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Israel's strategic importance in India's security

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Abstract

This research study explores the various aspects of Israel's strategic significance in relation to India's national security. As two democratic nations with a shared commitment to counterterrorism, regional stability, and technological progress, India and Israel have developed a strong partnership that goes beyond diplomatic relations. The paper examines the historical development of this relationship, highlighting joint endeavours in intelligence sharing, counterterrorism operations, and defence cooperation. The research study emphasizes Israel's strong defence technology capabilities and how Israeli innovations have helped strengthen India's military. Sharing expertise in cybersecurity, missile defence, and drone technology has not only improved India's defence but also built a strong alliance to tackle new security threats. Moreover, this research study shed light upon the geopolitical consequences of this strategic partnership, investigating how the merging of Indian and Israeli interests acts as a stabilizing factor in the area. The research study also discusses the economic and technological benefits that have arisen from collaborative projects and research alliances, promoting the development and strength of both countries. This research study also highlights how Israel significantly contributes to strengthening India's security framework. More than just a typical diplomatic partnership, the collaboration between these countries sets a standard for global teamwork, showing a mutual dedication to advancing peace, stability, and development in a changing world.

Keywords: Defence, India-Israel, security, politics strategy

Introduction

Israel began to develop strong and multifaceted relations with Asian countries soon after its establishment in 1948. This effort of Israel which started from small countries like Cambodia and Nepal. Later, India was also included which has now become a major ally of Israel. In a world where security and strategic partnerships play a crucial role, Israel has emerged as a beacon of innovation and a reliable ally for India. With a multitude of cutting-edge equipment and ground-breaking technologies at its disposal, Israel has cemented its position as a crucial partner in enhancing India's security capabilities. There is a trade of 1 billion dollars every year between India and Israel. India has been importing important defence equipment and weapons from Israel. For India to deal with terrorism in South Asia. Therefore, Israel is useful for India in strategically dealing with Pakistan and China, including the security of the Indian Ocean. India has taken missiles, radar, spice bombs and other weapons from Israel. In the year 2019, India has agreed to buy 100 spice bombs worth \$300 million from Israel. India used Spice bombs in the Balakot strike against terrorists. Apart from this, Israel has given unmanned aircraft Heron and Haroop to India. The weapons purchased by India from Israel are helping in combating cross-border terrorism, ensuring internal security and crime control. In March 2020, India signed a defence deal worth Rs 880 crore with Israel. In this defence deal, an order has been placed to purchase 16,479 light machine-guns for the Indian Armed Forces. India invited Israeli defence companies for joint production because there are good investment opportunities for Israel in the field of defence production in India. Investment in the field of defence production will benefit domestic manufacturing, reduce dependence on bureaucratically run state-owned armaments factories, and also provide access to new technology. India and Israel collaborated on the Barak-8 missile defence system, which is a long-range surface-to-air missile system developed by DRDO and Israel's Aerospace Industries.

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It offers protection against airborne threats and has been integrated into the Indian Navy's warships for added security against enemy aircraft and missiles. India and Israel have joined forces in the defence technology sector, particularly in the area of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs). Israel, known for its expertise in UAV development and production, has provided India with cutting-edge drones like the Heron and Searcher UAVs. These drones have played a crucial role in the Indian Armed Forces' surveillance, reconnaissance, and intelligence-gathering operations, significantly boosting India's situational awareness and operational capabilities. India and Israel work together on cyber security, sharing intelligence and expertise to tackle cyber threats. Israel's knowledge in cyber security has been very helpful to India as they both deal with challenges from various sources in cyberspace. Project Cheetah, a collaboration between India and Israel, is a significant initiative that showcases their strategic partnership by focusing on boosting India's security capabilities with cutting-edge military technology.

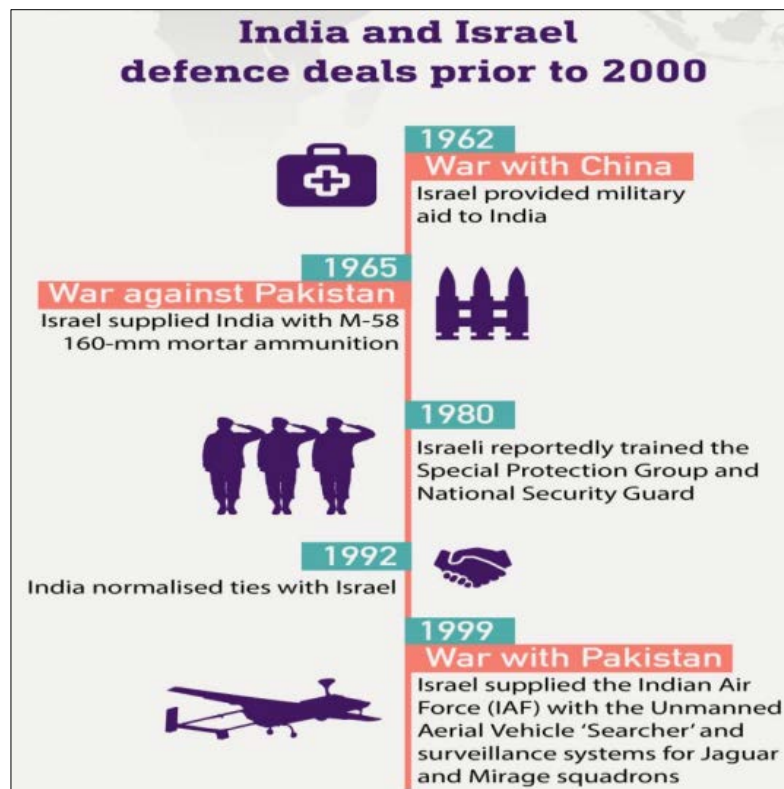
Beginning of Strategic Importance with Israel

Israel's strategic significance in India's security was first recognized during the 1962 India-China war, leading to strategic cooperation between the two countries.

- In the war against Pakistan, Israel provided India with T-58 160 mm mortar ammunition in 1965.
- Israel provided India with advanced weaponry during the 1971 conflict with Pakistan.
- In 1996, India bought 32 (IAI), Searcher drones, Electronic Support Major Sensor, and an (Air Combat Maneuvering Instrumentation Simulator System) from Israel ^[1]. Since then, Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI) has done many contracts with the Indian Air Force. This includes the upgrade of IAF Russian-made MiG-

21 ground attack aircraft and the addition of unmanned aerial vehicles. Laser sales have also taken place ^[2].

- In 1997, Israeli President Ezer Weizman became the first head of a Jewish state to visit India. He met Indian President Shankar Dayal Sharma, Vice President KR Narayanan and Prime Minister HD Devgoda. Weizmann negotiated the first arms deal between the two countries, which included the purchase of vertically launched surface-to-air (SAM) missiles from Israel. Barak-1 has the capability to intercept anti-ship missiles like Harpoon. India's purchase of Barak-1 missiles from Israel was a strategic necessity as Pakistan had purchased maritime surveillance aircraft Lockheed P-3 Ariane and 27 Harpoon sea-skimming anti-ship missiles from the US.
- At the time of the Pokhran tests in 1998, Israel was one of the few countries that decided not to condemn nuclear tests. Israel continued its arms trade with India even in the face of sanctions and international isolation following the tests ^[3].
- During the Kargil war in 1999, India lacked mortars and ammunition. India also didn't have bombs or reconnaissance aircraft to target enemy bunkers or spy on their posts. Despite these challenges, the Indian Army relied on ground intelligence to fight against the Pakistani Army. Israel was one of the few countries that directly assisted India during this war. They provided immediate help by supplying ammunition, mortars, and necessary equipment for surveillance and bombing. Despite pressure from America and other countries, Israel supported India without hesitation. They even provided laser guided bombs that were used by Mirage 2000 fighter planes to destroy Pakistani bunkers. With Israel's assistance, the Indian Army successfully destroyed all enemy mines located on the other side of the LoC from the high hills of Kargil ^[4].

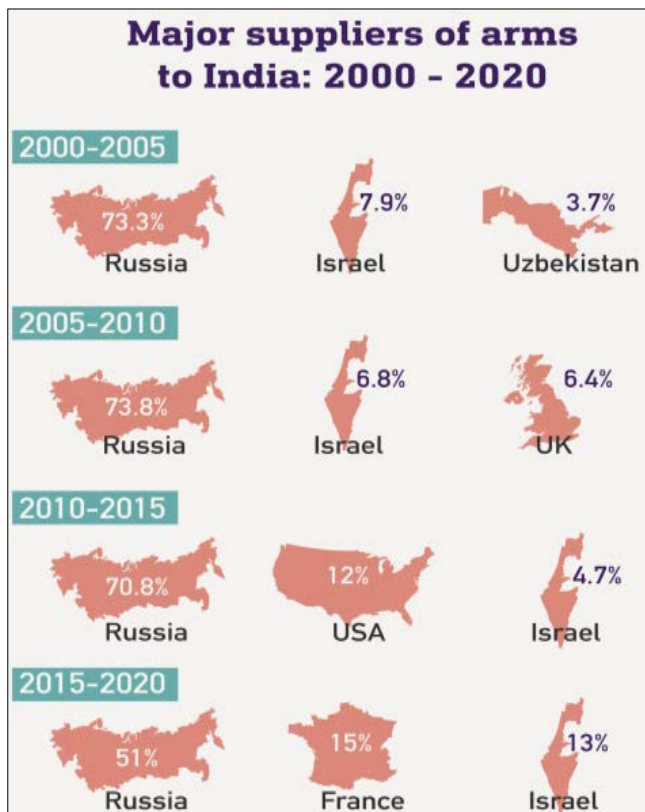


Source: SIPRI

Defence deals between India and Israel 2000 onward

- In 2000, Israeli submarines reportedly tested a nuclear-capable cruise missile in Indian Ocean waters off the Sri Lankan coast. In a military context, Israel sees great strategic value in an alliance with the Indian Navy, given India's massive naval dominance in South Asian waters and the Indian Ocean. Due to the immense importance of maritime trade to the Israeli economy, it sees the potential to establish a logistics infrastructure in the Indian Ocean with the help of the Indian Navy.
- After the devastating earthquake in 2001, Israel sent the so-called Israel Defence Forces (IDF) to India. To provide humanitarian relief and treatment for victims.
- At the beginning of the 21st century the Indian Army announced its intention to implement a modernization program. For which resources worth billions of dollars were allocated. Since then, Israel's defence deals have grown rapidly. Today India is the number one importer of Israeli defence industries [5]. Israel now imports a variety of defence technologies from India.
- India purchased three Falcon AWACS equipped with radar equipment mounted on Russian IL-76 transport aircraft in 2003 at a cost of US \$1 billion.

- country, the largest defence contract in Israel's history at the time. The then CEO of IAI Yitzhak Nissan visited India to finalize the understanding with the heads of the defence establishment and the President of the country.
- Following the Mumbai attacks in 2008, Israel provided a team of about 40 special forces and assistance in the investigation.
- On 10 November 2008, Indian military officials visited Israel to discuss joint weapons development projects, additional sales of Israeli equipment to the Indian Army and counter-terrorism strategies. The new round of talks was seen as an important expansion in the India-Israel strategic partnership [7].
- In 2009, Israel Defence Forces Chief of Staff Lieutenant General Gabi Ashkenazi visited India to strengthen defence ties between the two countries. He promised to provide all kinds of help from Israel to India to fight terrorism [8].
- In March 2011, India signed an agreement to purchase 8,356 Israeli Spike anti-tank missiles, 321 launchers, 15 training simulators and peripheral equipment from Israel's Rafael Advanced Defence System at a cost of US\$1 billion. But this deal was finalized in 2015 [9].
- In September 2015, the Government of India approved the Air Force's request to purchase 10 Heran TP drones from Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI). In 2015, a delegation from Israel's Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs visited India led by former Israeli Ambassador Dorgold. They Shared strategic interests including countering radical Islam, dealing with regional disputes and the security situation in West Asia were discussed [10].
- India and Israel planned to conduct their first joint military exercise in October 2015 [11].
- In September 2016, the Government of India approved the purchase of two more Falcon AWACS.
- In 2017, a military agreement worth US \$ 2 billion was signed between India and Israel [12].
- In 2017 for the first time, India established Uvda Air Force Base in southern Israel. Participated in "Blue Flag" exercise at Patavibam Thanemdha.
- Indian Air Force sent 5 Dassault 'Mirage 2000' fighter aircraft to participate in 'Blue Flag' 2021 [13].



Source: SIPRI

Major Supplier of Arms to India: 2000-2020

- India bought 50 Israeli drones in 2005 for \$220 million [6].
- In 2007, IAI signed a US\$2.5 billion deal with India to develop an anti-aircraft system and missiles for the

Technologies imported by India from Israel
Important defence equipment purchased by India from Israel

For India, Israel has emerged as a friend which has always played an important role in finding solutions to our security challenges. Indian defence agencies have been using (Weapon Systems) made by Israel for a long time. From Falcon Airborne and Control System (AWACS) to Heron, Harop drones, Barak anti-missile system, Spider Quick Reaction Craft to Python, Derby, security systems have played an important role in maintaining the Indian security system.

Table 1: Major Israeli defence equipment purchased by India

Missiles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Derby Beyond Visual Range Air to Air Missile (BVRAAM) • Harop loitering munition • Python-5 BVRAAM • SPICE-2000 guided bombs • Popeye-1 Air to Surface Missile (ASM)
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Griffin guided bombs • Spike anti-tank guided missiles • Popeye II (Crystal Maze) ASM • SkyStriker loitering munition
Unmanned Aerial Vehicles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heron • Searcher MkII • Harop
Sensors and Radars	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EL/M-2075 Phalcon airborne early warning radar system • EL/M-2248 MF-STAR multi-function radar • EL/M-2084 multi-mission radar systems • EL/M-2238 naval radar system • EL/M-2052 airborne AESA fire control radar • Litening electro-optical infrared sensor system
Air Defence systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spyder medium-range Surface to Air Missile (SAM) system • Barak SAM system
Small arms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Negev NG-7 light machine guns

Source: SIPRI Arms Transfer Data Base or IISS Military Balance 2022

India purchased important defence equipment from Israel

1. Heron (Bugla) Drone: It is a medium altitude, long range unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) used for intelligence, surveillance, target acquisition and reconnaissance purposes. It is a high endurance drone that can fly at altitudes up to 35000 feet for more than 45 hours at a time. It can lift weight up to 250kg and includes thermographic camera, airborne ground surveillance visual light [14]. Since India shares a long border with its potential adversaries on both the western and eastern fronts, the use of drones for intelligence gathering makes it highly efficient [15].

2. Elbit Hermes 900: It is a medium-sized multi-payload unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) designed for tactical missions. It is the successor to the Hermes 450 series of drones, which are among the most widely used military drones in the world. It is a multi-mission tactical unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) for surveillance, target acquisition, artillery adjustment and damage assessment. Capable of real-time collection and data transmission, it can fly continuously for 20 hours within the range of 300km. Apart from the small size and low radar detection, the four-stroke silent 182 gasoline engine ensures Audi stealth, making it different from the Heron [17].

Air Defence System

1. Spyder-MR: The SPYDER is a low-level quick reaction missile system developed by Israeli defence-technology company Rafael Advanced Defence Systems. It is used in ground-to-air missions to protect critical infrastructure from a broad spectrum of threats from aircraft, helicopters, UAVs, precision-guided munitions, etc. India successfully tested the SPYDER-MR system in May 2017 [18].

2. Barak: The Barak surface-to-air missile can also be deployed as a short-range air defence (LRAD) interceptor. In India, the Barak variant is known as the Barak-8 (for naval ships) or the Medium Range Surface Missile System. In this 70 km. has vertical launch capabilities up to a height of 100 m and supports 360-degree manoeuvrability [19].

Missiles

The Indian defence arsenal includes the Rafale-made missiles Python-5 and Derby

▪ **Python-5-** It is a 5th generation missile, it has been developed by the Israeli defence company Rafael

Advanced Defence Systems (RADS). It is the latest version of the Python family. It is a full sphere infrared air-to-air missile, meaning it can be fired from any direction and angle. This missile is capable of shooting down enemy aircraft from very short ranges to almost beyond visual range [20]. It is a dual-use missile capable of both air-to-air and surface-to-air missiles. This missile provides the facility to surround the pilot's area with enemy aircraft [21]. It will be of particular use to the Indian Air Force due to the soon to be inducted Mirage-2000, Jaguar, MiG-21, MiG-29, Sukhoi-30 as well as Tejas Light Combat Aircraft [21].

- **Derby:** Derby is a beyond visual range (BVR) air-to-air missile developed by Israeli defence company Rafael Advanced Defence Systems to meet the combat requirements of the armed forces. India ordered 750 Python-5 and Derby missiles in 2008, with them delivered by 2017. Since then it has been the backbone of India's air defence system. It was a Derby missile that shot down a Pakistani patrolling drone after the Balasore air strike in February 2019 [22].
- **Spike:** These are fourth generation anti-tank missiles with a range of 4 km, which can be operated from Fire and Forget mode. These are made by Israel's Rafael Advanced Defence System.
- **Crystal Maze:** This air-to-surface missile is an Indian version of the AGM-142A Popeye. Which is jointly developed by Israel-based Rafael and US-based Lockheed Martin [23].

Sensor (Search Track and Guidance Radar-STGR)

India has acquired many sensors for its naval ships and for various intelligence purposes. Most of them are with EL/M-Series plan. The systems are manufactured and used for ground surveillance, multi-role, air search and fire control plans. One of the sensors that India has acquired from Israel is the EL/W-2090 airborne early warning and control system (AEWCS). This system, manufactured by Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI), is installed on Indian Air Force aircraft to provide early warning of incoming aerial threats and help in managing air battles. The EL/W-2090 is equipped with sophisticated radar and communication systems, allowing it to detect and track multiple targets simultaneously, even in challenging environments [24]. Another sensor that India has procured from Israel is the Heron unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) system [25]. The Heron is a medium-altitude, long-endurance UAV that is used by the Indian military for

reconnaissance and surveillance missions. Equipped with high-definition cameras and infrared sensors, the Heron provides real-time intelligence to ground forces, helping them to monitor enemy activities and plan operations effectively. In addition to these, India has also imported the Green Pine radar system from Israel [26]. The Green Pine radar is a long-range, ground-based radar system that is used for detecting and tracking ballistic missile threats. It is a key component of India's ballistic missile defence system, providing early warning and tracking of incoming missiles and enabling the country to launch interceptors in response. The acquisition of these advanced sensor systems from Israel has significantly enhanced India's defence capabilities and its ability to respond to various security challenges. By leveraging Israeli expertise in sensor technology, India has been able to bolster its border security, improve situational awareness, and strengthen its overall defence posture. One of the sensors that India has equipped from Israel is the EL/M-2052 Active Electronically Scanned Array (AESA) radar for its fighter jets. This radar system offers superior detection and tracking capabilities, as well as enhanced situational awareness for pilots during combat missions. The EL/M-2052 AESA radar has been integrated into India's indigenous Tejas fighter aircraft, providing it with a technological edge over its adversaries [27]. The acquisition of sensors from Israel has played a crucial role in enhancing India's security and defence capabilities. The advanced sensor technologies provided by Israel have enabled India to monitor its borders, safeguard its national interests, and protect its sovereignty. As India continues to face multifaceted security challenges, its partnership with Israel in the defence sector will remain a cornerstone of its national security strategy.

Conclusion

Israel's strategic importance in India's security cannot be overstated. The two countries, despite being thousands of miles apart, share a special relationship that is based on mutual trust, cooperation, and strategic convergence. This partnership has grown significantly over the years, especially in the fields of defence, intelligence, and counter-terrorism, and has proved to be crucial for India's national security interests.

One of the key reasons for Israel's strategic importance to India is its expertise in defence technology and military capabilities. Israel is known for its advanced defence systems, such as missile defence systems, unmanned aerial vehicles, and cyber warfare capabilities, which are considered some of the most sophisticated in the world. India has benefited from Israel's technological prowess through various defence collaborations, including the joint development of missile systems like the Barak-8 and the Spyder.

Moreover, Israel's strategic location in the volatile Middle East region is also of great importance to India's security. Given India's own geostrategic challenges in its neighborhood, including threats from terrorism and nuclear proliferation, having a reliable ally like Israel in a critical region provides India with valuable intelligence and strategic depth. Israel's expertise in counter-terrorism and intelligence sharing has been particularly beneficial for India in combating transnational threats and terrorist groups operating in the region.

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