment of extreme danger and distress. Like all ancient historians, Flavius Josephus retrospectively constructed the speeches that could or should have been given in certain circumstances. But there was a huge difference between the conditions of Alexandria’s assimilating Jews and those of the last Jews of Masada, doomed to immediate extinction. Hence the attitudes of Philo and Josephus differed as well. Philo exhorts his Jews not to assimilate, whereas Josephus opposes and condemns the revolt against Rome. What Josephus’ *post-mortem* reconstruction of Eleazar’s speech shows is that he relied on the same sources as Philo of Alexandria, namely Hellenistic legends about Alexander meeting Indian philosophers who accepted death by fire rather than betray their moral convictions. The speech also reveals that Josephus’ admiration for Indian courage, readiness to die, and loyalty to tradition transcended his disapproval of the Jewish revolt. It appears that such views were not limited to Hellenistic Judaism, but were shared by some educated Jews in Judea as well, certainly Josephus himself was one of them.

Jewish-Hellenistic interest in India did not die with Philo or Josephus. Even as late as 400 CE, the Roman writer Claudian mentions this interest. One of his poems mocks the popular fantasy tales spreading at the time, including “all the vain imaginings of India depicted on Jewish curtains.”³⁶ We know from other sources, too, that Jews were curtain painters in Alexandria.³⁷ Apparently their mind was still on India.

Mishnah and Talmud: Dealing with Indian Reality (150-500 CE)

It is the Jews of Babylon, living on the way between the Land of Israel and India, who had the first historically palpable, pragmatic encounters with Indian people and goods. No longer is India a remote, unnamed place which sends spices to the Temple and fairy-tale animals to the king as in the First Temple period, nor is it the mythical home of moral heroes who prefer to kill themselves rather than betray their beliefs, as reported in Hellenistic stories. For the Jews of Babylon, who elaborated the Babylonian Talmud, India is real and it is near.

In Talmudic times, Babylonian Jews knew the location of India. However, some of the Sages still argued about the location of the two countries when they commented on the phrase *me-hodu-ve-od-kush* (from India to Ethiopia), which is found early in the Book of Esther – the only mention of India in the Hebrew Bible. Some did understand that India was "at one end of the world, Kush at the other," but others thought they were neighbors.³⁸ Some of this confusion is probably due to the powerful Kushan Empire, which rose in the 1st and 2nd centuries CE and collapsed in the 3rd and 4th centuries, exactly when the Mishnah and Talmud were written. Kushan comprised a large part of today's Pakistan and Afghanistan, including the Hindu-Kush mountain range, and, hence, was indeed adjacent to Persia and India.

The Talmud has many direct and indirect Indian references, but the Indian origin of particular goods is purely incidental. The Talmud knows three categories of products from India. The first and most important includes products indispensable for religious services. The second is luxury foodstuffs the Jews could not do without. The third includes staple products of daily necessity.

To the first category belongs a precious Indian textile. The Mishnah discusses the immersions of the High Priest in the Temple on Yom Kippur. When he emerged from the immersion in the afternoon, he would don the finest, expensive *Hinduyin*, that is Indian or Hindu, linen.³⁹ Also, we find again, as in the Bible, the spices and fragrances necessary for Temple

services. The Talmud gives the exact recipe for the required spice mixture, many of them Indian.⁴⁰ Among these, the Temple fragrance cinnamon, produced from an Indian tree bark, had a magic reputation that spawned nostalgia “When they would burn some of these, their fragrances would waft through all of the Land of Israel. But when Jerusalem was destroyed they were hidden and only the size of a barley grain remained.”⁴¹ Of comparable religious importance was and is the *Etrog* fruit, necessary for the Sukkot celebrations. The *Etrog* appears in the Mishnah. It is not a Semitic word. Rabin was convinced that the word, as well as the fruit itself, came from South India.⁴²

The second category contains two Indian luxury foodstuffs for which there was apparently great Jewish demand in Babylon: pepper and ginger. The Jews, like the Romans, loved pepper, *pilpalta* in Aramaic and *pilpel* in Hebrew, both derived from Sanskrit *pippali*. Those “earlier ones (the generations before the start of the pepper trade) who did not have pepper” had to be content with a less delicious spice.⁴³ Pepper even appears in popular proverbs: “One sharp pepper (sharp argument) is better than a basketful of pumpkins (weak arguments).”⁴⁴ From ancient to early modern times, India was the only source of pepper reaching the Middle East and Europe, and the Jews must have been aware of its origin, no less than the Greeks and Romans. Indian ginger, *zangvila* in Aramaic and *zangvil* in Hebrew, a name of ancient Indian origin, was equally popular – particularly when it was used for a sweet Indian delicacy called in Aramaic *hamalta*, made of ground ginger and honey. However, *hamalta* raised issues of religious law, which is the only reason why it is mentioned. Was it allowed or forbidden? “The hamalta that comes from the land of the Hindus is allowed?” asks the Talmud. Is it not forbidden to eat food cooked by gentiles? Yes, but ginger can be eaten raw, hence *hamalta* is not considered “food cooked by gentiles.”⁴⁵ *Hamalta* is again raised in the context of the laws of fasting on Yom Kippur. One authority reports that it is allowed. How is this possible? Is not ginger proper food? “No problem,” says the Talmud. Forbidden is fresh ginger, but here we speak of dry ginger, which is allowed (to be tasted).⁴⁶ It seems the rabbis made special efforts to accommodate the Jewish addiction to this Indian delicacy.

Among the staple products that the Jews imported from India were rice and iron. Chaim Rabin argued for a South Indian origin of rice and found an apparent root for the Talmudic word for rice, *ores*, in the Tamil *arici*, peeled rice.⁴⁷ Rice was an important Jewish food staple for many centuries. It came by sea to South Arabia and Babylon, and from there, by land to Israel. Again, its consumption raised religious questions. What type of cereal is it, and therefore, which religious blessings have to be said before consuming rice? Such questions fill several pages in the Talmud.⁴⁸ The Talmud does not mention the Indian origin of rice, but it does so for Indian raw iron. Why is there a problem with trading in Indian iron? Because idolaters could hammer it into weapons in order to commit murder, and Jews are forbidden to facilitate murder. This should not be a problem, states the Talmud: “Said Raw Ashi: to the Persians who protect us (we sell the iron)!”⁴⁹ Apparently, the alliance between the Jews and their Persian protectors initiated by King Cyrus eight centuries earlier was still intact.

The Talmud tells two fascinating anecdotes about an Indian convert to Judaism. “Rabbi Yehuda Hinduyi” the Indian or Hindu, was a storyteller; like other rabbis, he, too, used fables to convey moral messages. “Once we were going on a ship and we saw a certain precious stone (meaning human wisdom or intellect) which was surrounded by a sea monster. A diver descended to bring it up. Then the monster approached with the purpose of swallowing the ship, when a raven came to bit off its head.”⁵⁰ The monster is a metaphor for the *yetzer harah*, evil inclination or craving for forbidden pleasure, explain some of the traditional Talmudic commentators. The “evil inclination” was and is indeed a Rabbinic preoccupation. Did Rabbi Yehuda infuse his adopted Judaism with Hindu principles of asceticism and abstinence, which were familiar to him? Did he regard them as comparable to Rabbinic teaching? The hypothesis is tempting but impossible to verify. Later, when Rabbi Yehudah lay on his deathbed, Mar Zutra visited him. Three sages have the name Mar Zutra. The one in question here was either Mar Zutra I, the head of the famous Talmud academy of Pumpedita (4th century CE) or Mar Zutra II, the *Resh*

Galuta, or “Exilarch,” the political and spiritual leader of Babylonian Jewry (ca. 500 CE). Mar Zutra started a proceeding to ensure he would inherit his friend’s slave. In Talmudic law, the property of a convert who did not father children after becoming a Jew is free for all to take at the owner’s death. As Rabbi Yehudah had no Jewish children, his slave would have become a freeman and a Jew – except that Mar Zutra had other ideas about the man’s future.⁵¹ The impending death of the Indian convert was an opportunity for the Talmud to raise some legal fine points in regard to the inheritance of a convert’s estate. From Mar Zutra’s friendship we can infer that Rabbi Yehudah was himself a highly respected personality. Mar Zutra’s endeavors to keep the convert’s slave should be seen as a sign of affection, not of greed. Mar Zutra wanted this man, who would soon be the only living memory of his dying friend, to remain near to him.

Again, a great Jewish scholar looked for spiritual impacts of ancient India on Judaism’s sacred scriptures. Prof. Chaim Rabin’s effort to prove that King Solomon’s “Song of Songs” had roots in ancient South Indian love poetry was mentioned above. Rabin’s contemporary, Prof. David Flusser, tried to show that the *Upanishads* influenced the early Rabbinic legends, which describe how Abraham discovered the one true God. The *Upanishads* are philosophical texts that provide a basis for Hinduism. They were likely composed between the 6th and 2nd centuries BCE (although this is still an unsettled matter of academic debate). A monotheistic streak can be read into many of these texts. The *Upanishads* speak of *Brahman* as the omniscient, omnipresent, eternal and absolute principle, which can be interpreted as the “Highest God.” “Abraham’s search for God is a central concept in Upanishadic religiosity,” writes Flusser.⁵² He shows similarities between Upanishadic texts and post-Biblical Rabbinic texts that speak of Abraham. Although he knows his hypothesis is “adventurous,” he argues that India’s old monotheistic theme may have reached the Jews through ancient Persia. Flusser does not try to hide his *a priori* approach: “I hope ... the hero of the story of Abraham’s discovery of God changed from the Biblical patriarch to an Indian sage.”⁵³ It seems Flusser had a strong drive to “Indianize” Judaism. Raphael Patai, who was teaching history and Jewish

studies in various American universities, analyzed similarities between certain schools of Hinduism and the Kabbalah. He, too, believed to see a direct influence and concluded “Hindu concepts were known to some Kabbalists in 13th century Spain, just as certain Yoga-practices were.”⁵⁴

Great civilizations can develop spiritual similarities accruing from a shared humanity or from similar historical experiences, not from influences. The German philosopher Karl Jaspers warned against the temptation to look for “influences” between the great “Axial Age” civilizations. Flusser, Rabin, Patai, and others could not resist the temptation.

Jewish India Traders in the Middle Ages (1100-1300)

The Bible and Talmud tell us that the Kingdom of Israel of the First Temple period and the Jews of Babylon had trade links with India. For historians, the high Middle Ages, the 11th and 12th centuries, were a watershed in Indo-Jewish relations. For the first time we have letters and other documents that show a steady stream of Jewish long-distance traders visiting India and establishing links and friendships there. From then on, person-to-person contacts between visiting Jews and Indians have continued uninterrupted, although our knowledge of these contacts until early modern times is fragmentary.

The spread of Islam beginning in the 7th century CE boosted Indian trade in general because it opened a vast global space connecting the Mediterranean and the Middle East with large parts of Asia. Between the 10th and the 14th centuries, the India trade was the backbone of the international economy. So important was this trade that the search for a new, direct sea route to India led to the discovery of America in 1492 and the onset of modern times. Jews, mainly of North African and Egyptian origin, played a significant role in the India trade. For a period of more than 200 years, from the 11th to the 13th century, nearly a thousand letters and other documents written by and to Jewish India traders have been discovered. They were found in the Cairo *Genizah* and first published in 1973 by Prof. Shlomo Goitein,⁵⁵ and later expanded by his academic

successors in a 2008 edition.⁵⁶ Two more volumes of letters appeared in 2013. The mass of detailed information about Indo-Jewish trade links in these letters is unmatched for any other period before or after, until the 20th century.

The reader can follow the lives, successes, failures, and tribulations of dozens of Jewish long-distance traders and ship owners, and their families. Nearly all were rich and observant Jews who combined a vast knowledge of foreign business conditions and cultures with a daring entrepreneurial spirit and impressive physical and emotional strength. The riches that could be gained in the India trade were enormous, but so were the dangers. Shipwrecks, loss of goods, illness, frequent attacks by pirates or robbers, and the hostility of local rulers threatened all traders, not to mention their concern for their far-away families. More than one trader did not make it back alive. While shared dangers, family connections, and Jewish solidarity favored strong links between the traders, there was also plenty of tension, strife, and legal disputes among them. The letters allow us to catalogue Indian export products. Among the most important items were fragrances and spices, particularly pepper, iron and steel, and expensive silk and cotton textiles.⁵⁷ The Jews of Biblical and Talmudic times had already purchased the same Indian products a thousand or more years earlier – a remarkable stability in trade links.

Abraham Ben Yiju was one of the most prominent traders – mainly because an exceptionally large number of documents about him and his family, 80 in all, have survived.⁵⁸ Ben Yiju, a Tunisian, lived in Cairo and Aden for many years and developed his India business on a tremendous scale. He was not only a trader and manufacturer, but also a Torah scholar, poet, and occasional medical practitioner. He settled in South India for 17 years, set up a brass factory, purchased a slave girl, Ashu, set her free, converted her, gave her the Jewish name Bracha (Blessing) Bat Avraham (all converts to Judaism are called children of Abraham and/or Sarah) and married her. She bore him children who remained Jews. Abraham Ben Yiju is the hero of *In an Antique Land*, a book by Amitav Gosh, one of India's most renowned modern novelists discussed in the previous chapter.⁵⁹

Abraham Ben Yiju's openness to the religions and communities of India – Hindu, Muslim, and Christian – appears to characterize the attitude of the Jewish India traders of the time. There is no trace of animosity toward other religions and communities in any of their exchanges, which were written in Judeo-Arabic with the Hebrew alphabet and, hence, inaccessible to non-Jews. They are reliable expressions of what these Jews really thought. Some traders show particular warmth toward their Hindu contacts, such as Madmun Ben Hassan who asks a Jewish colleague to convey his best regards to his Hindu business partners “and tell them of my longing for them,”⁶⁰ or Mahruz Ben Jacob who speaking of his Hindu partner, Tinbu, said, “Between him and me there are bonds of inseparable friendship and brotherhood.”⁶¹ These pious Jews seem not have been bothered by fears of Indian “idolatry.”

However, it must also be said that the letters do not contain observations about Indian religions, cultures, and customs. Maimonides, who lived in the same period, had only fragmentary and partly erroneous knowledge of the religions of India. His brother, David Ben Maimon, who traded in precious stones and travelled often to India, may have had friendly personal relations with his Indian business partners but as an observant Jew did not want to know about their religions and did not ask questions. This was apparently the case of other traders as well. Did these long-lasting commercial links also spawn cultural exchanges, as they often have in history? We have no answer to this question.

Trade between India and Jews of the world did not disappear after the Middle Ages, but continued until pre-modern times when India fell under British rule. The second part of the 17th century saw the emergence of an international Jewish economy, a powerful long-distance trading network that stretched from the Caribbean to Amsterdam, Livorno, London and other wealthy Jewish centers in Europe, and from there to India and the Far East. Until the 18th century, India's share in global trade was large. Some statistics have it at more than 20 percent of global trade, which means that India was an important market for Jewish traders. The historian Jonathan Israel gives two examples of India-Jewish trade relations in the

17th and 18th centuries.⁶² London Jews bought diamonds from India and paid the Indians with polished coral imported from Jewish craftsmen in Livorno, Italy. Coral was and is still highly valued in India.

History tells us that long-term trade relations often have consequences beyond commerce. As said above, little is known about person-to-person links between self-identified Jews and Indians in the 17th, 18th or 19th centuries because no document trove from that period has been discovered. But there is one fascinating document that reveals that more was going on between Jews and Indians than just trade. The 1778 document concerns a Jew who had converted to Hinduism but later wished to return to Judaism. Reference to his case can be found in a responsum by Rabbi Yehezkel Landau (1713-1793), Chief Rabbi of Prague and an important 18th century rabbinic authority. Landau was asked to adjudicate the case of a London Jew, a Kohen, who had converted to Hinduism because he wished to marry a Hindu woman, but later wanted to return to Judaism. The rabbi stated that “after a Kohen repents he may fulfill all the functions of a Kohen ...(his conversion) does not make him an apostate. He did so only because otherwise the woman would not have agreed to marry him.”⁶³ Was this anonymous Jew one of the London diamond traders Jonathan Israel mentions?

Ancient Israel and Jews traded with India for 3,000 years, at least from the time of King Solomon. Babylonian, Hellenistic, Medieval, Modern Jews and the State of Israel continued a tradition that was probably never completely interrupted. It is one of the longest-lasting trade links between any still-living civilizations.

India in Medieval Jewish Thought: Between Admiration and Rejection (900-1300)

From the 9th or 10th century on, India appears in the books of several of the most important Jewish writers – rabbis, philosophers, historians, and travel writers. India is not a central issue but it is a part of the intellectual inventory of the Jews of the Middle Ages, as it had been in Hellenistic times. From then on, Jewish attention focuses on three different, though

sometimes connected, subjects. In the past, interest was limited to Indian civilization and Indian export products. Now, some continue to write about these subjects, but others (and sometimes the same ones) write about the Jews living in India, or about the lucrative India trade. That Jews were living and flourishing in India was an interesting novelty. A second novelty is the rejection by some authors of Indian religion, or what is presented as such. The Israeli scholar A. Melamed characterized the image of India in Medieval Jewish culture as oscillating “between adoration and rejection.”⁶⁴ This description is certainly true for the two best-known Jewish philosophers of the time, Yehuda Halevi and Maimonides. Whether it can be applied to Jewish medieval culture as a whole, lasting four or five hundred years is questionable. It is certainly true that no unifying theme dominated the image of India among the Jews of the Middle Ages, in contrast to the positive image that prevailed in Hellenistic times.

The historian of religion R. G. Marks counted at least 19 Jewish texts written between the 10th and 14th centuries that speak of India.⁶⁵ His collection is heterogeneous. It includes the most important works of the period as well as some long-forgotten books. During this period many Arab travelers visited India and some wrote travelogues that mention the presence of Jews in the country. In contrast, only one of the Jewish authors writing about India, the Karaite scholar Jacob al-Qirqisani (10th century), is believed to have visited the country himself. His *Book of Lights and Watchtowers* describes Hindu customs and compares them to Jewish religious practices and those of other nations.

Saadia Gaon (892-942): Saadia Gaon is regarded as the dominant Jewish philosopher and religious scholar of the early 10th century. A life-long struggle pitted him against the Karaite school of Judaism, which rejected the oral law as transmitted in the Talmud. Jacob al-Qirqisani was one of his main opponents. Saadia Gaon lived in Bagdad, on the way to India, and knew a lot about the country. His main philosophical work, *The Book of Beliefs and Opinions*, mocks “the masses of this country (Babylon) who labor under the impression that whoever goes to India becomes

rich.”⁶⁶ Another phrase of the book gives examples of people who fight against reality, such as “Hindus who have hardened themselves against fire, although it burns them.”⁶⁷ This is a neutral ethnographic observation, presented without animosity. A third reference mentions the Indian Brahmins as a model to emulate as they maintain and transmit their traditions.⁶⁸ Saadia also wrote an important commentary on the early Kabbalistic book, *Sefer Yetzirah*, in which he correctly credits India with inventing the decimal system and commends India as having separated the numbering system from the letters of the alphabet.⁶⁹ Saadia apparently believed in an Indian influence on *Sefer Yetzirah*.⁷⁰

Abraham Ibn Ezra (1089-1164): Abraham Ibn Ezra was one of the foremost Bible commentators of Spanish Jewry. He was a philosopher, poet, mathematician, and astronomer. His competence in mathematics and science largely explains his respect for the “wise men of India” and, perhaps, a certain affinity for Indian civilization. He helped to bring Indian mathematical symbols and ideas to Europe’s attention. Similar to Saadia Gaon, his attitude to India was positive although he knew there were major differences between Jewish and Indian beliefs.

Yehuda Halevi (1075-1141): Yehuda Halevi was the iconic poet and philosopher of Spanish Judaism’s “Golden Age,” and the first consequential “Zionist” in a modern sense.⁷¹ His longing for the Holy Land drove him to abandon everything and emigrate to Israel where he perished under unknown circumstances. Yehuda Halevi was a close friend, and perhaps son-in-law, of Abraham Ibn Ezra, but did not entirely share the latter’s respect for India. His famous philosophical treatise, *Sefer Kuzari*, is ambivalent about India and even employs insulting language. The *Kuzari* is a fictional tale in which the king of the Central Asian Khazar people questions a philosopher, a Christian priest, a Muslim imam, and a rabbi in order to identify the only true religion. As the rabbi’s arguments surpass those of his competitors, the king decides to convert to Judaism.

Sefer Kuzari refers to India five times. Halevi twice uses the “King of India” as a metaphor for God himself, which for a pious Jew is very significant. The rabbi asks the Khazari (king of the Khazars), if he were told that

the King of India (that is God) was an “excellent man” who established justice in his country, would he revere him?⁷² No, says the Khazari, maybe the Indian people love justice, independently of the king. But, he asks the rabbi again, if the king’s messengers would bring him extraordinary presents only procurable in India, would he then believe in him? This time the Khazari answers yes. The “presents” in this allegory are the miracles God had performed in the past. Another of the book’s argument recalls King Solomon who received visitors from all over the world, from “even as far as India,” who came to spread his wisdom.⁷³ But then the narrative turns hostile. The Khazari challenges the rabbi: does it not weaken your belief when you hear that the Indians have antiquities that are “millions of years old” – much older than anything the Jews can show for themselves? The rabbi replies that it would indeed weaken his belief if the Indians had a “fixed form of religion, or a book ... in which no historical discrepancy could be found ... apart from this, they are a dissolute, unreliable people, and arouse the indignation of the followers of religions through their talk, while they anger them with their idols, talismans and witchcraft.”⁷⁴

It is uncertain how Yehuda Halevi got his ideas about India. He lacked Saadia Gaon’s actual contact with the country. For him, India was a land of hearsay. But he knew Indian traders while he was in Egypt waiting to set out for the land of Israel. A particularly prominent Jewish merchant and scholar of the time, the Egyptian Halfon ha-Levi ben Nethanel, possessed a trading network that stretched from Spain to India. Halfon and Yehuda Halevi maintained a long-lasting friendship, immortalized by the poems Halevi dedicated to Halfon. Halfon’s Judeo-Arabic archive, parts of which were first published in 2013, is an important source of information on Yehuda Halevi during the period he wrote his *Kuzari*.⁷⁵ A review of this material might show whether Halfon had strong opinions about India, which he communicated to his friend. But the *Kuzari*’s outburst does not have to be linked to any conjectural personal experience of Jewish traders. Perhaps the conditions of the Jewish people when Halevi completed his book explain his sweeping condemnation. At the end of his life, Judaism was a despised faith. The threat of persecution hung over the Jews in both

Muslim and Christian lands and was growing. The *Kuzari* is a testimony of national distress and revolt. Perhaps Halevi's message was that Jews were not inferior to their tormentors and religious competitors, they were superior to all of them, Christians and Muslims, and even the far-away Indians who, according to an earlier comment in the *Kuzari* had long before recognized King Solomon's wisdom. The reference to the Indian visits to Solomon could then be read as a possible key to Halevi's negative comment.

Moses Maimonides (1135-1204): Maimonides was aware that there were Jews in India. He was pleased to report that they knew his *Mishneh Torah*, his famous codex of Jewish law. Maimonides' younger brother, David, was a trader in precious stones who visited India regularly. He perished on his last voyage to India when his ship sank. After David's death, Maimonides continued to invest in the India trade through other merchants.⁷⁶ In spite of these personal links, Maimonides' knowledge of India's culture was as fragmentary as Halevi's. He shared Yehuda Halevi's ambivalence about India. As he respected science, he described Indian sages as true scientists, who, among other things, helped to develop the science of astronomy.⁷⁷ On this, his position was similar to that of Abraham Ibn Ezra. On the other hand, his main philosophical work, the *Guide for the Perplexed*, contains four references to India, two of which criticize Indian idolatry. Maimonides speaks of the Patriarch Abraham who, he asserts was educated in the religion of the mythical Sabeans in Mesopotamia. They worshipped the stars as gods, but Abraham eradicated their idolatry, as Maimonides knew from Midrashic tales. Most people praise Abraham for this "except some ignoble remnants of the nations left in the remote corners of the earth, like the savage Turks in the extreme North and the Indians in the extreme South. These are remnants of the Sabeans who once filled the earth."⁷⁸

Maybe Maimonides knew of the well-known Indian (and not only Indian) adherence to astrology and regarded it as the essence of Hindu worship. But there is no basis for the assertion that Sumerian and Babylonian religions, which worshipped the sun, moon, and stars as divinities, migrated to India and became dominant there. Apparently, either

Maimonides' brother David had scant or no knowledge of Hinduism, or did not share his knowledge with his famous sibling. Still, a second comment by Maimonides does show some familiarity with the Indian reality: "Most idolaters objected to killing cattle, holding this species of animals in great estimation. Therefore the people of India up to this day do not slaughter cattle."⁷⁹ This was another reprimand of Indian religion. God had ordered the Jews to sacrifice animals in order to abolish animal worship, explained Maimonides. However, the prohibition of *Avodah Zarah*, idolatry, did not seem to impede the India trade of the Maimonides brothers, just as the Talmud had not raised obstacles to the India trade of the Babylonian Jews.

Sefer Yosifon (10th century): For hundreds of years, the most popular and widespread Jewish history book of early medieval origin was the *Sefer Yosifon*. Written in simple Hebrew, it was accessible to a large Jewish public and was often quoted, even by Biblical and Talmudic commentators.⁸⁰ Written by an unknown author of the late 10th century, it became one of the first printed Hebrew books (1476). It went through dozens of Hebrew editions and appeared in many translations. The *Yosifon* presented a Hebrew version of the "Alexander Romance," a collection of tales about Alexander the Great's fictive visit to India where he interacted with philosophers and Brahmins who lived a life of abstinence and preached stoic attitudes.⁸¹ Alexander had to admit the moral superiority of the Indian sages over their Greek counterparts. "As the inhabitants heard of him, they sent him wise men with books to say: 'if you come to fight us, it will be completely useless because we have nothing that merits your anger – but if you yearn to enjoy what we do have, don't come in strength and with force, come with mild words and pleasant language. You like war – but we like wisdom.'"⁸²

Some of the *Yosifon* manuscripts and other, independent Hebrew Alexander stories have the Brahmins – called *bargamnim* – using Biblical and Talmudic expressions and allusions. Moreover they claim to be monotheists. This was an obvious Jewish attempt to "Judaize" the Indian Brahmins and claim common wisdom, morality, and other similarities between Indian and Jewish cultures.⁸³

When Karl Jaspers published his book on the “Axial Age”, *On Origin and Goal of History* (1949), where he postulated as mentioned above a spiritual kinship between Prophetic Judaism and Indian wisdom, he probably had no idea that long before him there were apologetic Jewish writers who postulated the same, albeit by generously twisting Indian history and philosophy.

There were other fictitious travel stories commending the wisdom of the Indian sages. One was *Mishlei Sindebar* (Parables of Sindebar), which appeared in Hebrew in the 13th century and must have been quite popular, judging from the large numbers of extant manuscripts. Similar tales existed in Latin and Arabic. In fact, a popular “Alexander in India” story was part of the medieval culture of Jews, Christians, and Muslims alike.

In these tales there was no mention of Jews meeting Indians, but the number of Jews who read the Alexander Romance in the *Yosifon* and similar legends was probably many times greater than the number of readers who were familiar with the critical India references by Maimonides and Yehuda Halevi. For many medieval Jewish readers India was primarily a land of wisdom and wonders, of monsters, three-colored giant scorpions, talking trees, wise men who walked naked, six-handed humans (possibly derived from a depiction of a Hindu or Buddhist divinity) and those, head deprived, with torsos bearing eyes and mouths.

The novelist Mendele Mocher Sforim (1836-1917), known as the “Grandfather of Yiddish Literature,” wrote his own work of fiction published in 1878: *The Travels of Benjamin III*. There, the Jews Benjamin encounters quote the *Yosifon* to him, warning that his travels will meet no fewer obstacles than those of Alexander.⁸⁴ Mendele’s readers knew the *Yosifon*, even in the late 19th century. How could they not be enthralled when they read that Alexander wrote to his teacher Aristotle how he learned what his sad fate would be:

“A voice in Indian language came out from the tree, but those who knew the language did not want to translate it to me because they were afraid

until I swore to them that nothing bad would happen to them. And they said: Know, Alexander, that soon you will perish at the hands of your own men and those near to you...in Babylon you will die... and you will not see your mother again and not the land of Macedonia.”⁸⁵

ENDNOTES

- 1 David Shulman, "Preface," in *Between Jerusalem and Benares, Comparative Studies in Judaism and Hinduism*, edited by Hananya Goodman, New York, State University of New York Press, 1994.
- 2 Hananya Goodman, "Introduction: Judaism and Hinduism: Cultural Resonances," in *Between Jerusalem and Benares, op.cit.*, 3-6.
- 3 Dorothy M. Figueira, "Voltaire and the Search for Authority", in *Aryans, Jews, Brahmins – Theorizing Authority through Myths of Identity*, New York, State University of New York Press, 2002.
- 4 The German original is *Vom Ursprung und Ziel der Geschichte*.
- 5 Karl Jaspers, *Vom Ursprung und Ziel der Geschichte*, Frankfurt am Main-Hamburg, Fischer, 1955, 14 ff, translation by the author.
- 6 *Words on Water – India and Israel in Conversation, A Meeting between Indian and Israeli Writers* in Mishkenoth Shaananim, Jerusalem, on May 12, 2011. A similar event took place in 2012 in the context of the "Celebrating India in Israel" festival.
- 7 The etymological references of this section are taken from the classical lexicon of Biblical Hebrew by Koehler and Baumgartner, see later footnotes. In addition, all references to Indian languages, Sanskrit, Tamil and Telugu have been reviewed and if necessary, corrected by Dr. Alexander Cherniak, Lecturer in Sanskrit, Dept. of East Asian Studies, Tel Aviv Univ. and Lecturer in Hindi, Dept. of Asian Studies, Univ. of Haifa. Dr.Cherniak's general comments, e.g. on ancient Egyptian, are included in the text. We express thanks for his critical help.
- 8 *Gen.* 4:21.
- 9 *Lexicon in Veteris Testamenti Libros*, ed. Ludwig Koehler-Walter Baumgartner, *Adjectum est Supplementum*, Leiden, E.J.Brill, 1985, 443. Also *Hebraeisches und Aramaeisches Lexicon zum Alten Testament*, ed., Ludwig Koehler-Walter Baumgartner, Dritte Aufl., 1974, Leiden, E.J.Brill.
- 10 *Lexicon*, *op. cit.*, 664. *Śanipriya* means "dear to *Shani*" or Saturn. Indian astrology identified lapis lazuli with the planet Saturn.
- 11 *Exodus* 24:10, 28:18; *Isaiah* 54:11; *Ezekiel* 1:26; *Job* 28:6, 28:16; and others.
- 12 Brian Weinstein, "Biblical Evidence of Spice Trade between India and the Land of Israel: A Historical Analysis", *The Indian Historical Review* Vol. XXVII, Jan. 2000, 13.
- 13 *Lexicon, op.cit.*, 17.
- 14 *Lexicon, op.cit.*, 635.
- 15 Ranabir Chakravarti, "Reaching out to Distant Shores: Indo-Judaic Trade Contacts (Up to CE 1300)", *Indo-Judaic Studies in the Twenty-First Century – A View from the Margin*, edited by Nathan Katz et al., New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2007, 29.

- 16 *I Kings* 10:22. These details are repeated in *II Chronicles* 9:10-11.
- 17 *Tuki* (which in modern Hebrew is parrot) has been identified with various birds, but today a majority of scholars agree that it is peacock, see Chaim Rabin, "Lexical Borrowings in Biblical Hebrew from Indian Languages," *Between Jerusalem and Benares*, op. cit., 29.
- 18 *Lexicon*, op.cit.,833.
- 19 *Lexicon*, op.cit.,1028.
- 20 *Lexicon*, op.cit., 997.
- 21 See Chaim Rabin in *The Anchor Yale Bible Vol. 7c – Song of Songs*, trans. and ed. Marvin H.Pope, New Haven-London, Yale University Press, 1977, 27 ff.
- 22 For Flavius Josephus it was obvious that King Solomon's fleet went to India. See "Jewish Antiquities" 8. Ch./164, *The New Complete Works of Josephus*, transl. William Whiston, Grand Rapids, Kregel, 1999, 281.
- 23 Weinstein, op. cit., 25.
- 24 *Judges* 4:3, 4:12 ff, 5:20. Rabin searched for the origin of the non-Semitic name Sissera, the enemy general defeated by Israel's judges. He found that *śísira* is a Sanskrit name meaning "cool" or "chill." Rabin also linked the Hebrew term *daharoth*, galloping, to the Sanskrit *dhor* and *ressen*, bridle, also from the Deborah story to the Sanskrit *raśanā*. Rabin conceded that these language transfers could have occurred during the assumed Indo-Aryan migrations from Central Asia (ca. 1800 BCE), when small groups separated from the main stream and moved into the Near East. But this cannot be constructed as an influence from "India" to "Israel". See Rabin, *Lexical...*, op.cit., 26 ff.
- 25 Rabin, *Anchor Bible*, op.cit., 32.
- 26 Oral communication by Prof. David Shulman, Hebrew University of Jerusalem.
- 27 *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism*, ed. Menahem Stern, Jerusalem, The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1974, Vol.One, 46.
- 28 *Ibid.*
- 29 Louis Feldman, *Jew and Gentile in the Ancient World*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1993, 5.
- 30 Philo, *Every Good Man is Free*, London, The Loeb Classical Library, 1962, Vol.IX, 75 ff.
- 31 Philo, op.cit., Vol.IX, 74.
- 32 Philo, op.cit., Vol.IX, 96.
- 32 Ranabir Chakravarti, "Reaching out to Distant Shores: Indo-Judaic Trade Contacts (Up to CE 1300)", *Indo-Judaic Studies in the Twenty-First Century – A View from the Margin*, ed. Nathan Katz, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2007, 28 ff.
- 34 Flavius Josephus, op. cit., "The Jewish War," Book 7, Chapter 8, 338, page 930.

- 35 Josephus, *op.cit.*, Book 7, Chapter 8, 351 ff., pages 930 ff.
- 36 Stern, *op.cit.*, Vol.Two, 657-659.
- 37 Stern, *op.cit.*, Vol.Two, 659, Note on line 357.
- 38 *BT Megillah* 2b, 11a.
- 39 *BT Yoma* 34b.
- 40 *BT Kareitot* 6a.
- 41 *BT Shabbath* 63a.
- 42 Rabin, *Lexical, op.cit.*, p. 30.
- 43 *BT Eruvin* 28b.
- 44 *BT Chagiga* 10a.
- 45 *BT Brachoth* 36b.
- 46 *BT Yoma* 81b
- 47 Rabin, *Lexical, op.cit.*, 30 ff.
- 48 *BT Brachoth* 37a, 37b.
- 49 *BT Avodah Zarah* 16a.
- 50 *BT Baba Batra* 74b.
- 51 *BT Kiddushin* 22b-23a.
- 52 David Flusser, "Abraham and the Upanishads", *Judaism and the Origins of Christianity*, Jerusalem, Magnes Press, 1988, 649.
- 53 David Flusser, "Abraham and the Upanishads", *Between Jerusalem and Benares*, op. cit.. 38.
- 54 Raphael Patai, *The Jewish Mind*, New York, Hatherleigh Press, 2007 (1st ed. 1977), 46.
- 55 Shlomo Gotein, *Letters of Medieval Jewish Traders*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1973,
- 56 *India Traders of the Middle Ages: Documents from the Cairo Geniza ("India Book")*, ed. S.D.Goitein and Mordechai A. Friedman, Leiden-Boston, Brill, 2008.
- 57 *India Traders, op.cit.*, 16.
- 58 The name Ben Yiju survives to this day in the well-known North-African Jewish name Benichou.
- 59 Amitav Gosh, *In an Antique Land*, London, Granta Books, 1998, first publ. 1992.
- 61 *India Traders, op.cit.*, 477.
- 62 Jonathan Israel, *European Jewry in the Age of Mercantilism 1550-1750*, 3rd ed., London-Portland, The Littman9 Library of Jewish Civilization, 1998, 146 ff.

- 63 *Noda bi Yehudah, Sheeloth uTeshuvot, Yoreh De'ah* 18, Jerusalem, no year, transl. Avraham Yaacov Finkel, *The Responsa Anthology*, Northvale, NJ, Jason Aronson Inc., 1990, 117.
- 64 Abraham Melamed, "The Image of India in Medieval Jewish Culture: Between Adoration and Rejection", *Jewish History*, Vol. 20, No. 3/4, 2006, 299-314.
- 65 Richard G. Marks, "Hindus and Hinduism in Medieval Jewish Literature", *Indo-Judaic Studies*, *op.cit.*, 58..
- 66 Saadia Gaon, *The Book of Beliefs and Opinions*, trans. S.Rosenblatt, New Haven and London, Yale Judaica Series, 1948, 26.
- 67 *Ibid*, 16.
- 68 *Ibid*, 172.
- 69 Brian Weinstein, "Traders and Ideas: Indians and Jews", *Indo-Judaic Studies*, *op.cit.*, 50.
- 70 This hypothesis is discussed, but not endorsed by David Shulman, "Is There an Indian Connection to the Sefer Yesirah?" in *Aleph: Historical Studies in Science and Judaism*, Number 2: 2002, edited by Gad Freudenthal, Indiana University Press.
- 71 Hillel Halkin, *Yehuda Halevi*, New York, Schocken, 2010.
- 72 Judah Halevi, *The Kuzari*, revised Engl. Translation, Jerusalem, Sefer ve-Sefel Publishing, 2003, I:19-22, pp. 32 f. Later on one of the "friends" of the King travels to India where great honours are bestowed on him. He is advised to "continue in obedience to the King of India". *Op.cit.* I:109, 61f.
- 73 Judah Halevi, *op.cit.*, II :66,106.
- 74 Judah Halevi, *op.cit.*, I:60-61, 38f.
- 75 *India Book IV/A. Halfon and Judah Ha-Levi, The Lives of a Merchant Scholar and a Poet Laureate according to the Cairo Geniza Documents* (Hebrew), by Mordechai A. Friedman, and *India Book IV/B. Halfon the travelling Merchant Scholar – Cairo Genizah Documents* (Hebrew) by S.D.Goitein, Mordechai A.Friedman and Amir Ashur, Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute and the Rosen Foundation, 2013.
- 76 *India Traders of the Middle Ages: Documents from the Cairo Geniza ("India Book")*, edited by S.D.Goitein and Mordechai A. Friedman, Leiden and Boston, Brill Academic Publishers, 2008, 90.
- 77 Abraham Melamed, *op.cit.*, 307 ff.
- 78 Moses Maimonides, *The Guide for the Perplexed*, trans, M.Friedlaender, 1st ed. 1904, New York, Dover, 1956, III:29, 315.
- 79 *Ibid*, III:46, 359.
- 80 Richard G. Marks, *op.cit.*, 62f.
- 81 *Sefer Yosifon* (Hebrew), ed. David Flusser, Jerusalem, Mosad Bialik, 1979, Vol. I 474 ff., Vol.II 26 ff.

82 *Sefer Yosifon* I, 474, para.5. Translation by the author.

83 Richard G. Marks, *op.cit.*, 63, 65, 71.

84 Mendele Mocher Sforim *The Travels of Benjamin III.* (Yiddish), New York: Hebrew Publishing Company, 1920, 47 f.

List of Interviewees

Aafredi, Navras Jaat
Amit, Judy
Amit, Uri
Anzi, Chana
Aston Nathan
Bagchi, Indrani
Balachandran, Gopalan
Basu, Kaushik
Belicotsercovsky, Eli
Berg-Rafaeli, Tania
Bernstein-Reich, Anat
Bhaskar, C. Uday
Bloch, Ari
Brand, Ofer
Buis, Jim
Butalia, Urvashi
Catarivas, Dan
Cherniak, Alexander
Choshen, Chaim
Cohen, Bradley
Colman, Jeffrey
Dagan, Sagi
Danieli, David
Deo, Neelam
Eber, Irene
Egorova, Yulia
Feler, Zvi
Feferman, Dan
Fisher, Shlomo
Fortuna, Gilead
Foxman, Abraham
Gamiel, Ophira
Garz, Seth
Gavish, Oren
Gil, Avi
Glatzer, Michael
Goldfarb, David
Goldstein, Jonathan
Good, David P.
Goshen-Gottstein, Alon
Gourvitch, Natalie
Goz, Elad
Gupta, Arvind
Halff, Antoine
Haskel, Gil
Hardas, Arjun
Herzog, Michael
Hoenlein, Malcolm
Ilyasi, Umer Ahmed
Inbar, Efraim
Isaacson, Jason F.
Ishwaran, Natarajan
Ivry, David
Iyer-Mitra, Abhijit
Jacob, Aaron
Jacob, Elijah
Jacob, JFR
Jain, Bawa P.
Jhirad, Ralph
Jhirad, Yael
John, Wilson
Kahanoff, Ruth
Kapoor, Pavan
Kaye, Ephraim
Khwaja, Iftikhar Ahmed
Kolitz, David
Korenstein, Antony
Kripalani, Manjeet
Kumaraswamy, P.R.
Leibler, Isi Joseph
Lele, Ajey
Lev, Shimon
Lieberman, Joe
Madhav, Ram Varanasi
Maimon, Dov
Malekar, Ezekiel Isaac
Mariaschin, Dan
Melamed, Abraham
Mercer-Wood, Shimon

Meridor, Sallai
Mishra, Harinder
Mitra Das, Srijana
Moser, Naftali
Moses, Nissim
Mukherjee, Rohan
Nayan, Rajiv
Ningthoujam, Alvite
Pant, Harsh V.
Prasad, Jayant
Propper, Eyal
Punnoose, Eldos Mathew
Rajiv, S. Samuel C.
Ramana, Siddarth
Rappaport, Sharon
Reuben, Nissim
Robbins, Kenneth
Rosen, David
Rosenbaum, Walter
Ross, Dennis
Sagiv, Orna
Sarkar, Jaideep
Sarna, Navtej
Schwarzbach, Joseph
Secunda, Shai
Serebriany, Sergei
Shah, Ajay
Shani, Ornith
Shichor, Yitzchak
Shulman, David
Singh, Arun
Singh, K.C.
Singh Roy, Meena
Sirohi, Sima
Sivan, Emanuel
Sloman, Mark
Sofaer, Abraham D.
Sofaer, Marion
Sofer, Mark
Sofer, Sara

Solomon, Jonathan
Solow, Alan P.
Susskind, Yuval
Sussman, Gary
Tadmor, Zehev
Tandon, Priya
Tejpal, Tarun J.
Thakur, Ravni
Tharoor, Shashi
Theodor, Ithamar
Tokayer, Marvin
Trink, Claude
Turgeman, Yossi
Ushpiz, Alon
Venkatshamy, Krishnappa
Vilan, Yahel
Weil, Shalva
Wessler, Heinz Werner
Whine, Mike
Wilf, Einat
Winston, Mandie
Yaron, Amos
Yehuda, Abraham
Zalis, Chana
Zeevi Farkash, Aharon
Zeffert, Rebecca

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