

## **BOOK REVIEWS**

## **The Weapon Wizards: How Israel Became a High-Tech Military Superpower**

Yaakov Katz and Amir Bohbot (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2017, 288 pages)

**Reviewed by Attiq ur Rehman\***

The mysterious story of Israel's largest strategic capabilities primarily against its territorially adjoining states is the core theme of the book written by two journalists. Yaakov Katz, editor-in-chief of *The Jerusalem Post* and a faculty member of Harvard University's Extension School, is an American citizen living in Jerusalem. Amir Bohbot is a military editor working for Tel Aviv based an online news network *Walla*, and is a renowned Israeli defence analyst. The combined work of both authors in the book focuses the genesis of technologically advanced and technically sophisticated armed capabilities of Israel. Both Israeli journalists try to justify the role of the persistently swelling weapon industry of their country and its worldwide undeniable commercial connections. In defence of Israel Defence Forces (IDF)'s offensive operations against bordering Arab nations, both writers attempt to construct the legitimate grounds for strategically conventional and nonconventional competences of their country.

The book divides into eight chapters and highlights the role of leaders, scientists, researchers, businessmen within and outside Israel in maintaining its largescale weapon industry. The first chapter starts with the discussion from Yishuv (the Jewish community before the creation of Israel). Yishuv initiated the clandestine efforts for the construction of an underground bullet factory known as Ayalon Institute which later renamed as Israel Military Industries (IMI). It was the Doctrine of Defence and State of Armed Forces which laid the formal foundation for the Jewish weapon industry (p.36). The subsequent chapters provide an

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\* Atiq ur Rehman is Lecturer in International Relations Department, NUML, Islamabad.

inclusive detail of different weapon systems and their role in refining IDF's performance. The idea of drones was empowered with the help of American Jews in order to carry the 3D missions – dull, dirty and dangerous (p.67). Chapter second defines the performance of Israeli drones and their global reputation. The history of Merkva, main battle tank of IDF, is debated in the third chapter. Fourth and fifth chapters titled “Chutzpadik Satellite” and “Rocket Science” concentrate on the functions of Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI) and Rafael missile factory.

The interesting part of the book starts from the sixth chapter which carefully gives a glimpse of IDF's reconnaissance missions. Shabak-the internal security agency of Israel functioning in Gaza (p.175) is carrying out target killing raids. The debate of the intelligence missions of Israel cannot be completed without pinpointing the Mossad's covert worldwide network. Mossad's association with cyber warfare was thinly indicated in chapter seventh by arguing the Stuxnet report (p. 201). Final chapter of the book tells a fascinating record of Knesset members in the placing of their country among international community. Jewish diplomatic missions around the globe constantly struggled for the bringing of qualitatively improvement in IDF's performance by establishing their links with militarily advanced states.

Each chapter portrays an exciting picture of Israel's different weapon programs coupled with an interesting record of efforts carried out by overseas Jewish communities in developing Israeli military culture. A constant determination to manufacture advanced weapons of Jewish decision makers revolutionized the weapons industry and upgraded the notion of modern battlefield. In this way, Israel cultivated a remarkable popularity in international weapons market and successfully persuaded powerful nations by signing several deals. The contacts with foreign companies not only helped the Jewish leaders in becoming influential in international system, but it also boosted the Tel Aviv's economy.

The journey to progressively build advanced weapons capability in the book describes a parallel story of Arab-Israel wars. A chronological

survey of the main Arab-Israeli wars along with numerous biographic details of leading Jewish figures covers major parts of the book. Both writers reluctantly address the question of nuclear ambiguity adopted by Israel. More journalistic and less academic style of Katz and Bohbot narrates merely the journey of a tiny state which starts from a weapon-deprived status instead of revealing the impact of high-tech weapons on regional security environment. The book only traces the legitimate connections of Israeli Jews in upgrading the military industrial complex of their country.

Both writers glorify the role of technological advancement in upgrading the Israeli military-industrial complex and its worldwide extension. The efforts of two military journalists is an endeavour to sympathetically review how over a decade-long struggle of Jews provided highly sophisticated weaponry against the overwhelming wave of security upheavals originating from bordering states. It further improved the IDF's capabilities for carrying out major combat operations against Lebanese Hezbollah and Palestinian Hamas. On the basis of technologically innovative skills in addition to the implantation of an improved form of interoperability in the warfare domain, the different IDF units are now capable of working together in a highly coordinated manner, according to Katz and Bohbot.

The writers cautiously explain the Jewish leaders' quest for acquiring the status of an advanced armed state of the world while implementing its hegemonic designs in the Middle Eastern region. The book offers an insight into Israel's innovative technological advancement and its appropriate application in military affairs. Lack of a balanced approach and the absence of a scholarly enquiry in the book will probably make it a less interested reading for leading strategic circles of the international community. It is an appropriate piece of writing only to guess carefully the contemporary status of Israeli weapons. Furthermore, the detailed stories of different Jewish leaders, scientists, and politicians provide

unnecessary information to the reader. Main argument of both the writers emphasizes less the principal theme of the book, they more focus on the praising of the Jewish community in and outside Israel. The writers of the book are deliberately silent on addressing the question of how the application of cutting-edge technology in non-peaceful matters will deteriorate the regional security situation of Middle East.