

MP-IDSA *Commentary*

Modi's Visit to Jordan and Oman Reinforces India's 'Think West' Policy

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S*ummary*

Modi's visit to Jordan and Oman further strengthens India's 'Think West' policy that prioritises engagement with the West Asian countries.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited two key West Asian countries—Jordan and Oman—during his three-nation tour from 15 to 18 December, which also included Ethiopia. The visit was significant in reinvigorating India’s relations with Jordan and in further strengthening the already robust India–Oman partnership. More broadly, the tour contributed to advancing India’s ‘Think West’ policy by reinforcing New Delhi’s diplomatic, economic and strategic engagement with the West Asian region.

Jordan Visit

India’s engagement with Jordan has mainly remained transactional, with limited strategic depth. For several decades, bilateral economic relations have been limited to routine trade, with the overall volume remaining modest. Total bilateral trade stands at approximately US\$ 2.6 billion in 2024–25. While India is Jordan’s third-largest trading partner, Jordan occupies only a marginal position in India’s global trade profile. Investment flows between the two countries have also been limited.

Historically, the lack of convergence in economic and strategic interests has contributed to subdued bilateral relations. The Gulf countries have traditionally constituted India’s primary strategic focus in West Asia, underpinned by robust trade, energy and diaspora connection. India–Israel relations have deepened considerably since the establishment of diplomatic ties in 1992. In contrast, Jordan has not attracted comparable strategic attention from India. On its part, Jordan has largely prioritised engagement within its immediate neighbourhood, with the Israel–Palestine issue dominating its strategic calculus. The absence of shared security concerns, coupled with limited economic complementarities, has constrained the development of a deeper and more sustained India–Jordan partnership. Against this backdrop, Prime Minister Modi’s visit is significant, as both sides expressed a shared intention to enhance economic engagement by doubling bilateral trade to US\$ 5 billion over the next five years and to expand their cooperation into new and emerging areas.

The lack of sustained engagement is reflected in the infrequency of high-level bilateral visits. Prime Minister Modi’s 2018 visit to Jordan, for instance, came nearly three decades after Rajiv Gandhi’s 1988 visit. Similarly, President Pranab Mukherjee’s 2015 visit marked the first high-level Indian engagement with Jordan since King Abdullah II’s visit to India in 2006, underscoring the infrequency of

bilateral political interactions. This needs to change if a fundamental shift in bilateral ties is to take place.

During their recent meeting, King Abdullah II and Prime Minister Modi discussed areas of convergence in countering terrorism and extremism and agreed to strengthen defence and security cooperation further. The discussions also focused on expanding collaboration in trade and investment, renewable energy, information technology, infrastructure, and people-to-people ties, among other areas.¹

Addressing the India–Jordan Business Forum, Modi encouraged greater participation by Jordanian businesses in India’s growth story and identified infrastructure, construction, clean energy and the automobile sector as areas with significant potential for bilateral cooperation. He also proposed joint India–Jordan efforts in Syria’s post-conflict reconstruction.² The visit resulted in the signing of an MoU on technical cooperation in renewable energy and on cooperation in water resources management and development, reflecting a shared intent to diversify and deepen bilateral engagement.

Earlier in 2018, during King Abdullah’s visit to India, both countries signed 12 MoUs and agreements, including a defence cooperation agreement.³ The discussions between King Abdullah II and Prime Minister Modi also focused on enhancing cooperation in counter-terrorism. Despite shared concerns about the threat of terrorism and considerable experience on both sides in counterterrorism operations, tangible progress in translating this convergence into sustained operational cooperation has been limited. King Abdullah II had visited the National Security Guard (NSG) Training Centre at Manesar in 2018. There is an opportunity for Indian and Jordanian CT forces to engage in capacity and capability building.

India and Jordan have now concluded agreements across a range of critical bilateral domains, reflecting a gradual strengthening of mutual trust in the relationship. Further deepening engagement in key areas such as defence and security, trade and investment, technology, innovation and green energy would provide additional momentum to consolidate and expand the bilateral partnership. During his visit to Jordan, Modi underscored the deep historical trade linkages between the two

¹ [“Prime Minister Meets with His Majesty King Abdullah II of Jordan”](#), Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, 15 December 2025.

² [“Prime Minister's Address at the India - Jordan Business Forum”](#), Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, 16 December 2025.

³ [“Transcript of Media Briefing on Visit of King of Jordan to India”](#), Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, 1 March 2018.

countries. In Jordan, he highlighted the role of the ancient city of Petra as a significant node in trans-regional trade networks connecting Asia with Europe, situating India within these historic commercial exchanges. Reflecting their shared heritage, India and Jordan signed an MoU to twin the landmark cities of Petra and Ellora.

Oman Visit

India’s ties with Oman are deep, and the signing of the India–Oman Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), which had been under negotiation for some time, indicates both countries intend to accelerate economic cooperation. Oman became the second Gulf country, after the UAE, to sign a CEPA with India. During his visit to Oman, Modi held wide-ranging discussions with the Omani leadership, covering political, economic, defence and security issues. Modi characterised the CEPA with Oman as a “blueprint for a shared future”.⁴ Addressing the business community in Oman, he encouraged greater investment in India, particularly in emerging sectors such as green energy, solar parks, energy storage, smart grids, agri-tech, fintech, artificial intelligence and cybersecurity, moving beyond traditional areas of cooperation such as energy and fertilisers.⁵

Both countries agreed to align their long-term national visions—Viksit Bharat and Oman’s Vision 2040—to advance their cooperation. Such a collaborative approach towards the national visions would further strengthen the strategic partnership between the two countries. Prime Minister Modi and Sultan Haitham bin Tarik also agreed to prioritise investment in the energy, technology, logistics, food security, manufacturing and agricultural production sectors.⁶

Oman has emerged as a key strategic partner for India in the Gulf region and remains among India’s oldest defence and security partners in West Asia. It is one of the few countries with which India conducts joint military exercises involving all three services. Oman has also extended consistent support to the Indian Navy’s anti-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden. At the same time, Omani airports are utilised by the Indian Navy and Air Force for refuelling and operational turnaround.

⁴ [**“Prime Minister Attends India-Oman Business Forum”**](#), Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, 18 December 2025.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ [**“His Majesty and Indian Premier Hold Talks”**](#), Foreign Ministry of the Sultanate of Oman, 18 December 2025.

During the visit, Prime Minister Modi and Sultan Haitham bin Tarik agreed to strengthen bilateral defence cooperation further.

Given Oman’s position as a critical maritime neighbour, both countries signed a Joint Vision Document on Maritime Cooperation to enhance collaboration on regional maritime security in the Arabian Sea, deepen engagement in the Blue Economy, and promote the sustainable use of ocean resources. The two leaders also agreed to intensify cooperation to combat piracy and strengthen maritime domain awareness.⁷ Prime Minister Modi also highlighted the centuries-old maritime trading connections between the two countries, particularly the sea routes linking Mandvi on India’s western coast with Muscat, thereby emphasising the longstanding people-to-people and commercial ties that continue to inform contemporary bilateral relations.

The IMEC Connection

Both Jordan and Oman hold critical positions in India’s regional connectivity calculus. Jordan and Oman are two important countries in the India–Middle East–Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC). Active support and participation from these two countries would play a significant role in advancing IMEC's objectives. Owing to its strategic maritime location at the mouth of the Gulf, Oman could potentially serve as the primary point of entry from India into the Gulf. Jordan, in turn, is significant for providing essential overland connectivity linking the Gulf region to Israeli ports, thereby facilitating onward access to Europe.

Conclusion

Modi’s visits to Jordan and Oman further reinforce India’s ‘Think West’ policy, which prioritises deeper engagement with West Asian countries. Following his visits to Saudi Arabia in April 2025 and Kuwait in December 2024, these visits underscore a sustained diplomatic focus on India’s extended neighbourhood and reflect New Delhi’s intent to strengthen its political, economic and strategic engagement with the region.

⁷ [“India-Oman Joint Statement During the Visit of Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi to Oman”](#), Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, 18 December 2025.

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