

## Indian Foreign Policy in MENA

Mohammed Sinan Siyech

**Abstract:** India's relations with the region of Middle East and North Africa (MENA), which is also referred to as West Asia and North Africa (WANA), have been historic and deep-seated in nature. Given the geographical proximity of parts of India and many Middle Eastern countries, relations have long been flush with the exchange of commodities, people and ideologies. In the post-colonial era, India's relationship with many of these nations has been focused on the procurement of oil and other energy imports, which have been necessary commodities for sustaining its economy, which has been growing especially rapidly since the 1990s.

This paper looks at India's foreign policy in the broader Middle East and North Africa region and charts the changing dynamics of the relationship. After going through the factors that have led to the evolution of India's foreign policy, it discusses the country's position vis-à-vis the different actors present in the MENA region, including the GCC nations, Iran, Israel, Palestine, Turkey and various states hit by conflict.

Specifically, it argues that India has been walking a tightrope of neutrality in the MENA region by balancing between all of its allies there, many of whom are in conflict with each other. This balancing act is in accord with a long line of pragmatic thinkers in the Indian foreign policy establishment, most recently epitomized by Prime Minister Modi, and also India's growing clout in Asia as a benign power that respects the internal affairs of foreign countries.

### **India's evolving interests in the region**

Few regions have had links with India as deep and historic as those of the MENA region. Trade routes between places in modern day India and regions such as Babylon and Sumeria (located in modern Iraq) date back to 3,000 BC. Most trade was two-way in nature, with Middle Easterners buying spices and textiles from India while also selling precious metals and jewels to India.<sup>1</sup> With the advent of Islam in the Middle East region, Arab traders began to propagate the religion in parts of Southern India such as Kerala and Karnataka, with many of the practises taught then still prevalent in these states.<sup>2</sup>

***In the post-colonial period, India's relationship with the MENA region was mainly focussed on Egypt, Palestine and Iraq (with a slightly lesser focus on Saudi Arabia) due to the importance of these three countries in the region***

### **The Cold War Era 1947-1991**

In the post-colonial period, India's relationship with the MENA region was mainly focussed on Egypt, Palestine and Iraq (with a slightly lesser focus on Saudi Arabia) due to the importance of these three countries in the region.<sup>3</sup> Egypt, as the largest Arab country which also spearheaded Nasserism and the Pan-Arab agenda while seeking to remain neutral in the ongoing Cold War, was a natural ally for India, with whom it formed the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). Iraq was an important military and economic power due to its size and leadership and thus was chosen by India as another major country to trade with. Finally, Palestine was the central nation in the foreign

policy of various Arab nations, which meant that any country wishing to gain the favor of the Arab nations had to factor this in. This, coupled with the fact that India had a large Muslim population that supported the Palestinian cause, meant that the nation occupied an integral position in India's West Asia policy.

A handful of issues characterized India's relations with the MENA region in the post-colonial era. First, India took an ideological position regarding the West, calling for the decolonization of various third world nations.<sup>4</sup> This shaped its stance on the Palestinian cause, to which it strongly aligned itself with during the Cold War. India's stance on Palestine was also a result of its attempts to woo other Arab states, most of which supported the cause. This was also carried out to counterbalance Pakistan's efforts to persuade Arab nations to take a pro-Islamic, anti-Indian position, especially due to India's administration of Muslim-majority Kashmir.<sup>5</sup>

Second, given India's desires to garner goodwill among the Arab nation, it mostly stayed neutral throughout the various bilateral conflicts and tensions that took place in the region. This included the Jordanian Civil War mainly referred to as Black September (1970-71), President Anwar el Sadat's controversial visit to Jerusalem in 1977, the signing of the Camp David Accords in 1978 and the Egypt-Israeli peace treaty a year later, the Iranian Revolution of 1979, and the protracted Iran-Iraq war that began in September 1980, among others.<sup>6</sup>

Third, India also used major trade routes located in the Middle East region such as



the Bab al-Mandeb (between Yemen and Somalia) as well as the Suez Canal (located in Egypt) and the Straits of Hormuz (Iran). These channels were not just important for India to be able to trade with the MENA region, but they also served as a transit point for Indian goods going to Western Europe and the United States. India’s major trade partners at that point included countries like Egypt, Iran and Iraq due both to their production of oil and their sea routes.<sup>7</sup>

Fourth, during this time and up until the end of the Cold War, the six Gulf states remained insignificant in India’s foreign policy. Five of the six Gulf nations were only formed after Britain’s withdrawal from the region in 1971. Even after the formation of the states and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), India often saw itself at odds with these nations.

This was because the GCC nations had taken the U.S. as its security guarantor and India, although neutral during the Cold War, still had much closer relations with the USSR. Moreover, Pakistan, which was a major defence partner of countries like the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia, used its goodwill to influence the GCC nations and speak against India on the issue of Kashmir in platforms like the OIC meetings.<sup>8</sup> In addition, India was not happy about Pakistan’s sponsorship of the Afghan Mujahideen alongside Saudi Arabia. Most of these dynamics, sans the Afghan factor, applied to Turkey as well as another country in close cooperation with the U.S. and Pakistan.<sup>9</sup>

Thus, India’s relations in the MENA during the 1947–1990 phase was a result of its ideological affiliations, trade

partnerships, the Cold War and its rivalry with Pakistan. However, towards the late 1980s and early ‘90s, the decreasing importance of the Palestinian cause, the deterioration of Iraq, the rising prominence of the Gulf nations, and the disintegration of the Soviet Union forced India to drastically rethink its positions in the region.<sup>10</sup>

| Underlying Factors           | Effects on Foreign Policy                    |
|------------------------------|--|
| Ideological Stance           | Pro-Palestine, Anti-Israel                   |
| Maintaining goodwill in MENA | Neutrality in various conflicts              |
| Trade                        | Good relations with Iraq, Egypt and Iran     |
| India–USSR relations         | Negligible ties with Gulf sheikhdoms, Turkey |

*Table 1: Defining Factors in India’s MENA foreign policy during the Cold War.*

**Post-Cold War: 2001–1991**

In this period, India moved closer to the Gulf nations and began to reduce its footprint in the rest of the MENA region. This situation came about for a few reasons. Firstly, Iraq, which was a major seller of oil to India, was devastated by the two Gulf Wars, leading to a drop in the oil trade with India. Secondly and in a similar vein, India’s major trade partner and oil supplier the Soviet Union collapsed at the same time, leading to a drop in oil imports and trade revenue and impelling India to seek other sources of both trade and oil.<sup>11</sup> Thirdly, this drop in oil imports was compounded by India’s new economic direction, whereby it liberalized its economy leading to massive increases in energy demand.<sup>12</sup>

Given India’s newly opening economy, it became a natural trade partner for the Gulf nations to turn to. This shift towards



***Given India's newly opening economy, it became a natural trade partner for the Gulf nations to turn to. This shift towards the Gulf nations was further assisted by India's larger shift closer to the United States, witnessed in its support for Kuwait during the Gulf crisis***

the Gulf nations was further assisted by India's larger shift closer to the United States, witnessed in its support for Kuwait during the Gulf crisis.<sup>13</sup> This relationship, however, was limited by Pakistan's role and India's indignation at the use of the Gulf nations as launching pads and networking venues for various anti-Indian Pakistani militants.<sup>14</sup> Allegedly, intelligence agencies held the UAE and Saudi Arabia responsible for knowingly harbouring some major terrorists such as Dawood Ibrahim (who had been responsible for many terrorist attacks in India) and terror groups such as Lashkar e-Taiba.<sup>15</sup>

The Indo-U.S. warming of ties also ushered in a new era in Indo-Israeli relations, with India opening an official embassy in Israel and sending forth many of its political leaders for visits.<sup>16</sup> In particular the Vajpayee government (2004-1999) witnessed an outburst of exchanges in the fields of defence, internal security and counter-terrorism. That India was facing lots of cross-border terrorism from Pakistan via tunnels and other illegal pathways gave it some impetus to formulate a border protection plan inspired partly by Israel.<sup>17</sup>

At the same time India was slowly increasing the strength of its bilateral ties with Iran as well. This was borne out of converging interests in various different

ways. Chief among these was energy, where India turned to Iran as well as the Gulf to fulfil its energy requirements.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, Iran and India's mutual interest in the central Asian region for energy and connectivity became another crucial factor bringing them together.<sup>19</sup> This was in addition to their shared aversion to Sunni Jihadist groups, best demonstrated in their support for the Northern Alliance against the Taliban in Afghanistan.<sup>20</sup> All of these set the stage for good relations, especially in the post2001- era.

### **Current Day Relations**

The post-9/11 era is an appropriate place to consider the next phase of Indo-MENA relations as beginning due to the deep impact that the bombing of the World Trade Center had on the region. Four broad events shaped India's foreign policy in the region after 2001.

***The post-9/11 era is an appropriate place to consider the next phase of Indo-MENA relations as beginning due to the deep impact that the bombing of the World Trade Center had on the region. Four broad events shaped India's foreign policy in the region after 2001***

The first was the actual event of 11/9 and its aftermath. This brought about drastic changes in the MENA region stemming from the U.S. invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as the consequent birth of countless new terrorist movements across the region. Ever since, national security and the containment of the spill-over from regional conflicts became an important driver of foreign policy for many nations in the MENA region.<sup>21</sup>



Second was the Arab Spring, which was in many ways a long-term effect of the U.S. invasion of Iraq, giving rise to massive instability in the Middle East. What began as a minor protest in Tunisia at the tail end of 2010 sparked a revolution that began various conflicts across the whole of the MENA region, including in Egypt, Libya, Yemen, and Syria (where it is still active) among others. The very real effects of this public discontent and its role in bringing down governments particularly perturbed the Gulf nations, who adopted many reforms internally and in their foreign policy to prevent any unexpected regime change attempts. Most obviously, the Gulf nations were more supportive of autocratic governments in the region such as Egypt as a way to repress any rebellious movements.<sup>22</sup>

Third, the U.S. intervention in the Middle East began to reach its limits, with Obama expressing the U.S.’s exhaustion, particularly during his second term as president (2016–2012).<sup>23</sup> This was also coupled with oil prices falling from 112\$ a barrel to about 40\$ a barrel, leading the U.S. to depend less on the stability of the MENA.<sup>24</sup> While in the past the U.S. has tried to maintain stability in the region in order to secure the flows of hydrocarbons, it has since become a bit slack as its dependency on the MENA has lessened. This is something of an ongoing process, but has opened up space for other countries to enter the region, and India, due to its geographic proximity, has chosen to assume a larger role as a power broker.

Fourthly, the election of Modi in 2014 and his vigorous foreign policy efforts, including visiting the Arab nations many

times over during his five-year tenure, have deepened bilateral relations with many Arab countries as well as opening up further to nations like Israel.<sup>25</sup> Simultaneously, Modi has largely continued India’s position of neutrality with almost no problems, giving India a stronger role in the region.

| Defining Feature                     | Effects                               |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Bombing of World Trade Center (2001) | Intense counter terrorism cooperation |
| Arab spring (2010)                   | New conflicts, heightened controls    |
| US exhaustion in MENA (post-2010)    | Search for new security guarantors    |
| Election of Modi (2014)              | Frequent visits and deals             |

Table 2: Factors shaping India’s MENA policy since 2001

| Country                  | Trade in Millions of USD |                       | Relevance to India   |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|--|
|                          | 2001                     | 2018                  |  |
| Gulf Cooperation Council | 5,000                    | 120,000 <sup>26</sup> | Power brokers, oil and gas, NRI population, defense and counter-terrorism cooperation, remittances |
| Israel                   | 1,000                    | 5,000 <sup>27</sup>   | Defense cooperation, U.S. ties   |
| Iran                     | 2,000                    | 16,000 <sup>28</sup>  | Oil and gas, Afghanistan, Central Asia   |
| Palestine                |                          |                       | Ideological support  |
| Turkey                   | <1,000                   | 8,000                 | Power broker   |
| Egypt                    | <1,000                   | 3,700 <sup>29</sup>   | North Africa connection  |

Table 3: A brief summary of trade ties and India’s trade volume (expressed in \$ millions) and interests in various countries of the MENA region



Each of these four issues separately or jointly shaped relations with India. Firstly, with the **Gulf countries**, India's position vis-à-vis terrorist groups was reflected by the Gulf nations as well. This was a result of U.S. pressure on Gulf nations to choke off all support for terrorist groups as well as bombings carried out by Al Qaeda in Saudi Arabia and the UAE as a result of the group focusing on what it termed the "near enemy" (Arab Muslim states) over the "far enemy" (America), leading to major antagonism towards these groups and, therefore, better counterterrorism co-operation.<sup>30</sup> For instance, many Gulf countries began to deport Indian terrorist sympathisers and agreed to share intelligence in many operations.<sup>31</sup>

Moreover, the U.S. withdrawal from the Middle East region also led to India being hailed as one of the countries that could provide security guarantees in the region. Consequently, Indian relations with the Gulf nations improved both bilaterally and multilaterally, with the seven nations signing various Memoranda of Understanding on defence agreements, maritime issues, technological advancements and knowledge sharing in the aspects of medicine and construction.<sup>32</sup> Much of this was also underpinned by the huge non-resident Indian (NRI) population present in the Gulf region. However, in terms of being a security provider, India has still not placed many of its troops in the region or begun training Gulf militaries, nor has it installed any major air bases, indicating that it has no plans to build up a large military presence in the region.

Additionally, India has also become a more important customer for the GCC

***Furthermore, India's relations with Iran have also been upgraded significantly in light of the Tehran Declaration (2001) and Delhi Declaration (2003), whereby the two countries stressed the need to engage strategically with each other***

nations in buying oil. In the case of Qatar, India has also begun to increase its imports of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) in its bid to buy a cleaner source of energy.<sup>33</sup> All of these have placed India in a stronger position vis-à-vis the Gulf nations, one that India did not hold a decade or two ago. The Modi government also signed substantial agreements and upgraded relationships with these countries demonstrating his diplomatic deftness even while manoeuvring around the intra-GCC conflict as the next section will explain.

Furthermore, India's relations with Iran have also been upgraded significantly in light of the Tehran Declaration (2001) and Delhi Declaration (2003), whereby the two countries stressed the need to engage strategically with each other.<sup>34</sup> Ever since this time, India has also begun to share with Iran an aversion towards Sunni terrorism emanating from Iraq and Afghanistan; multiple such attacks were carried out in Iran in the late 2000s.<sup>35</sup> Indo-Iranian relations during this time also witnessed an uptick in relations with the country cooperating on issues of defence and maritime issues. This was best seen in joint naval operations carried out by the two nations in 2003 and 2006.<sup>36</sup> Moreover, as will be explained in the next section, the Modi administration managed to also negotiate with the United States regarding Iranian sanctions without compromising on its own interests.



***It is important here to note that Indo-Israeli ties have also intensified due to issues like the Arab spring which shifted the focus of the world from the Palestinian conflict to the toppling of various regimes in the MENA region***

Lastly, Indo-Israeli relations have also begun to intensify since the 2000s. This was partly due to the initial thrust provided by the BJP government (2004–1998) but was carried on by the subsequent Congress government. Indeed, the Israeli government has consistently ranked within the top five suppliers of arms to India, with about 9\$ billion in bilateral military deals.<sup>37</sup> Moreover, the two governments share a common vision on terrorism, giving them even better incentives to get closer in terms of counter-terrorism cooperation among other issues.<sup>38</sup>

Currently, under the Modi administration, India has witnessed many high-profile foreign visits. This has resulted in new developments regarding border security and intelligence cooperation at a time when both the Middle East and South Asia are warily keeping an eye out for jihadist actors such as the Islamic State and Al Qaeda and its affiliates. Bilateral trade has shot up to about 5\$ billion, with arms purchases from Israel alone accounting for one fifth of this trade.<sup>39</sup> Moreover, India also took part in aerial operations alongside the U.S., Germany, France, Italy and Poland for the 2017 Blue Flag exercise, the largest aerial training exercise to ever take place in Israel.<sup>40</sup>

Yet India did not take part in many other major military operations. Most conspicuous was its absence in the international coalition against the

Islamic State. This stemmed from short term concerns – the IS held more than 40 Indian captives and India feared that its presence in the coalition would lead the IS to kill these captives in retribution. Arguably, India probably also deferred its presence to prevent any retaliatory attacks being carried out on its own soil.<sup>41</sup>

It is important here to note that Indo-Israeli ties have also intensified due to issues like the Arab spring which shifted the focus of the world from the Palestinian conflict to the toppling of various regimes in the MENA region. The Arab spring was the last nail in the coffin of the Arab world's protectionist sentiment towards the Palestinian cause, which was what allowed India to shift from its ideological position to a more pragmatic stance.

Given the focus on these three blocs (i.e. Israel, Iran and the GCC nations) in the MENA region, it is important also to notice how India stands vis-à-vis other countries in the region, as seen in the next section.

### **Evaluating other relations**

**Palestine:** India has historically been a strong ally of Palestine and has supported the Palestinian cause right from its independence. Although India's relations with Israel have improved substantially over the course of the last 25 years and particularly under the stewardship of Prime Minister Modi, India continues to reaffirm its support for Palestine. Indeed, there have been many high-level visits between Indian and Palestinian authorities, especially with ministers from the Modi administration. Moreover, Modi himself was awarded Palestine's highest civilian award in first part of 2018.<sup>42</sup>



India has also been quite vocal about many issues regarding the rights of Palestinians. Most notably, it ramped up aid to Palestinian regions in the wake of the U.S. withdrawal of funding for the nation.<sup>43</sup> This stems again from India's position of asserting neutrality in the region while also acting according to the circumstances unfolding in the region: a point that is expounded on below.

***In the post-Islamic State era, India has made some attempts to resume its trade with Iraq. Iraq is now the second largest exporter of oil to India after Saudi Arabia and is an important part of India's energy security goals***

**Turkey:** India's relations with Turkey remain mostly lukewarm and slightly dependent on Turkey's politics in the region. While both Prime Minister Modi and President Erdogan have similar stories as powerful politicians with humble beginnings, and they share a good rapport, there has not been much advancement of the bilateral relationship. For instance, trade volumes amount to about 8\$ billion,<sup>44</sup> a petty sum compared to India's investments in other parts of the Middle East and the sizes of the two economies. As there is no major Indian population in the country, India does not seem to exhibit a lot of interest in the nation.

Moreover, there are three issues restricting the development of India's relations with Turkey. First, Turkey has been a solid ally of Pakistan via sharing of defence cooperation and trade agreements. This has resulted in Turkey opposing India on issues like the Nuclear Suppliers Group

when it sided with Pakistan and China in 2017.<sup>45</sup> Second, President Erdogan's push to establish himself as a voice for Muslims globally has led Turkey to comment on the Kashmir issue, which has raised eyebrows in India, which is sensitive about third parties mediating in what it considers a bilateral issue with Pakistan.<sup>46</sup>

Third and on a similar note, is India's relations with Cyprus, a country that was formerly part of Turkey in the early 20th century and where Turkey has currently stationed troops.<sup>47</sup> Bilateral visits between India and Cyprus have ruffled some feathers in Turkey as well causing an already lukewarm relationship to remain so. Cyprus does not occupy as sensitive a position in the corridors of Turkish power as Kashmir does for India. In the future, however, India will have to engage with Turkey since it is emerging as another power broker in the MENA region despite not being fully a part of it.

**Egypt:** Indo-Egyptian relations have mostly been sluggish since the Arab spring due to the volatility and instability of the nation. While trade ties are limited to about 7\$ billion, the two nations are still grappling to find mutual interests that would elevate their relationship.<sup>48</sup> Counter-terrorism is one of these concerns, given that both nations face consistent insurgencies. However, India's interest in Egypt would probably increase quite substantially if the nation were to become more of a power broker in the region.

**Iraq:** India's ties to Iraq during the Cold War and immediate post-Cold War situation, which was mostly related to trade and the sale of oil, plummeted drastically





with the U.S. invasion of the nation in 2003. India was one of the countries that spoke out against military action at the time. Although trade picked up in the late 2000s, the rise of the Islamic State once again brought trade crashing down from close to 20\$ billion in 2014–2013 to about 11\$ billion in 2015–2014.<sup>49</sup>

In the post-Islamic State era, India has made some attempts to resume its trade with Iraq. Iraq is now the second largest exporter of oil to India after Saudi Arabia and is an important part of India's energy security goals. Moreover, in 2019, a delegation of traders visited Iraq for the first time since the conflict settled down to buttress trade in the country again.<sup>50</sup> In the future, trade ties will be largely dependent on the security of the nation.

***India finds itself in the unique position of being a country whose citizens make up significant percentages of other countries' populations. This is a key component that drives Indian policy in conflict countries***

### **Neutrality and Non-Intervention**

The MENA region has been embroiled in one form of conflict or another ever since the end of the Second World War. India has been cognizant of this fact and has avoided taking sharp positions on many of the issues of the region. These issues can mainly be split into 1) violent conflicts and civil wars and 2) countries that are at odds with each other, such as Iran and Saudi Arabia, Israel and Palestine, Iran and Israel, etc.

India's neutrality is mainly due to two reasons. First, India has spread its investments across most countries in the MENA region. What it lacks in terms of

volumes in some countries, it has made up for by the nature of the benefits that it procures from such countries. For instance, while trade with Iran amounts to 15\$ billion as opposed to 120\$ billion with the GCC nations, Iran serves as an important gateway to Central Asia via the port of Chabahar, making it an important ally. Similarly, Egypt and Israel, both of whom only trade 8–5\$ billion a year with India are important for connectivity to North Africa and arms procurement (respectively). This factor is what frames its policy in dealing with countries at odds with each other.

Second, the Indian diaspora is spread out in the MENA region, with more than 12 million Indians residing in these countries. In this situation, India finds itself in the unique position of being a country whose citizens make up significant percentages of other countries' populations. This is a key component that drives Indian policy in conflict countries. Considering that India has engaged in at least three costly evacuations of its citizens in Kuwait (1991), Libya (2011) and Yemen (2015). It does not have the appetite for more unrest in such nations. This neutrality had played out in the following ways:

| Country      | Indian population | % of total population |
|--------------|-------------------|-----------------------|
| Saudi Arabia | < 4 million       | 9                     |
| Kuwait       | 700,000           | 11                    |
| UAE          | < 2 million       | 16                    |
| Qatar        | 650,000           | 18                    |
| Bahrain      | 400,000           | 29                    |
| Oman         | 450,000           | <20                   |

*Table: The Indian population in Gulf countries (total and percentage)<sup>51</sup>*

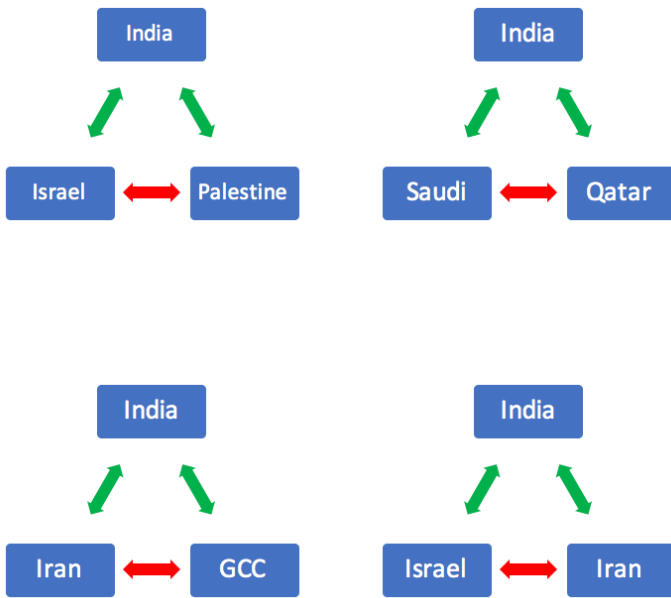


Figure 1. Various relationships that India balances in the Middle East region (Red arrows indicate negative relations and green arrows indicate positive relations)

Firstly, India’s reaction to the Arab Spring and the fall of various regimes across the region. India did not issue many statements in the initial period of the Arab Spring and instead chose to wait a bit before issuing official statements. Given the low amount of investment it had tied up in Tunisia, it did not comment much on the whole process. However, in countries like Egypt and Bahrain (which faced protests initially), it issued statements calling for good relations and peace in the country due to its own investments and citizens in these nations.<sup>52</sup>

Similarly, India’s voice was largely muted on both the Libyan and Syrian crisis. At the UN council meetings discussing these crises, India initially abstained from votes against the heads of these nations, although later it did vote against Syria once that country’s human rights violations became unquestionable.<sup>53</sup>

Secondly, India has also been cautious in dealing with countries at odds with one another. One relationship that demonstrates this approach to tensions in the MENA is the India–Iran–Israel triangle. Since the 1979 Iranian revolution, Iran has persistently antagonized Israel with various statements and attempted attacks on the country. Most recently, Israel was one of the main proponents of pulling out of the Iran Nuclear deal.<sup>54</sup> Despite all these differences, India did not renounce its relations with Iran, even when its relations with Israel began to improve substantially and it remains one of the few nations in the world that has good relations with both countries.

This can be attributed to a pragmatic approach adopted by all three nations. Israel for instance, welcomed China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) even though India strongly denounced this project for its encroachment into the disputed Kashmir region.<sup>55</sup> Similarly, Iran too cannot afford to hinge its relationship with India on the latter’s ties with Israel, since India remains a major buyer of oil even after the implementations of sanctions by the United States.

These reasons also play a role in helping it de-hyphenate India’s relations with Saudi Arabia. The Saudi–Iranian rivalry has been fierce since the 1979 revolution, when Ayatollah Khomeini called for a revolution in the GCC nations.<sup>56</sup> Moreover, Iranian support for the Houthi rebels in Yemen via weapons and advisory support has placed it in opposition to Saudi Arabia and the UAE, who support the government in Yemen.



Yet, Saudi Arabia has chosen to ignore the Indo–Iranian relationship and maintained a warm bonhomie with India. This is despite how it might view some of India’s trade engagement, such as the latter’s funding of the Chabahar port, which it thinks will help Iran circumvent U.S. sanctions.<sup>57</sup> This tolerance of the India–Iran relationship stems mostly from India’s great population in the country as well as the Indian Government’s diplomatic heft in the Gulf region.

***India has also been cautious in dealing with countries at odds with one another. One relationship that demonstrates this approach to tensions in the MENA is the India–Iran–Israel triangle***

Saudi tolerance of India’s relationship with Iran also trickles down to India’s stance in the intra-GCC crisis that began in mid-2017. The Qatar crisis, where Saudi Arabia, UAE, Bahrain and Egypt boycotted Qatar, was expected by some analysts. The quartet’s main criticism of Qatar is its relations with Iran and the tiny nation’s alleged role in supporting anti-government uprisings (particularly Islamist actors in different countries) during the Arab Spring. Although there were talks of a Saudi invasion of Qatar, leading to fear that Indians in Qatar (around 700,000 in total) would have to be evacuated, this did not happen in practice.<sup>58</sup> Moreover, since then India has only improved its relations with Qatar. It began increasing its LPG imports, counter-terror cooperation and even cultural relations, with Qatar declaring India as its partner nation for the 2019 cultural year.<sup>59</sup>

India has been able to achieve this neutrality for two reasons: first, the GCC crisis did not encompass too many other countries. Indeed, Oman (a member of the GCC) witnessed its trade with Qatar skyrocket after the crisis began.<sup>60</sup> Similarly, the U.S. continued to sell weapons to both Qatar and Saudi Arabia.<sup>61</sup> It is only natural then that India would follow in the footsteps of regional and global actors and maintain its neutrality. Second, India’s status as a major buyer of LNG from Qatar also ensured that the sheikhdom would not jeopardize its rapport with India.

The other point of bilateral conflict/tension in the MENA region that India has also negotiated with some skill is the Israel–Palestine issue. India voted against the U.S.’s decision to shift its embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem despite many visits to Israel.<sup>62</sup> Although such a move would elicit distress among Israeli lawmakers, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu stated that one vote wouldn’t affect the Indo-Israel bond, demonstrating the strength of bilateral ties.

This reaction to India’s moves in the region seems to stem from India’s otherwise objective approach in the region. Moreover, it also comes within the ambit of the world’s approach to the Palestine issue, which has been relegated to a position of lesser importance.<sup>63</sup> Against this backdrop, it makes no sense then for India to take a strong stance on any side.



## Other Factors

### International Actors

Given the geo-strategic importance of the MENA region, Indian foreign policy is also influenced by many other factors as well. India has had to deal with the United States. During the Cold War and post-Cold War period, U.S. interests in the region have pushed it to spread its tentacles all across the nations of the region. However, since President Obama's presidency, it has shown some level of exhaustion and signs of decreasing its presence.<sup>64</sup> This was further compounded by President Trump's erratic behaviour and withdrawal of support to both anti-Assad rebels in Syria<sup>65</sup> and the Iranian pact.<sup>66</sup> It is against this background that India sees itself as a plausible major security actor helping to maintain peace in the MENA region.

***Pakistan is another nation that used to impinge on India's relations with the Arab nations of the region. However, India has in many successfully delinked its alliances with the countries of the MENA region from their relations with Pakistan, giving it more space to collaborate with the Arab nations***

Yet, India is not the only actor that has done so. Another actor that has taken advantage of the power vacuum created by the U.S.'s withdrawal from the region and flexed its diplomatic clout in the Middle East has been Russia. From holding peace talks on Syria to mediating the Yemeni conflict, Russia has burnished its credentials as a serious power broker in the MENA region. Moreover, its increasing rapport with countries like Turkey, Israel and the Gulf nations has given it quite a boost in the region.<sup>67</sup> In this context, India stands to benefit from co-operating with Russia and

must be looking to see which operations can be conducted jointly in the region.

The U.S.'s gradual decline in the Middle East has also provided space for China to step into the region.<sup>68</sup> With deep pockets and a reputation for ignoring human right violations committed in the nations it trades with, China has emerged as a stronger counterweight to India, whose strategic community is already wary of China due to border disputes and China's alliance with Pakistan. Yet China has, like India, mostly stayed neutral in most MENA conflicts, showing the limits of its involvement as mainly economic.

Pakistan is another nation that used to impinge on India's relations with the Arab nations of the region. However, India has in many successfully delinked its alliances with the countries of the MENA region from their relations with Pakistan, giving it more space to collaborate with the Arab nations. This is one of India's significant achievements given that these countries' past animosity towards India was borne significantly due to Pakistan's achievements.

Yet, in the future, it can be said that India's clout in the MENA and especially among the Gulf nations will be solidified only when India can successfully marginalize Pakistan for supporting terror activities. The Saudi crown prince Mohammed Bin Salman's visits to Pakistan and India in succession is a case in point. Coming in the wake of a major terrorist attack in India (which India blames Pakistan for), MBS barely raised a word against Pakistan due to their substantial military actions, and in fact, even promised 20 billion in future investments.<sup>69</sup> Thus, Pakistan will

continue to be a thorn in the side of India's quest for securing power in the MENA region

### **Domestic Politics and the role of Hindutva**

Another important factor that could have affected India's foreign policy in the MENA region has been the role of Hindu hyper-nationalism. Given the current Indian administration's strong right-wing inclination, many critics have debated the role of the Hindu right wing in formulating foreign policy. Indeed, groups like 'Friends of Rashtriya Swayamwar Sevak' (RSS) located overseas have provided strong support to the BJP government. Moreover, this ideological group of voters have also been vociferous in their dislike of any warming of India–Pakistan ties.<sup>70</sup> This was especially true after Modi's first visit to Pakistan in 2015, which was followed by two deadly attacks on Indian military targets.<sup>71</sup>

Hindu right-wing parties also consider Gulf funding of mosques and madrassas in India as a conspiracy to convert millions of Hindus to Islam and change the demographics of their nation. This is a criticism that has been present from the 1980s onwards<sup>72</sup> and continues to be propagated even today, especially in the wake of a WikiLeaks reports that graphed the rise of Saudi (private and government) funding in the country as a means to counter Iranian influence.<sup>73</sup>

Yet, despite this animosity, the BJP government has greatly heightened its bond with various Arab and Muslim countries. This speaks of a very pragmatic strategic thought process within the Indian foreign policy establishment that is more

interested in economic two-way benefits than ideological dissimilarities.

***Given the current Indian administration's strong right-wing inclination, many critics have debated the role of the Hindu right wing in formulating foreign policy. Indeed, groups like 'Friends of Rashtriya Swayamwar Sevak' (RSS) located overseas have provided strong support to the BJP government***

In the same vein, Hindutva has also not been as strong a guiding factor India's Israel policy, as much as the benefits of such a relationship. Nor has domestic Muslim opposition greatly impacted this alliance as it used to in the Cold War era. Indeed, it was the Congress government (which was otherwise known for appeasing Indian Muslims) that opened the Israeli consulate in India (1992). Moreover, even before this, the Congress government purchased arms from the Israeli government to fight Pakistan during Indira Gandhi's time. Thus, it is expected that any succeeding government, be it the Congress or the BJP, will continue to uphold these ties. Perhaps the one unique contribution by the BJP is its visible overtures to Israel as opposed to Congress's behind-the-scenes approach.

### **Conclusion**

Trade relations, energy security, conflicts in the MENA region, defence deals and counter terrorism now stand as the dominant driving forces of India's foreign policy in the region. While critics lambasted India for not stepping up and taking hard stances during the various crises taking place in the Arab world, it is India's caution and silence itself that



earned it a favourable position in the region, including those countries at odds with each other.

In analysing Indo-MENA relations, this paper has demonstrated the Indian strategic community's proclivity for basing their foreign policy on the power brokers of the region – these being Saudi Arabia, Iran, UAE and Israel, most of whom hold animosity towards one another. That different political parties have helmed the government in India without dramatically changing the course of its stance in MENA only reinforces the fact that continuing governments will likely adopt the same pragmatic approach. Moving away from such a methodology will only hurt India's interests and draw it into the quagmire of conflicts prevalent across the Middle East and the North Africa region.

However, it is also important for India to note that the very same neutrality that is its strength in the region is also a double-edged sword preventing its advance as a major power in the MENA region. For any country to assume the mantle of any sort of a power broker in the region, it has to be able to insert itself in conflicts as a negotiator, which at times entails taking sides as well. No country can hope to rise in the MENA region without earning itself some enemies. Thus, India's neutrality will impede this rise to power and relegate it more to a position of a benign ally for all rather than an actual power.

The U.S.'s exhaustion in the MENA region has also indicated to most countries that seeking to fill its shoes is no easy task and demands lots of skills and power. India's quest for power has to be reflected in hard stances, military presences and

interventions in times of conflict. However, given India's tightrope act in the MENA, it is safe to say that it will not be acting as a superpower in the region in the near future.



## Endnotes

- 1- P.N. Chopra. *India and the Arab World. Early Cultural Contacts.*
- 2- K.N. Kurup. *The Emergence of Islam in Kerala in 20th Century.* Standard Publishers. New Delhi: 2010
- 3- Ranjit Gupta. "India's Relations with West Asia: A New Era Dawns," Middle East Institute, 07 March 2017, <http://www.mei.edu/content/map/india-s-relations-west-asia>.
- 4- Ibid
- 5- Bansidhar Pradhan, 'Changing Dynamics of India's West Asia Policy', *International Studies* 2004 ,(1)41, pp. 88-1
- 6- Ibid
- 7- Ibid
- 8- Mohammed Sinan Siyech, 'The India-U.A.E. Strategic Partnership in Regional Context: A Zero-Sum Game?' Middle East Institute, May 16,2017. <https://www.mei.edu/publications/india-uae-strategic-partnership-regional-context-zero-sum-game>
- 9- Mohammad Samir Hussain, 'Forging a New Partnership: India and Turkey. *Journal of Alternate Perspectives in Social Sciences.* 655-635 (3)3 .2011.
- 10- Bansidhar Pradhan, 'Changing Dynamics of India's West Asia Policy', *International Studies* 2004 ,(1)41, pp. 88-1
- 11- David M. Malone, C. Raja Mohan and Srinath Raghavan, *The Oxford Handbook of Indian Foreign Policy*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2015.
- 12- David M. Malone, C. Raja Mohan and Srinath Raghavan, *The Oxford Handbook of Indian Foreign Policy*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2015.
- 13- India's relations with Iraq were also downgraded after the crisis, although India did not support military action against Iraq wholeheartedly. For more on this see: J. K. Baral and J. N. Mahanty, 'India and the Gulf Crisis: The Response of a Minority Government,' *Pacific Affairs.* 384-368 ,(3)65 ,1992.
- 14- Much of this support was more from private citizens than from the states itself. But the nuance was lost on the Indian political community.
- 15- Duped by Dubai?, *Outlook India*, 14 December 2002, <https://www.outlookindia.com/website/story/duped-by-dubai/218292>
- 16- Debjani Ghosal, *Strategic Hyphenation between India and Israel: The Major Areas of Cooperation and Constraints in the Post-Cold War Era*, *Jadavpur Journal of International Relations*, 2016.
- 17- Ronak D. Desai Xenia Dormandy, *Indo-Israeli Relations: Key Security Implications*, Belfer Center, July ,10 2008,<https://www.belfercenter.org/publication/indo-israeli-relations-key-security-implications>
- 18- Gulshan Dietl, *India's Iran Policy in the Post-Cold War Period*, *Strategic Analysis*, 2012.
- 19- Ibid
- 20- Avinash Paliwal, 'New Alignments, Old Battlefield: Revisiting India's Role in Afghanistan', *Carnegie India*, 15 June 2017, <https://carnegieindia.org/15/06/2017/new-alignments-old-battlefield-revisiting-india-s-role-in-afghanistan-pub71272->
- 21- Bruce Jones & Andrew Hart, 'Keeping Middle East Peace?', *International Peacekeeping*, 117-102 (1)15 2008.
- 22- Larbi Sadili, 'The Impact of the Arab Spring on the Gulf Cooperation Council' *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*, 2015.
- 23- Hassan Hassan, 'The Arab Winter Is Coming', *The Atlantic*, 02, November 2018, <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/11/2018/where-us-middle-east/574747/>
- 24- Shivshankar Menon, 'Asia's New Geopolitics,' *ISAS Working Paper*, December 22,2017, <https://www.isas.nus.edu.sg/ISAS20%Reports/ISAS20%Working20%Papers20%No.20%-20279%Asia%20%New20%Geopolitics.pdf>
- 25- Harsh V. Pant, 'India's Nuanced Middle East Policy', *The Diplomat*, December 15,2018. <https://thediplomat.com/12/2018/indias-nuanced-middle-east-policy/>
- 26- *India-GCC Relations: Delhi's Strategic Opportunity*
- 27- Bansidhar Pradhan, 'Changing Dynamics of India's West Asia Policy', *International Studies* 2004 ,(1)41, pp. 88-1
- 28- *India's Pursuit of Strategic and Economic Interests in Iran.*
- 29- 'India-Egypt Relation', [https://www.mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/Bilateral\\_Brief\\_2018.pdf](https://www.mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/Bilateral_Brief_2018.pdf)
- 30- Daniel L. Byman, 'The U.S.-Saudi Arabia counterterrorism relationship, *Brookings Institution*, May 24,2016, <https://www.brookings.edu/testimonies/the-u-s-saudi-arabia-counterterrorism-relationship/>



- 31- Mohammed Sinan Siyech, 'India Gulf Counter Terrorism Cooperation', December 21, 2017, <https://www.mei.edu/publications/india-gulf-counterterrorism-cooperation>
- 32- Shafeeq Rahman, 'India's Middle East Balancing Act', *The Diplomat*, June 23, 2017, <https://thediplomat.com/06/2017/indias-middle-east-balancing-act/>
- 33- Satish Kanady, 'India looks to further boost Qatar LNG import volume', *The Peninsula Qatar*, September 26, 2017, <https://thepeninsulaqatar.com/article/2017/09/26/India-looks-to-further-boost-Qatar-LNG-import-volume>
- 34- E Yazdani, 'The Dynamics of India's Relations with Iran in the Post-Cold War Era: A Geo-Political Analysis', *Journal of South Asian Studies*. 368-351 ,30:2 2007.
- 35- 'Iran suicide bombing: Chabahar mosque hit by attack', *BBC*, 15 December 2010, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-11997679->
- 36- E Yazdani, 'The Dynamics of India's Relations with Iran in the Post-Cold War Era: A Geo-Political Analysis', *Journal of South Asian Studies*. 368-351 ,30:2 2007.
- 37- Shamsur Rabb Khan, 'India-Israel relations: from obscurity to certainty', *Atimes*, January 2018 ,08, <http://www.atimes.com/india-israel-relations-obscurity-certainty/>
- 38- Ibid
- 39- Ibid
- 40- Judah Ari Gross, 'IDF's largest-ever aerial exercise takes off, with India on board', *Israel Times*, 05 November 2017, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/idf-kicks-off-its-largest-ever-international-aerial-exercise/>
- 41- 'India may not join US-led global coalition against Islamic State', *Economic Times*, September 27, 2014, [http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/articleshow/43632469.cms?utm\\_source=contentofinterest&utm\\_medium=text&utm\\_campaign=cppst](http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/articleshow/43632469.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst). Notably, the Indian captives were still executed as was confirmed in March 2018.
- 42- 'Narendra Modi, first Indian PM to visit Palestine, receives highest honour', *Zee News*, 19 February 2018, <http://zeenews.india.com/india/narendra-modi-first-indian-pm-to-visit-palestine-receives-highest-honour2080026-.html>
- 43- 'India pledges USD 5 million for UN Palestinian aid agency', *Indian Express*, 26 June 2018, <https://indianexpress.com/article/world/india-pledges-usd-5-million-for-un-palestinian-aid-agency5234102-/>
- 44- 'Turkey and India should have balanced trade ties: Trade Minister', *Hurriyet Daily*, 18 December 2018, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkey-and-india-should-have-balanced-trade-ties-trade-minister-139828>
- 45- Rakesh Sood, 'India-Turkey relations: Turkish delight turned sour', *The Hindu*, 08 May 2017, <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/turkish-delight-turned-sour/article18404983.ece>
- 46- Ifthikar A. Khan, 'Turkey pledges to support Pakistan on Kashmir at UN', *Dawn*, September 08, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1433015>
- 47- Soujanya Sridharan, 'Why do Turkey and Cyprus not get along?', *The Hindu*, April 15, 2017. <https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/why-do-turkey-and-cyprus-not-get-along/article18208746.ece>
- 48- Prasantha Kumar Pradhan, 'India-Egypt Relationship: Looking for a new Momentum', *IDSIA expert brief*, 01 September 2015, [https://idsa.in/idsacomments/IndiaEgyptRelationship\\_pkpradhan\\_010915](https://idsa.in/idsacomments/IndiaEgyptRelationship_pkpradhan_010915)
- 49- 'India-Iraq Bilateral Relations', *Indian Ministry of External Affairs*, 2017, [https://mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/Bilateral\\_Brief\\_iraq.pdf](https://mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/Bilateral_Brief_iraq.pdf)
- 50- Huma Siddiqui, 'Are the Indian companies ready to tap the Iraq market? Huge opportunities for Indian companies in Iraq', *Financial Express*, 12 December 2018, <https://www.financialexpress.com/economy/are-the-indian-companies-ready-to-tap-the-iraq-market-huge-opportunities-for-indian-companies-in-iraq/1411989/>
- 51- 'Share of Indian expatriates living in the Gulf Cooperation Council as of March 2018, by country', *Statista*, March 2018. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/806083/gcc-share-of-indian-expats-by-country/>
- 52- Harsh V Pant, 'India before and After the Arab Springs,' in (ed) Robert Mason, 'The International Politics of the Arab Spring' Palgrave Macmillan. 2014
- 53- Ibid
- 54- Alexander Fulbright, 'In recording, Netanyahu boasts Israel convinced Trump to quit Iran nuclear deal', *Israel Times*, 17 July 2018, <https://www.timesofisrael.com/in-recording-netanyahu-boasts-israel-convinced-trump-to-quit-iran-nuclear-deal/>





- 55- Shrenik Rao, 'Can India Really Play 'Best Friends' to Israel, Palestine and Iran at the Same Time? Israel Times, 15 January 2018, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/netanyahu-meets-modi-just-don-t-mention-the-palestinians-or-iran-1.5730725>
- 56- Jonathan Marcus, 'Why Saudi Arabia and Iran are bitter rivals', BBC, 18 November 2017, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-42008809>
- 57- James M. Dorsey, 'The Saudi Battle for India', The Globalist, 06 January 2019, <https://www.theglobalist.com/india-muslims-saudi-arabia-iran/>
- 58- C P Surendran, 'Steps for timely evacuation of Indians from Qatar have been ensured: MEA', Khaleej Times,
- 59- "India declared as Partner Nation for 2019 Year of Culture", Gulf Times. January 01,2019. <https://www.gulf-times.com/story/618065/India-declared-as-Partner-Nation-for-2019-Year-of->
- 60- 'Oman, the Only Winner in Qatar Crisis', Al Bawaba Business, 12 September 2017, <https://www.albawaba.com/business/oman-wins-qatar-crisis1020650->
- 61- 'For the Gulf states, diplomacy involves buying weapons they don't need', The Economist, 01 March 2018, <https://www.economist.com/middle-east-and-africa/01/03/2018/for-the-gulf-states-diplomacy-involves-buying-weapons-they-dont-need>
- 62- Shairee Malhotra, 'Explaining India's UN Vote on Jerusalem', The Diplomat, 28 December 2017, <https://thediplomat.com/12/2017/explaining-indias-un-vote-on-jerusalem/>
- 63- John Bell, 'Israel-Palestine: Is it even relevant anymore?' Al Jazeera, 02 March 2015, <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2015/03/israel-palestine-relevant-anymore-150302072026022.html>
- 64- David E. Sanger, 'A Strategy of Retreat in Syria, With Echoes of Obama', New York Times, 19 December 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/12/19/us/politics/trump-syria-withdrawal-obama.html>
- 65- Victoria Nuland, 'In a single tweet, Trump destroys U.S. policy in the Middle East', Washington Post, 19 December 2018. [https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/in-a-single-tweet-trump-destroys-us-policy-in-the-middle-east/2018/12/19/eb423434-03da-11e9-b5df-5d3874f1ac36\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.ec9b8409645e](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/in-a-single-tweet-trump-destroys-us-policy-in-the-middle-east/2018/12/19/eb423434-03da-11e9-b5df-5d3874f1ac36_story.html?utm_term=.ec9b8409645e)
- 66- 'The Guardian view on Iran's nuclear deal: Trump creates a narrative for war', The Guardian, May 09, 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/may/09/the-guardian-view-on-irans-nuclear-deal-trump-creates-a-narrative-for-war>
- 67- Liz Sly, 'In the Middle East, Russia is back', Washington Post, 01 October 2018, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/in-the-middle-east-russia-is-back/2018/12/04/e899df30-aaf1-11e8-9a7d-cd30504ff902\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.cdce82286017](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/in-the-middle-east-russia-is-back/2018/12/04/e899df30-aaf1-11e8-9a7d-cd30504ff902_story.html?utm_term=.cdce82286017)
- 68- Owen Daniels, 'How China Is Trying to Dominate the Middle East', National Interest, 28 August 2018, <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/how-china-trying-dominate-middle-east-29922>
- 69- Kabir Taneja, 'Why It Was Wrong to Expect the Saudi Prince to Take India's Cue on Pakistan,' The Wire, 21 February 2019, <https://thewire.in/diplomacy/saudi-arabia-mohammed-bin-salman-india>
- 70- Rozina Ali, 'A Troubling Culture War Between India and Pakistan', the New Yorker, 02 November 2016, <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/culture-desk/the-india-pakistan-film-wars>
- 71- Sushant Sareen, 'Modi's Pakistan policy: What's working and what's not,' ORF, 27 April 2018, <https://www.orfonline.org/research/modi-pakistan-policy-what-working-not/>
- 72- Chitkara, M.C. "Converts do not make a nation". (New Delhi, Ashish Publishing house Pg. 318). For a prominent instance of blowback against the Muslim community in India, read the case of the Dalits of Meenakshipuram where 800 Dalits converted to Islam. "Flashback: How 800 Dalit Hindus in Meenakshipuram were converted to Islam 33 years ago". India TV. December 12,2014.
- 73- Sreenivasan Jain, 'Controversial Texts, Mystery Funds: On the Trail of Saudi-Style Islam In India, NDTV, 25 September 2016, <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/controversial-texts-mystery-funds-on-the-trail-of-saudi-style-islam-in-india-1466303>



#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mohammed Sinan Siyech is a Research Analyst with the International Centre for Political Violence and Terrorism Research (ICPVTR), a constituent unit of the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. He has written on politics, conflict and security pertaining to West Asia and India.

#### ABOUT ALSHARQ FORUM

The Sharq Forum is an independent international network whose mission is to undertake impartial research and develop long-term strategies to ensure the political development, social justice and economic prosperity of the people of Al-Sharq. The Forum does this through promoting the ideals of democratic participation, an informed citizenry, multi-stakeholder dialogue, social justice, and public-spirited research.

**Address:** Istanbul Vizyon Park A1 Plaza Floor:6

No:68 Postal Code: 34197

Bahçelievler/ Istanbul / Turkey

**Telephone:** +902126031815

**Fax:** +902126031665

**Email:** info@sharqforum.org

**sharqforum.org**

    / SharqForum

 / Sharq-Forum

**المنتدى  
الشرف**  
ALSHARQ FORUM