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Q8(a)

Critically examine the continuity and change in India's Palestine policy in the wake of the ongoing Israel-Hamas War.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2024 · PSIR GS 2 · 20 marks · Indian Foreign Policy

Indian Foreign Policy: Determinants of foreign policy; institutions of policy-making; continuity and change.

Core demand of the question

- **State the Nehruvian and later baseline:** two-state, UN votes, ties with both
- **Show change:** defence and tech with Israel; post-October 2023 terror language
- Critically examine continuity (Palestine recognition, humanitarian line) and change (closer Israel, less NAM theatre)

Revision summary

Baseline India policy was anti-colonial support for Palestine, two states, and UN voting with the South.

From the 1990s-2010s India de-hyphenated and built defence and technology ties with Israel.

After October 2023 India condemned Hamas's terror quickly and kept humanitarian and two-state language as the war widened.

Continuity is the diplomatic formula; change is partner hierarchy and the terror frame.

- **Critical need:** keep both sentences, because dropping either one breaks either the South or India's own terrorism diplomacy.

Introduction

- **India's** Palestine policy **began as anti-colonial solidarity:** recognition of Palestinian self-determination, UN voting with the South, and a two-state formula. In the same decades India also built quiet, then open, ties with **Israel**. The **Israel-Hamas war** after October 2023 is a test of **continuity and change**. Both are present. A critical answer must not pretend that nothing moved, or that India simply switched camps.

Body

Continuity

India still states a **two-state solution**, still has relations with the Palestinian Authority, and still sends **humanitarian** assistance to Gaza. It did not empty its UN history in a week. The neighbourhood-first and Global South identity still makes a total alignment with one West Asian party costly among domestic Muslims, among NAM-era partners, and at the UN. That continuity is **real**, if thinner in rhetoric than in the 1970s.

Change, already underway before 2023

From the 1990s, and publicly from the 2010s, India treated Israel as a **defence, agriculture and technology partner**. Prime-ministerial visits, I2U2, and intelligence cooperation against

terrorism re-ranked Israel in Delhi's West Asia matrix. De-hyphenation - talking to Israel without every sentence passing through Palestine - was the change. It fitted the neoliberal-era partnership style of 6(a) and the U.S. intimacy of 7(c).

The war as accelerator

After Hamas's attack on Israeli civilians, official India **condemned terrorism** in language closer to Israel and to India's own Pakistan file than to classical NAM communiqués. It also spoke of civilian suffering in Gaza and of humanitarian law as the war's death toll rose. That **twin sentence** is the current doctrine: terror is named; a two-state horizon is not formally dropped. Critics say the balance tilted toward Israel in speed and warmth of the first response. Supporters say India finally aligned words with its own experience of mass-casualty terror.

Critical verdict

Continuity is the **formula** (two states, humanitarian aid, no embassy withdrawal from the Palestinian cause as a file). Change is the **hierarchy of partners** and the **counter-terror frame**. The war did not create the Israel partnership; it revealed how far de-hyphenation had gone. A policy that only condemns Hamas and forgets occupation will lose the South. A policy that only repeats 1974 language and ignores Hamas's massacre will look disconnected from India's terrorism diplomacy. The critical path is the twin sentence, honestly kept, not a slogan from either embassy.

Flow diagram

Continuity -> Two-state UN humanitarian
Change -> Israel defence de-hyphenation
Israel-Hamas war -> Terror language plus Gaza aid
Continuity -> Twin track
Change -> Twin track

Conclusion

India's Palestine policy still names two states and humanitarian duty. It has changed by making Israel a strategic partner and by reading **October 2023** through a counter-terror lens. Continuity is the formula. Change is the weight. The war accelerated a shift that began in the 1990s, it did not invent it.

Facts & figures

Full Israel ties 1992

Diplomatic normalisation that began the open partnership after decades of distance.

October 2023

Hamas attacks inside Israel followed by a Gaza war; India's first official emphasis was on terrorism.

Two-state formula

Still the stated Indian end-state, even when operational warmth with Israel has increased.

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