



## INDIA-ISRAEL STRATEGIC COOPERATION

Anand K. Singh

Associate Professor & In-Charge Department of Defence Studies, Hindu College, Moradabad (U.P.) India

***Abstract- More than 80,000 Israeli Tourists/Academicians/Students visited India from 2010 to 2016. Overall, we can say India is Israel's sixth-largest trading partner. Although the bilateral relationship is dominated by defence cooperation, new sectors of cooperation are also emerging. Indo-Israel trade was approximately \$10 billion in 2012, and Israeli companies and entrepreneurs benefit from India's huge market of 1.2 billion people, as well as the growing middle class of 300 million. In Modi Era these two countries are now negotiating a bilateral Free Trade Agreement.***

**Introduction-** From 1992, Israel was emerged as a true partner for India on different fronts. Both countries are established in democratic setup and have survived in a sea of hostility, surrounded by implacable adversaries and a heavily militarized security environment. India and Israel both have fought wars in nearly every decade of their existence. Both countries also have been facing external and internal security threats in the form of Islamic terrorism and sabotage. It should have been therefore natural for India to reach out to Israel in terms of establishment of meaningful political and economic relations. India's record has been otherwise.

Actually, Indian Prime Minister P.V. Narashimha Rao's decision in January 1992 to establish full diplomatic relations with Israel was driven by the potential for security cooperation.<sup>1</sup> Similar goals and rationales behind arms modernization, buildup, and export brought the two nations closer. Moreover, Israel could potentially assist India in remedying problems with its program for developing indigenous weapons systems.

'Military' is one such area which both the countries are exploring. In the military field, the former Soviet Union has been a strong and traditional friend and partner of India. Though the collapse of Soviet Union affected the Russian military industrial complex and their production capacity has come down from what it was in the Soviet era, but their products are export oriented and relatively low priced. Israel on the other hand, is a late entrant in establishing diplomatic relations with India but has emerged as an important partner in various fields including the military field. Such cooperation is based on India's realistic assessment of the global and regional security environment as well as technological requirement.<sup>2</sup>

In March 1994, Israel's Air force commander visited India. His Indian counterpart-then Chief of the Indian Defense Research and Development Organization (DRDO) A.P.J Abdul Kalam-visited Israel two years later. The warmth of the newly formed ties was evidenced by high level official visits starting with Israeli President Ezer Weizman's trip to India in December 1996, accompanied by a 24-member business delegation.<sup>3</sup> Subsequently, Israel offered India both investment and technical cooperation in matters related to military aircraft, reverse engineering, and the upgrading of weapons systems.<sup>4</sup> In addition, India began to obtain a large number of small arms and weapons systems from Israel, eventually including airborne early warning systems. New Delhi sent its first military attaché to Israel in 1997, indicating a growing military dimension in bilateral relations.

In 1996, India purchased a sophisticated Air Combat Maneuvering Instrumentation from Israel, which was installed at the Jamnagar air base. The same year, a \$10 million deal was made to provide two Dvora MK-2 patrol boats for the Indian Navy. In the electronics and communication arena, Israeli firms like Tadiran played an important role in providing pertinent systems to India. Soltam, another Israeli

---

Corresponding Author



defense firm, agreed to supply the Indian Army with 155 mm self-propelled guns. During the 1990s, the Israeli firm Elta also won a multi-million-dollar contract to upgrade the avionics on India's MiG-21 fighters. The negotiations for the purchase of Barak-1 vertically-launched surface-to-air missiles from Israel in the late-1990s were a significant technological and financial breakthrough in defense cooperation, which provided India with cutting edge technologies and eventually led to co-production.<sup>5</sup>

However, the definitive motivation for greater Indo-Israeli military cooperation emerged from the BJP's 1998 success in forming a ruling coalition. While Israel's weapon production capabilities and combat successes had caught the attention of the Indian defense establishment, it was not until the BJP rose to power that the advantages of bilateral cooperation began to outweigh the objections of India's large, yet decreasingly relevant, Muslim minority. Thus, despite India's support for the Palestinians in various international forums, including the UN, New Delhi gradually began strengthening relations with Israel. Increasing Islamist terrorism in the divided states of Jammu and Kashmir and elsewhere in the country further strengthened this relationship. Meanwhile, Pakistan's expanding nuclear arsenal and alleged funding of militant groups has presented India with additional justification for cooperative ties with Israel.

Growing defense relations were further solidified by Israel's willingness to supply arms-including ordnance, laser-guided bombs, and unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs)-during the 1999 Kargil War between India and Pakistan. The quick response to India's request for military assistance increased Israel's credibility as a reliable arms supplier even during a crisis and helped to bolster the relationship. Thereafter, the defense cooperation grew considerably as Israel stepped up its arms sales to India while most major countries restricted their technological exports to India following the 1998 Pokhran nuclear test. Shortly thereafter in 2000, Indian Home Minister Lal Krishna Advani's visit to Israel further reinforced the bilateral bond.<sup>6</sup> New Delhi also appreciated Israel's proficiency in upgrading outdated Soviet weapons systems, which constituted most of India's defense stockpile. Israel had an advantage, as many of its immigrants had already worked as engineers and technicians in the Soviet military industry. Unsurprisingly, India turned to Israeli companies for retrofitting these aging Soviet weapons. For example, Israel Aircraft Industries (IAI) signed large contracts with the Indian Air Force (IAF), including the upgrading of Russian-made MiG-21 aircraft. In addition, Israel provided state of the art fire control systems and thermal imagery for the Indian Army's Russian-made T-72 tank fleet.<sup>7</sup>

Counterterrorism measures comprise another important factor in Indo-Israeli defense cooperation. The relationship between the states' security agencies actually predates the establishment of official diplomatic relations. However, engagement between the two countries in this field remained limited during the early period of normalization of relations. Moreover, this relationship was never a military alliance, as both the countries adhered to their own set of national priorities and made no commitment to fight for each other. This remains true today.

Additionally visits of India's National Security Adviser Mr. Brajesh Mishra and Services Chiefs have taken place. Since 1998 underlining the growing strategic cooperation between India and Israel. In non-strategic areas visits to Israel have taken place in 1998 - 99 from the Indian side by the Ministers of Urban Affairs, Health and Welfare and the Attorney General. The Indian Navy has also conducted goodwill visits by its ships to Israel. INS SHAKTI, INS GOMTI and INS RANVEER visited Port Eilat around March 28, 2000 Senior Indian Naval officers held talks with Israeli defence officials.<sup>8</sup>

Upto year 2000 Defence related purchases by India from Israel as reported include the following:

- \* Artillery Guns 130mm upgradation to 155mm- 180  
(To be done in Israel)
- \* Artillery Guns 130mm upgradation to 155mm- 250  
(To be done in India)



- \* Battlefield surveillance radars (Artillery) - 250
- \* Battlefield surveillance radars hand held (Infantry)- unspecified
- \* Fast attack naval craft Super Davora - 2 plus four to be built in India.
- \* Electronic Warfare System for INS VIRAT (aircraft carrier)
- \* 160mm Mortar ammunition - 30,000 rounds
- \* 130mm artillery gun ammunition - 50,000 rounds
- \* 125mm shells (for tanks) - 100,000 rounds
- \* 5.56 mm ammunition for rifles - Unspecified
- \* Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) - 8 in 1999 for surveillance purposes(Army) - 20 in 2000
- \* Indian Navy (UAV) requirements (Shipborne) - 50
- \* Russian MI 35 helicopter prototype upgradation - 25 with Israeli avionics and night vision devices.
- \* India seeking defence equipment worth- unspecified number \$ 200 million to include UAVs, avionics for IAF SU - 30 MK I, MIG 27 ML, and JAGUAR upgrades Fire Control radars.

Here a table given below shows India's Defence Purchases from Israel and Areas of Potential Interest-9

	WEAPON DESIGNATION	#	DESCRIPTION	YEAR OF ORDER/DELIVERY	VALUATION
AIRCRAFTS	HERON	16	UAV	2009/2012-13	\$239 M
	HERON	2	UAV	2010/2011	
	SEARCHER	2	UAV	2010/2011	\$12 M (EST.)
	HERON	10	UAV	2016/Y.T.D.	\$400 M
	HERON	10	UAV	2018/Y.T.D	\$200 M
AIR DEFENCE SYSTEMS	SPYDER	18	SAM SYSTEM	2008/2015-17	\$395.4 M
	BARAK-LR	5	SAM SYSTEM	2009/Y.T.D.	\$2.5 B (INC. PRODUCTION IN INDIA)
	BARAK-8	80	SAM	2009/2016-18	
	DERBY	750	BVRAAM	2008/2015-17	\$940 M (EST.)
	PYTHON-5	750	BVRAAM	2008/2015-17	
	SPIKE-2000	100	GUIDED BOMB	2008/2009	\$5-6 M (EST.)
	GRIFFIN	250	GUIDED BOMB	2008/2012-13	\$8-9 M (EST.)
	HAROP	50	LOITERING AMMUNITION	2009/2013-14	\$100 M
	CRYSTAL MAZE	30	ASM	2010/2013-14	\$60 M
	BARAK-1	131	SAM	2017/Y.T.D	\$72 M
MISSILES	EL/M 2075 PHALCON	3	AWACS	2004/2009-11	
	EL/M 2032	9	COMBAT AIRCRAFT RADAR	2005/2008-11	\$110-137 M
SENSORS	EL/M 2032	9	COMBAT AIRCRAFT RADAR	2005/2008-11	\$110-137 M

SIPRI Arms Transfer Database (data compiled by the authors). Note: y.t.d.-yet to be delivered.

**Let's discuss about some special weaponry which is taken from Israel:** Heron is the Medium Altitude Long Endurance (MALE) unmanned aerial system used for intelligence, surveillance, target acquisition and reconnaissance purposes. It is a high-endurance drone that can fly to heights of up to 35,000 ft. for more than 45 hours at a time. It has a visual line-of-sight (LOS) range of 350 km and beyond line-of-sight (BLOS) range of 1,000 km. For the BLOS operations, the visual feed is transmitted to the control room via satellite communication (SATCOM). As India shares a long border with its potential





adversaries in both the western and eastern fronts, the use of drones for intelligence gathering makes this highly efficient. Moreover, harsh weather and complex terrain in conflict-prone regions in India's north hinders manual operations. An all-weather aircraft like Heron can provide an edge in these conditions. In 2009, 16 such drones were ordered by India for US\$239 million; these were delivered in 2012-13. In 2016, the government also approved a US\$400-million plan to procure the Heron TP-XP variant which is specially designed to cater to the needs of international customers using a variety of payloads.<sup>10</sup> In 2008, India ordered the SPYDER-MR Air Defence System from Israel.

SPYDER is a low-level quick reaction missile (LLQRM) system developed by Rafael Advanced Defence Systems, an Israeli defence-technology company. It is used to protect critical infrastructure in ground-to-air missions from wide-spectrum of incoming air-borne threats ranging from aircrafts, helicopters, UAVs, precision-guided munitions (PGMs). It offers both lock-on before launch (LOBL) and lock-on after launch (LOAL) capabilities with I-Derby and Python-5 Missiles.

The Medium Range (MR) version of SPYDER (Surface-to-Air Python-5 Derby) purchased by India offers target interception through vertical launch, thereby creating a protective dome of 80 km radius. It uses electro-optic payloads and wireless data link communications to ensure all-weather, multi-launch and network-centric capabilities. India successfully test fired the SPYDER-MR system in May 2017.<sup>11</sup>

In 2017, Government of India has decided that the surface-to-air missile BARAK can also be deployed as low-range air defence (LRAD) interceptor. In India, the BARAK-LRAD version is known as BARAK-8 (for naval vessels) or Medium Range Surface-to-Air Missile (MRSAM) system (for land-based launchers). It has vertical launch capabilities till 70 km height and supports 360° manoeuvrability. Imbued with an active high-end RF seeker for targets, BARAK also has low launch signature. These missiles will be jointly developed by Israeli Aerospace Industries (IAI) and Defence Research and Development Organization (DRDO) in a boost to Make-in-India in defence.<sup>12</sup>

More than 80,000 Israeli tourists/Academicians/Students visited India from 2010 to 2016. Overall, we can say India is Israel's sixth-largest trading partner. Although the bilateral relationship is dominated by defence cooperation, new sectors of cooperation are also emerging.

Indo-Israel trade was approximately \$10 billion in 2012, and Israeli companies and entrepreneurs benefit from India's huge market of 1.2 billion people, as well as the growing middle class of 300 million. In Modi Era these two countries are now negotiating a bilateral Free Trade Agreement. On the defense front, Israel's timely help with defense equipment during the Kargil war with Pakistan is appreciated in India, and Israel has emerged as India's second largest supplier of defense equipment. In recent years India has bought sophisticated defense equipment from Israel including the Anti-terrorist Strategy to cooperate in fighting terrorism.<sup>13</sup>

#### Conclusion:

India, at the turn of the millennium seems, to have broken out of the straitjacket of moral histrionics of the last 75 years in terms of its foreign policies and approaches to strategic cooperation. In terms of India's national interests related to the context of its present external and internal threats, the imperatives of strategic cooperation with countries willing to contribute to enhancement of India's security, becomes inescapable. Israel as the preceding survey would indicate, is a prime example of a country willing to go the whole length for strategic cooperation with India.

That it is willing to do so without pre-conditions or succumbing to pressures from other countries, makes it a safe source for meeting India's Defence needs. India is in dire need today to reform its intelligence apparatus and add teeth to its counter-intelligence and counter-terrorism responses. Israel has expressed its readiness to assist in these fields and can be expected



to provide blueprints appropriate to Indian requirements. India's national interests are paramount and these dictate the enhancement of India-Israel strategic cooperation. In terms of strategically educating itself from Israeli experience, India could learn to have the will to use power, unapologetically.

#### REFERENCES-

1. P. R. Kumaraswamy, India and Israel: Evolving Strategic Partnership 'Mideast Security and Policy Studies, No. 40 (Sept. 1998).
2. Farah Nazz, India-Israel Military Co-operation, Strategic Analyses, volume: XXIII, Sept. 1999, IDSA, New Delhi.
3. Raja Swamy, "The Case against Collaboration Between India and Israel," MR Zine, August 2006, <http://mrzine.monthlyreview.org/2006/swamy300806.html>.
4. P. R. Kumaraswamy, "Strategic Partnership Between India and Israel," MERIA, Vol. 2, No. 3 (1998), <http://meria.idc.ac.il/journal/1998/issue2/jv2n2a6.html>, pp. 4-6.
5. Wendell Minnick, "Israeli Exhibit Among Largest at Show," Defense News, February 12, 2009, [http://www.defensenews.com/osd\\_story.php?i=3944502](http://www.defensenews.com/osd_story.php?i=3944502).
6. Yiftah S. Shapir, "Israel's Arms Sales to India," Strategic Assessment, Vol. 12, No. 3 (2009), [http://www.inss.org.il/upload/\(FILE\)1259664485.pdf](http://www.inss.org.il/upload/(FILE)1259664485.pdf), p. 29.
7. "India, Israel Military Ties Continue to Grow," The Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs (JINSA), April 8, 2003.
8. 'JanesDefence Weekly (JDW)', April 5, 2000 issue. P15
9. See SIPRI Arms Transfer Database (data compiled by the authors). Note: y.t.d. - yet to be delivered.
10. Santosh Chaubey, "India-Israel Relation Over The Years: Ten Defining Developments". India Today, July 4, 2017.
11. Ankit Panda, "India Tests SPYDER Surface-To-Air Missile System", The Diplomat, May 14, 2017.
12. The Economic Times, July 14, 2017.
13. The Economic Time Sep 24, 2012.

\*\*\*\*\*