

India-Israel Defence Cooperation: Security Implications for Pakistan

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Abstract

The burgeoning India-Israeli defence cooperation is escalating the already existing arms competition in the South Asian region resulting in action-reaction dynamics owing to the security competition between India and Pakistan. This paper highlights India-Israel increasing defence collaboration in hi-tech weapon systems including Air and Ballistic Missile Defence system, which is creating a security dilemma leading to greater security concerns for Pakistan. Resultantly, Pakistan's counter-effort to secure itself is enhancing arms competition. Exploring the advancements in India-Israel defence cooperation, this paper examines the security implications of both states evolving defence cooperation which is creating challenges and threat matrix for Pakistan. This paper also explains how the rapid pace of arms trade between the two countries is disturbing the South Asian deterrence and strategic stability.

Keywords: Arms race, Action-Reaction Dynamics, Air and Ballistic Missile Defence System, Deterrence, Security dilemma, Strategic Stability

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Introduction

In the past two decades, India-Israel defence cooperation has expanded exponentially. Many agreements have been signed for buying or jointly developing military systems as the two countries have shown mutual interest to widen their influence in South Asia and the Middle Eastern region, thereby enhancing their strategic and defence cooperation. The most obvious example is in the field of Air and Ballistic Missile Defence cooperation, in addition to a wide range of other military systems too, leading the well-established and modernized Israeli technical expertise to fill critical gaps in Indian defence industry.² This partnership has become increasingly institutionalized with ever-stronger links between government officials, defence organizations and corporate sector. This in part points to the fact that both states have similar security concerns and corresponding socio-political outlooks where India's pursuit for upgraded military technology and "Israel's need for economizing defence research are complementary."³ Moreover, India-Israel ties are conducive to the US strategic interests because of its power struggle with China and Russia as well as varied interest in South Asia, the Indian Ocean and the Middle East.

The increasing India-Israel defence cooperation and rapid development of the conventional and non-conventional military weapons is triggering the existing arms race in the region between the two nuclear weapon adversaries, i.e., India and Pakistan. This development is resulting in an action-reaction spiral⁴ as it constrains

² Christer Ahlstrom, "Arrows for India: Technology Transfers for Ballistic Missile Defence and the Missile Technology Control Regime," *Journal of Conflict & Security Law*, Vol. 9, no. 1 (2004), 123.

³ P.R. Kumara Swamy, "India and Israel: Emerging Partnership," *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 25, no. 4(2002), 202.

⁴ Charles L. Glaser, "The Security Dilemma Revisited," *World Politics*, Vol. 50, Issue. 1(1997), 175-176.

Pakistan to effectively deter the emerging threat from India-Israel defence partnership and to maintain the strategic and conventional balance vis-à-vis India. Therefore, the paper briefly evaluates the implications of growing India-Israel defence cooperation for Pakistan while underlining the security dilemmas and explains how this defence cooperation is driving the nuclear arms-race and disturbing the South Asian strategic balance. Moreover, India-Israel enhanced joint defence ventures and increasing Air and Ballistic Missile Defence cooperation plays a significant role in escalating the missile competition in the region. Following this, the research also addresses the repercussions of this transition for regional politics and places the emerging India-Israel nexus in the wider geopolitical context, shaped by the great power politics and competition between the United States, China, and Russia.

The paper proceeds in four sections; (i) the first section aims to develop a conceptual framework to investigate the premise that India-Israeli defence cooperation is generating a new arms race in South Asia; (ii) the second section traces the evolution and development of India-Israel relationship and explores the major areas of defence cooperation, the co-development of military programmes and the growing relationship within the military and security domain besides explaining the importance of these ties for the two states (iii) the third section looks at the issue of Air and Ballistic Missile Defence cooperation and the importance of strategic defence ties between India and Israel, (iv) the fourth examines important queries about why India is procuring the advanced missile technology, how it affects the South Asian region, how India-Israel cooperation in Air and Ballistic Missile Defence system is threatening the South Asian strategic stability and how Pakistan may react to these alarming developments by taking counter-measures.

This research would remain restricted to examining only India-Israel defence partnership and its security implications for Pakistan. Although

India's rapid development and procurement of advanced military weaponry is also directed towards China, but this study does not include that debate.

Conceptual Framework

The growing development in India-Israel defence cooperation, especially in advanced Air and Missile defence technology is not only upsetting the deterrence stability in South Asia but also posing a significant security threat for Pakistan. This paper examines the whole phenomenon under the Realist paradigm and explains the security dilemma theory to understand the action-reaction dynamics that mandated Pakistan to improve its defensive capabilities. The Indian military modernization is therefore escalating tensions and increasing the probability of nuclear warfare in the South Asian region.

Realism considers state as the primary actor in the international system, pursuing its national interests rationally, while survival, power and security are the core values of a state's functions. According to Gilpin,⁵ Morgenthau⁶ and Schmidt⁷ anarchism or non-existence of a central power, which illustrates the international structure, forces the states to act in pursuit of survival and achieving their national interests. Generally, the perception of self-interest and survival constrains the states to increase their security, which deteriorates the security of other state, especially the neighboring state. This creates a chaotic environment which then leads to the security dilemma.

⁵ Robert J. Gilpin, "The Richness of the Tradition of Political Realism," *International Organization*, Vol. 38, no. 2 (1984), 292.

⁶ Hans Joachim Morgenthau and Kenneth W. Thompson, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, 6th edition (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1985), 165-166.

⁷ Brian C. Schmidt, "On the History and Historiography of International Relations," in *Handbook of International Relations*, eds. Walter Carlsnaes, Thomas Risse and Beth A. Simmons (London: SAGE Publications, 2002), 28.

In international relations theory, the term security dilemma reflects the basic logic of defensive realism and is very much relevant to the South Asian security architecture.⁸ The concept of security dilemma was introduced by John Herz and Herbert Butterfield in 1950. John Herz writes that “wherever anarchic society has existed, there has arisen the “security dilemma” of men, or groups, or their leaders. Groups or individuals living in such a constellation must be, and usually are, concerned about their security from being attacked, subjected, dominated, or annihilated by other groups. Striving to attain security from such attacks, they are driven to acquire more and more power in order to escape the impact of the power of others. This, in turn, renders the others more insecure and compels them to prepare for the worst. Since none can ever feel entirely secure in such a world of competing units, power competition ensues, and the vicious circle of security and power accumulation begins.”⁹ He further adds that “conflicts caused by the security dilemma are bound to emerge among political units of power.”¹⁰ Hence, the security dilemma arises when states increase power gradually for their security due to fear and ambiguity about the intentions of other states under anarchy.

Robert Jervis has also explained the concept of security dilemma very rigorously. According to Jervis, “an increase in one state’s security can make others less secure, not because of misperceptions or imaged hostility, but because of the anarchic context of international relations.”¹¹ The uncertainty among states about each other’s intentions leads them towards security dilemma as Jervis states that

⁸ Feroz Hassan Khan, “Security Dilemma in South Asia: Building Arsenals and Living with Distrust,” *Naval Postgraduate School*, 2015, Available at: <https://calhoun.nps.edu/handle/10945/57244> (accessed on 4 March 2021).

⁹ John H. Herz, “Idealist Internationalism and the Security Dilemma,” *World Politics*, Vol. 2, no. 2(1950), 157.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 158.

¹¹ Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), 62.

“even if they can be certain that the current intentions of other states are benign, they can neither neglect the possibility that the others will become aggressive in the future nor credibly guarantee that they will remain peaceful.”¹² Hence, military build-ups, arms race, development of nuclear technology and missile systems are major indicators of the security dilemma.

The competition of two nuclear-weapon states and the adversarial relationship among India and Pakistan has already complicated the security dynamics of South Asia and made the region a nuclear flashpoint. Also, the presence of China and the United States, because of their strategic interests in the region, added more complexities in the existing security dilemmas. Here security dilemma seems to be dominant, as an action-reaction dynamic is created due to the competitive environment in the region and seems more like a “power security dilemma.”¹³ For instance, China is building arms in response to the United States strategic capabilities; while the United States developmental trajectories are to project itself as a global power and also to contain the increasing influence of China in Asia Pacific as well as resurgent Russia. Hence the United States is strengthening its relationship with India to counter China’s rise which ultimately incentivizes a nuclear arms competition between India and Pakistan.

Moreover, India views its nuclear weapon program as a means to attaining regional dominance and great power status as well as looking for a viable and effective defence against the missile advancement of Pakistan. Hence, India increased cooperation with the United States and enhanced its strategic partnership with Israel to get more advanced weaponry and defence technology. As the “vibrant India-

¹² Robert Jervis, “Was the Cold War a Security Dilemma,” *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol. 3, no. 1 (2001), 36.

¹³ Barry Buzan, *People, States and Fear: The National Security Problem in International Relations* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1983), 157.

Israeli axis is a clear US interest,” therefore, the United States openly endorses “a powerful, progressive India bolstered by Israeli technological expertise.”¹⁴ In this regard, India-Israel growing cooperation in military technology and sophisticated weaponry, especially in missile systems, is further enhancing the nuclear arms race in the region. Moreover, India’s increased defence budget every year, rapid modernization of conventional and non-conventional weapons and power projection behavior constantly undermines the regional strategic environment and subverts nuclear deterrence in the South Asia region. These developments directly threaten Pakistan and compel it to increase its reliance on nuclear deterrence to ensure peace and avoid war. Although India and Pakistan are seeking enhanced security which has resulted in an action-reaction cycle generally recognized as security dilemma. Hence, a complex nuclear geometry is taking shape because of the security dilemma as India’s increasing defence partnership and technological cooperation on missile defence with Israeli is not only destabilizing the contemporary dynamics of credible nuclear deterrence but also intensifying the menace of the nuclear outbreak in the region.

The Genesis of Cooperation

India and Israel came into existence in 1947 but their relations were dormant almost for four decades. India chose not to initiate formal ties with Israel, keeping its dealings on the low ebb because of its traditional policy preferences towards the Arab states. However, during this time, both states were discreetly cooperating in multiple areas, such as security, intelligence sharing and transfer of military equipment. Israel never wavered from supporting India militarily in

¹⁴ Martin Sherman, “Indo-Israeli Strategic Cooperation as a US National Interest,” *Ariel Centre for Policy Research*, 1999, Available at: <https://www.amazon.com/Indo-Israeli-Strategic-Cooperation-National-Interest/dp/9659023944> (accessed on 4 March 2021).

most of its major conflicts, be it the border conflict with China or a war with Pakistan.¹⁵ With regards to the intelligence-sharing, extensive cooperation also developed between the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) of India and Israel's Mossad 'under the leadership of Indira Gandhi (1966-77 and 1980-84) and Rajiv Gandhi (1984-89).'¹⁶

Throughout the Cold-War era, the Soviet Union was India's major defence partner and "emerged as India's primary supplier of defence equipment."¹⁷ But after the collapse of the USSR, India had to look for alternative alliances and military competences; therefore, the sophisticated weapons of Israel were the obvious choice. Israel soon became a reliable defence partner of India and the "second-largest source of armaments."¹⁸ After the Cold-War period and subsequent changes in the international geostrategic environment, both India and Israel not only formalized their diplomatic relations in 1992 but also established formal defence cooperation in 1997.¹⁹ Since then, a number of military visits, exchanges and meetings held between New Delhi and Jerusalem that have reached new heights with passing years.

The Kargil conflict between India and Pakistan also played a vital role in revitalization of Indian defence cooperation with Israel. During the war, Israel proved to be a reliable partner by providing India with various hi-tech weaponries that it required. This included: laser-guided missiles for fighter jets, unmanned aerial vehicles, surface-to-surface

¹⁵ Harsh V. Pant, "India-Israel Partnership: Convergence and Constraints," *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 8, no. 4 (2004), 61.

¹⁶ P. R. Kumaraswamy, *India and Israel: Evolving Strategic Partnership* (Bar-Ilan University: Begin and Sadat Centre for Strategic Studies, 1998), 5.

¹⁷ Harsh V. Pant, "India-Russia Ties and India's Strategic Culture: Dominance of a Realist World View," *India Review* Vol. 12, no. 1 (2013), 3.

¹⁸ Teresita C. Schaffer, *India and the United States in the 21st Century: Reinventing Partnership* (Washington, D.C. The CSIS Press, 2009), 79.

¹⁹ N. A. K. Browne, "A Perspective on India-Israel Defence and Security Ties," *Strategic Analysis*, Vol. 41, no. 4 (2017), 327.

missiles, avionics and artillery,²⁰ all of which helped India to recapture “Tiger Hill”²¹ and demonstrated operational edge against Pakistan. Similarly, in 2002 Israel delivered military support to India against Pakistan, when India decided to commence a limited military attack “Operation Parakram,”²² although the operation ended without turning into an arm conflict. The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the Indian parliament attack in 2001, the Mumbai attack in 2008, and the Balakot strike in 2019, all pushed India to procure advanced and modernized military technology and missile systems from its defence partners especially Israel to enhance its regional power projection.

Soon the military exchanges and official visits began to take place and both states signed several defence agreements. For India, Israel is a reliable and ideologically like-minded arms supplier. The ‘special friendship’ between the premiers of both states made India Israel’s largest arms client in 2017.²³ According to a report, published by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) in March 2020, India is now the topmost buyers of Israeli arms, and purchases almost half of all the exports of the Israeli defence equipment and technologies. In 2017, India overtook the United Kingdom as fifth largest defence spender in the world²⁴ and with the increase in its defence budget from 2017 to 2019; it became third military spender in the world after the US and China. The SIPRI report also reveals that India increased its military spending and arms export because of

²⁰ Harsh V. Pant, 65.

²¹ Sushant Singh, “Israeli help and Indian jugaad in recapture of Tiger Hill,” *The Indian Express*, July 5, 2017.

²² Harsh V. Pant, *Ibid*.

²³ Harsh V. Pant and Ambuj Sahu, “Israel’s Arms Sales to India: Bedrock of a Strategic Partnership,” *ORF Issue Brief*, Issue No. 311 (September 2019), 2.

²⁴ “The Military Balance: An Annual Assessment of Global Military Capabilities and Defence Economics,” *The International Institute for Strategic Studies*, Vol. 118, no.1 (2018).

growing tension and rivalry with its regional neighbors.²⁵ These developments show an alarming trend towards India's militarization duly supported by Israel as a key player.

Following the route to get more modernized weaponry, Prime Minister Modi is determined to strengthen relations with Israel and therefore, took the next step under 'Make in India' initiative to diversify its military and defence ties for technology transfers. The initiative was launched in September 2014, to make India a global hub and to encourage national and multinational companies to manufacture their products within the country. Under this initiative, the Indian government signed a number of agreements to boost defence production, upgrade technology and defence export capability.

Moreover, Israeli President Reuven Rivlin during the visit to India in November 2016 expressed his confidence in working together with India and agreed to focus on the joint development in the defence sector.²⁶ During PM Modi visit to Israel next year in 2017, PM Netanyahu also expressed his desire to enhance cooperation with India and stated: "you're making India initiative meet my *Make with India* policy."²⁷ Hence, both states joined in co-productions and initiated joint ventures under this initiative to promote the culture of defence cooperation. In this regard, various joint development initiatives have taken place between their defence companies in the past few years,

²⁵ Pieter D. Wezeman, et.al, "Trends in International Arms Transfers-2019," *SIPRI Fact Sheet*, March 2020, Available at: https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2020-03/fs_2003_at_2019_0.pdf (accessed on 8 March 2021).

²⁶ "We can work towards 'Make in India and Make with India'," *The Economic Times*, November 20, 2016.

²⁷ "PM Netanyahu Welcomes Indian PM Narendra Modi on his Historic Visit to Israel," *Israeli Missions Around the World*, July 4, 2017, Available at: <https://embassies.gov.il/MFA/PressRoom/2017/Pages/PM-Netanyahu-welcomes-the-Indian-PM-Narendra-Modi-on-his-historic-visit-to-Israel.aspx> (accessed on 18 March 2020).

especially to upgrade military technology and co-development and co-production of the missile defence system.

Major Areas of India-Israel Defence Cooperation

After establishing diplomatic relations, India has been pursuing close partnership with highly sophisticated Research and Development (R&D) industry of Israel and initiated joint R&D projects to boost its defence sector. The major step was opening of the Defence Wing office in Israel in 1997.²⁸ Since then India-Israeli defence collaboration has diversified into a number of areas, such as Phalcon AWACS, submarine-launched cruise missiles, micro-satellite system for surveillance, laser-guided systems and precision-guided munitions, anti-ballistic missile systems, long-range and advanced medium-range surface-to-air missile systems, anti-aircraft systems and missiles, combat drone technology and up-gradation of arms technology. Some of the major defence collaborations are chronologically furnished below:

- **2004:** India and Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI) signed an agreement for US \$1 billion, under which India ordered three strategic airborne radar systems that would be fixed on Russian (IL-76) transport aircraft. The delivery of these Phalcon AWACS helped India to monitor and survey deeply, intercept communications and radar frequencies and help command IAF responses in case of missile and aircraft attacks.²⁹

²⁸ Efraim Inbar and Alvir Singh Ningthoujam, "Indo-Israeli Defence Cooperation in the Twenty-First Century," *Mideast Security and Policy Studies*, no. 93(2012), 3.

²⁹ "India, Israel Ink the Phalcon Deal," *Dawn News*, October 11, 2003.

- **2009:** An Israeli Phalcon arrived in India which was inducted into the Indian Air Force Phalcon on 28 May,³⁰ which helped India to join the global ranks of AWACS operators.
- **2009:** Israel finalized US \$1 billion deal with India for 18 mobile “Surface to Air Python and Derby Missile System (SPYDER).”³¹ Indian forces used Israeli Derby missile technology to shoot down Pakistani spying drone after the Balakot air-strikes in 2019,³² and decided to re-arm its Sukhoi-30 fighter jets with Israeli Derby air-to-air missile as they were unable to retaliate F-16s.³³
- **2016:** The Indian government approved the purchase of two more AWACS for approximately US \$3 billion in defence sales from Israel to acquire broader aircraft coverage of the territory.³⁴ These aircrafts help IAF in tracking the aerial threat and also guide the counter-response. Therefore, during the February 2019 military stand-off between Pakistan and India,

³⁰ “AWACS will Alter our Dynamics Like Never Before,” *Rediff News*, May 28, 2009, Available at: <http://news.rediff.com/report/2009/may/28/slide-show-1-awacs-will-alter-our-dynamics-like-never-before.htm> (accessed on 19 March 2020).

³¹ Yaakov Katz, “India to Buy Rafael’s SPYDER Missile Systems in \$1 billion Deal,” *The Jerusalem Post*, August 23, 2009.

³² “Israeli Spyder used to shoot down Pakistani drone in Gujarat,” *Business-Standard.com*, February 26, 2019, Available at: https://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ani/israeli-spyder-used-to-shoot-down-pakistani-drone-in-gujarat-119022600672_1.html (accessed on 19 March 2020).

³³ Vishnu Som, “Outgunned by Pak F-16s, IAF plans to re-arm its Sukhoi with Israeli missiles,” *NDTV*, May 28, 2019, Available at: <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/outgunned-by-pakistan-f-16s-iaf-plans-to-re-arm-its-sukhois-with-israeli-missiles-2044172> (accessed on 19 March 2020).

³⁴ Anagha Unnikrishnan, “India Approves Purchase of Two Phalcon Warning System from Israel,” *Air Force Technology*, March 6, 2016, Available at: <https://www.airforce-technology.com/news/newsindia-approves-purchase-of-two-phalcon-warning-system-form-israel-4831275/> (accessed on 19 March 2020).

Israeli made AWACS and AEW&C aircrafts were deployed to monitor the IAF operation and aerial engagement.³⁵

- **2017:** India and Israel signed US \$2 billion missile defence deal for advanced Medium Range Surface to Air Missiles (MRSAM), which includes an advanced phased-array radar, command and control, mobile launchers and missiles.³⁶
- **2017:** IAI finalized a US \$630 million deal with India to supply advanced 70 km Low Range Surface to Air Missiles (LRSAM) or Barak-8 naval air defence system for four ships of the Indian Navy. It was jointly developed by IAI and DRDO and handed over to the Indian Navy on August 2017.³⁷ The major purpose of the Barak-8 missile is to protect the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and key strategic facilities of Israel that are seemingly exposed to ‘multiple threats.’³⁸ Justin Paul George writes in *The Week Magazine* that this missile “was developed to counter the threat of advanced subsonic and supersonic anti-ship missiles that the likes of Pakistan, China, and Syria (in case of Israel) have been buying.”³⁹
- **2017:** India successfully tested the SPYDER missile system.⁴⁰ According to *India Today*, the Indian Air Force will deploy the Israeli SPYDER missile system on its western border to

³⁵ Sushant Singh, “Mirage, AWACS, Sukhoi, Popeye: How IAF took down Jaish Training Camp,” *Indian Express*, February 27, 2019.

³⁶ Rahul Singh, “India, Israel seal \$2 billion missile deals: What it means for New Delhi?,” *Hindustan Times*, April 7, 2017.

³⁷ Anna Ahronheim, “Indian Navy Receives First Missile Jointly Developed with Israel,” *The Jerusalem Post*, August 29, 2017.

³⁸ “IAI to provide Barak-8 Missiles Defense System for Navy’s New Warships,” *The Jerusalem Post*, August 14, 2018.

³⁹ Justin Paul George, “Israeli Navy to Procure Advanced Missile Jointly Developed with India,” *The Week Magazine*, August 16, 2018.

⁴⁰ “Israeli SPYDER Missile Test a Hit,” *Indian Express*, May 12, 2017.

reinforce its vigilance to strike down any aerial threat from Pakistan.⁴¹

- **2017:** The Indian Navy procured Integrated Under-Water Harbor Defense and Surveillance System (IUHDSS) for security and protection. The system was launched in India with the collaboration of IAI and strategically installed around the Mumbai Port, not only providing comprehensive monitoring but also enhancing the security of valuable assets against asymmetric threats.⁴²
- **2018:** The Indian Cabinet Committee on Security gave the final affirmation to acquire AWACS from Israel.⁴³
- **2018:** The Light Combat Aircraft (LCA), used by the Indian Air Force, was equipped with Israeli super radar in 2018 that gave it the combat edge to engage multiple air and ground targets at the same time. IAI also finalized the delivery of AESA (Active Electronically Scanned Array) radars to the Indian Air Force to increase the capability of the Indian Air Force in cross border strikes.⁴⁴
- **2018:** The Indian Army signed an agreement with DRDO to raise one regiment of MRSAM and planned to have five regiments of air defence systems deployed, to combat both China and Pakistan.⁴⁵ The system is jointly developed by IAI and DRDO to boost Make-in-India initiative.

⁴¹ "India Prepares Israeli SPYDER Air Defense Missile System for Pakistan Border," *India Today*, February 28, 2017.

⁴² Ami Rojkes Dombé, "IAI's Underwater Harbour Defense System Launched in India," *Israel Defense*, February 7, 2017, Available at:

<http://www.israeldefense.co.il/en/node/28461> (accessed on 21 March 2021).

⁴³ Rajat Pandit, "Government may clear purchase of two more AWACS for around \$800 million," *The Times of India*, September 11, 2018.

⁴⁴ Manu Pubby, "Israeli super radars set to give desi LCA fighter jet enhance combat capability," *The Economic Times*, May 10, 2018.

⁴⁵ "Israel to Partner DRDO for Developing Missile Defence System for India," *The Economic Times*, July 14, 2018.

- **2018:** India acquired missile-armed drones or Heron TP-armed drones for US \$400 million from Israel capable of detecting, tracking and taking down targets with air to ground missiles.⁴⁶ These drones helped India upgrade its Harpy UAV fleet. Because of increasing tension with Pakistan and China, India approved the deal to purchase 10 drones in 2013 from Israel. In the past, India also procured these UAVs from Israel to boost its surveillance capabilities at the borders with China and Pakistan.⁴⁷
- **2020:** India finalized the US \$1 billion deal with Israel to purchase two AWACS because of on-going military confrontation with China in eastern Ladakh. According to *Times of India*, India planned to acquire additional AWACS during the pre-dawn strikes at Balakot and the subsequent aerial combat with Pakistan Air Force in February 2019. The AWACS detect and track incoming fighters, cruise missiles and drones and keep tabs on enemy troop build-ups and movement of warships.⁴⁸

These significant developments and the rapid proliferating strategic and military cooperation between India and Israel indicate that it is not a one-sided relationship where India gained by procuring advanced military technology from Israel, but Israel also needed India as a market for selling its weapons and technology. Initially, India's nuclear deal with the United States helped it to pursue its missile program but since the past few years India is more interested in widening the missile defence cooperation with Israel to facelift its defence industry.

⁴⁶ "India all set to get missile armed drones from Israel," *The Economic Times*, July 14, 2018.

⁴⁷ "Govt. clears proposal for buying 15 UAVs from Israel," *The Times of India*, December 29, 2013.

⁴⁸ Rajat Pandit, "Ladakh face-off: India to order 2 more Israeli 'eye in sky' for \$1 billion," *Times of India*, August 27, 2020.

India-Israel Partnership in Missile Defence System

The significant changes and transformation in global security architecture after the end of the Cold-War compelled many states to acquire a strong anti-ballistic missile defence system to guard them against any nuclear weapon attack. Ever since the introduction of missile defence system in South Asia, there is an ever-rising competition between India and Pakistan threatening the delicate regional strategic balance. The military and political reasoning of India to develop a missile defence system is to survive a nuclear attack and create the potential for retaliation. Moreover, India wanted to possess BMD technology along with nuclear missile technology to enhance its status among the world's leading countries.⁴⁹

In addition, India alleges its principal adversaries, Pakistan and China, to be the key sources of missile and nuclear threats and used this reasoning as a pretext to initiate its missile defence programme in the late 1990s especially after the reports that Pakistan is deploying Chinese missiles.⁵⁰ Brahma Chellaney, an Indian analyst, stated that India was affected not only from the new arms race in Asia, prompted by the United States missile defence system but also by the increased threat from China's built-up of nuclear and missile technology and the sales of its missile systems to Pakistan.⁵¹ Since then, India has been looking for alternatives and decided to collaborate internationally with states like Israel and the United States, so that it could procure the best technology to build a strong Air and Ballistic Missile Defence

⁴⁹ Petr Topychkanov, "India's Prospects in the Area of Ballistic Missile Defense: A Regional Security Perspective," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, 2012, Available at: https://carnegieendowment.org/files/WP3_2012_Topychkanov_en.pdf (accessed on 24 March 2021).

⁵⁰ Gregory Koblenz, "Theater Missile Defence and South Asia: A Volatile Mix," *The Non-Proliferation Review*, Vol. 4, no. 3 (1997), 54.

⁵¹ Brahma Chellaney, "Delhi's Dilemma," *Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 23, no. 3 (2000), 145.

system.⁵² India is developing lower and upper tier-system for air and missile defence (Prithvi Air Defence (PAD) missile) and Advanced Air Defence (AAD) missile) as a clear manifestation of power projection for evident geopolitical objectives.

India views Israel as a major player in providing it advanced military technology. Israel has made extensive developments in missile defence system. India admires and wants to benefit from its expertise in the areas of unmanned aerial vehicles and electronic warfare equipment. Therefore, India's DRDO has been collaborating on various defence projects and co-developing defence equipment with major Israeli defence companies such as Elbit, IAI, Israel Military Industries (IMI) and Rafael. India also showed particular interest in Israeli made state of the art anti-missile defence systems, namely David's Sling and Iron Dome, as it may give India a significant edge if there is a missile attack from Pakistan or China.⁵³ All these developments are testimony to the fact that India-Israel strategic partnership has been contributing constructively to the Indian missile defence system, raising genuine concerns or Pakistan.

Due to the on-going military modernization, India and Israel enhanced their defence collaborations where India has been able to acquire a number of sophisticated weapon systems from Israel to gain a significant advantage over its adversaries. Driven by the desire to integrate missile defence into its nuclear posture in 2003,⁵⁴ India signed a US \$1.1 billion deal with Israel in April 2009, to get an upgraded version of Barak-8 air defence missile system.⁵⁵ Following

⁵² Ashok Sharma, "India's Missile Defence Programme: Threat Perception and Technological Evolution," *Centre for Land Warfare Studies*, no. 15 (2009), 3.

⁵³ EfraimInbar and Alvite Singh Ningthoujam, "Indo-Israeli Defense Cooperation in the Twenty-First Century," *Mideast Security and Policy Studies*, no. 93 (2012), 8.

⁵⁴ Ashley J. Tellis, "The Evolution of U.S.-India Ties: Missile Defense in an Emerging Strategic Relationship," *International Security*, Vol. 30, no.4 (2006), 144.

⁵⁵ "India Buys Upgraded Israeli Air Defences for \$1.1bn," *Reuters*, November 9, 2009.

this, both states again signed a US \$1.4 billion contract for the development and procurement of Barak-8 Medium-Range Surface-to-Air Missiles.⁵⁶ In 2014, IAI successfully tested a jointly developed Barak-8 air and naval defence missile system. This successful first missile test was carried out by Israel's Defence Ministry and DRDO India, wherein the defence ministry termed the test as "an important milestone in the cooperation between India and Israel."⁵⁷ The Barak-8 Long-Range Surface-to-Air Missiles were also successfully tested in 2015 and 2016, respectively. Developed jointly by DRDO and IAI, the Barak-8 system can identify and abolish airborne threats like UAV's, jets, missiles and rockets, which include warheads that can be mounted on naval ships as well as the ground.⁵⁸

India and Israel are also quite keen on strengthening their naval cooperation, and announced a deal of US \$630 million in 2017 for the installation of Barak-8 air defence systems aboard four Indian Navy ships: INS Vikrant, Visakhapatnam class guide-missile destroyers, Kolkata class destroyers, and Kamorta class anti-submarine warfare corvettes.⁵⁹ To further enhance the maritime cooperation, India signed US \$777 million deal in October 2018 with Israel for the procurement of Barak-8 LR-SAM Air and Missile Defence System for seven ships of Indian Navy. This system is an Air and Missile Defence system which is used by Indian and Israeli navy, air and land forces.⁶⁰ Whereas, the

⁵⁶ Yaakov Katz, "Israel Eyeing Big Defence Contracts in India," *The Jerusalem Post*, March 10, 2010.

⁵⁷ IAI Successfully Tested the Barak-8 Air & Missile Defense System," *Israel Aerospace Industries*, November 10, 2014, Available at: <http://www.iai.co.il/2013/36782-46165-en/MediaRoom.aspx> (accessed on 24 March 2021).

⁵⁸ "India Successfully Tests Missile Defence System Developed with Israel," *Times of Israel*, June 30, 2016.

⁵⁹ TOI Staff, "India Successfully Tests Missile Defence System Developed with Israel," *Times of Israel*, June 30, 2016.

⁶⁰ "Israel to Supply Missiles Defense Systems to India for \$777 mn," *The Economic Times*, October 24, 2011.

Israeli Navy also decided to procure the Barak-8 missile defence system for the protection of its “economic zones and strategic facilities from diversified threats.”⁶¹

Furthermore, to enhance their combat capabilities and to strengthen missile cooperation, Israel finalized US \$2 billion deal in 2017 with the Indian Defence Ministry to supply advanced missile defence system MRSAM. The MRSAM program is an extension of the project started in January 2006, under which India and Israel signed a US \$350 million agreement to co-develop a new generation LRSAM for Indian Navy ships.⁶² IAI also provided additional LRSAM air and missile defence systems to the Indian aircraft carrier.⁶³ To further extend their defence cooperation, the DRDO and IAI agreed on joint development of Long-Range Surface-to-Air Missile (LRSAM) for Indian Navy and Medium-Range Surface-to-Air Missile (MRSAM) for Indian Air Force.⁶⁴ Along with Indian Navy and Air Force, the Indian Army also signed a memorandum in 2018 with DRDO to increase one regiment of advanced MRSAM. The army decided to procure five regiments of the air defence system to be deployed against Pakistan.⁶⁵ In January 2021, India and Israel successfully tested MRSAM which can shoot down enemy aircraft at a range of 50-70 kms.⁶⁶ These deals boosted bilateral military ties and are considered to be the largest in the history of Israel’s Defence Industries. This continuous missile development by

⁶¹ “India-Israel missile defence system to be procured by Israeli navy,” *The Times of India*, August 16, 2018.

⁶² “India and Israel’s Barak-8 SAM Development Project(s),” *Defense Industry Daily*, October 25, 2018.

⁶³ Franz-Stefan Gady, “India, Israel Conclude \$2 Billion Missile Deal,” *The Diplomat*, April 11, 2017.

⁶⁴ “India, Israel Decided to Set Up Defence Ties,” *The Times of India*, December 23, 2009.

⁶⁵ “Israel to Partner DRDO for Developing Missile Defence System for India,” *The Economic Times*, July 14, 2018.

⁶⁶ “India, Israel successfully test cutting edge MRSAM air and missile defence system,” *India Today*, January 6, 2021.

India with the help of Israel is quite alarming as it directly triggers a nuclear arms race in South Asia which seriously affects the deterrence stability in the region.

India's Advancement in Missile Defence System: An Alarm for South Asian Strategic Stability

Ever since the successful nuclear tests in 1998, India has been enhancing the pace of ballistic missile defence system development by obtaining advanced military and technological assistance from other states, such as the United States, Israel, France, and Russia.⁶⁷ India is pursuing the missile defence programme to expand its power projection within the immediate South Asian neighborhood and the broader Asia-Pacific region. The procurement of missile defence technologies from states, like Israel and the US, is helping India in its quest for the great power status as well as to exercise regional hegemony. This continuous advancement in missile defence system by India challenges the basis of deterrence and provides “a false sense of security to the Indian leadership, thus increases instability and deepens Pakistan’s security dilemma vis-à-vis India.”⁶⁸

India believes that a continued upgradation of its missile defence programme as the key to guarantee its security and is a defensive measure to confront the growing missile threats from Pakistan and “to defeat Pakistan’s nuclear deterrent.”⁶⁹ Indian strategic experts believe that South Asian security environment is complex and uncertain because the continuous growth of nuclear weapons by Pakistan

⁶⁷ Harsh V. Pant and Ambuj Sahu, “Israel’s Arms Sales to India: Bedrock of a Strategic Partnership,” *ORF Issue Brief*, Issue no. 311 (September 2019), 4.

⁶⁸ Ghazala Yasmin Jalil, “Indian Missile Defence Development: Implications for Deterrence Stability in South Asia,” *Strategic Studies*, vol. 35, no. 2 (2015), 30.

⁶⁹ Zafar Nawaz Jaspal, “Countering Indian Ballistic Missile Defence & Strategic Stability in South Asia,” *Margalla Papers*, Vol. XXII, no.1 (2018), 12.

presents an unprecedented obstacle for India's security.⁷⁰ Rajeshwari Pillai writes in *The Diplomat* that "Pakistan was always a more prominent and unpredictable rival for India, and thus India has felt compelled to respond with greater swiftness."⁷¹ These developments put Pakistan under perpetual existential threat dragging the region into an action-reaction spiral, hence Pakistan developed missiles to counter India's missile defence system and to maintain strategic stability. Zafar Nawaz Jaspal mentioned that India's Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) system and nuclear capability forced Pakistan to acquire BMD structure and deploy operational nuclear weapons for the sole purpose of solidifying its defensive posture.⁷² He further argued that Pakistan cannot ignore India's BMD program and thus must increase the size of its offensive ballistic missile force in response to its assessment of India's missile program.⁷³

India's quest to develop and deploy missile defence systems is transforming the regional strategic dynamics due to the evolving security environment and is eroding the overall concept of deterrence. The continuous build-up of nuclear forces by India together with its BMD system is emerging as a substantial threat for Pakistan. It is not only affecting the regional security but also driving Pakistan to increase and modify its nuclear weapons capability, quantitatively and qualitatively. Moreover, India's expansion of nuclear capabilities and desire to develop a robust air and missile defence systems strongly motivates Pakistan to strengthen its cooperation with China and

⁷⁰ Avinash Patel, "The Challenges and Opportunities in Developing an Indian Missile Defence System," *RUSI Defence Systems*, vol.15, no.3 (2013).

⁷¹ Rajeshwari Pillai Rajgopalan, "Where would India fit in a Missile Defense Partnership in the Indo-Pacific," *The Diplomat*, January 24, 2019.

⁷² Zafar Nawaz Jaspal, "Ballistic Missile Defense: Implications for India-Pakistan Strategic Environment," *NDU Journal*, Vol. XXV, (2011), 2.

⁷³ Zafar Nawaz Jaspal, "Countering Indian Ballistic Missile Defence & Strategic Stability in South Asia," 17.

improve the effectiveness of its nuclear forces.⁷⁴ This action-reaction aspect, connected with the missile defence system, would consequently result in the greater regional instability. Hence, to rebalance the strategic stability and to overcome the alarming developments in Indian missile defence program, it is obligatory for Pakistan to adopt effective countermeasures by establishing more vigorous deterrence along with enhancing its offensive military capabilities.

In its pursuit for acquiring the missile defence system, India is ignoring the fact that this whole scenario is not only undermining the strategic stability of the entire region but is also adding “a new dimension to one of the scariest arms races on the planet.”⁷⁵ India’s BMD system is creating a regional security dilemma by jeopardizing the security of other countries, especially Pakistan as it encourages Pakistan to devise more advanced nuclear missiles and Multiple Re-entry Vehicles (MIRVs) to neutralize India’s BMD shield. According to Kenneth Weiss, the ballistic missile defence system destabilizes nuclear deterrence among states, influences an arms race in the region and generates misperceptions and miscalculations during the crisis.⁷⁶ Consequently, the BMD deployment undermines the balance of strategic nuclear deterrence between India and Pakistan and intensifies a nuclear arms race.⁷⁷ In addition, the possession of an advanced missile defence system by India is rigorously upsetting the deterrence

⁷⁴ Petr Topychkanov, “India’s Prospects in the Area of Ballistic Missile Defense: A Regional Security Perspective,” *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, Working Paper No. 3 (2012), 27.

⁷⁵ Sebastien Roblin, “Get Ready, Pakistan: India is Developing its own Missile Defense Shield,” *The National Interest*, October 15, 2017.

⁷⁶ Kenneth G. Weiss, “The Limits of Diplomacy: Missile Proliferation, Diplomacy, and Defence,” *World Affairs*, vol. 163, no. 3 (2001), 118.

⁷⁷ Zafar Nawaz Jaspal, “Countering Indian Ballistic Missile Defence & Strategic Stability in South Asia,” 19.

stability, arms race stability and crisis stability⁷⁸ of the whole South Asian region.

India-Israel Defence Ties: Security Implications for Pakistan

The defence and military partnership of India and Israel seems to be enduring because of their mutual strategic interests and continuous collaboration. Israel is facilitating India to acquire requisite defence equipment's, defence production capability and upgraded weapons to maintain their alliance and sustain its ambition to be a major regional as well as a global power. Sophistication in military technology with the help of Israel and the allocation of high budget for defence purpose indicates that India wants to counter the joint threat of Pakistan and China. Hence, India's regional and global hegemonic approach and growing defence cooperation with Israel is not only destabilizing the regional strategic balance but also carries severe consequences for the stability of South Asian region. Their clandestine relations during the Cold-War era and strong alliance after the Cold-War period proved to be a potential threat especially for Pakistan's security. India's obsession with power projection against strategically compatible Pakistan and strong rival China tempts it to find a reliable defence partner and Israel comes in handy.

In the last two decades, India has strengthened its defence partnership with Israel by pursuing military modernization. Timothy Hoyt writes that "military modernization is most advanced in states which are deeply involved in regional political-military rivalries, or which boast significant military and economic advantage over most of their neighbors. Many developing states face potential external threats, from regional neighbors or outside forces. These threats usually create a demand for advanced military capabilities and an

⁷⁸ Frank P. Harvey, "The Future of Strategic Stability and Nuclear Deterrence," *International Journal*, Vol. 58, no. 2(2003), 321.

expanded military-industrial base.”⁷⁹ Therefore, to enhance its operational and deployment capabilities, India is continuously procuring advanced missile defence system, sophisticated delivery mechanism and advanced nuclear technology, which is ultimately raising the level of threat, insecurity and arms race in the region. Various agreements on missile and defence cooperation with Israel have definitely enhanced military superiority of India while disintegrating the balance of power and compelling Pakistan to allocate extra resources on the defence sector.⁸⁰ Also, the development in air, naval, satellite and space program has provided India with a strategic gain over Pakistan.

Moreover, the surveillance equipment (i.e., UAVs, cross-border sensors, and Airborne Early Warning Systems), which India is getting from Israel,⁸¹ would help India in carrying out swift and quick operations or strikes against Pakistan and to infiltrate Pakistan’s territory. February 2019 Balakot crisis between India and Pakistan is a recent example that determines the pace of India-Israel defence partnership in which India used Israeli weapons to launch strikes inside Pakistan’s territory.⁸² Such incident only increases the chances of war between both the states albeit limited, intensify threat matrix for Pakistan and destabilize the peace and stability in the region. Robert Fisk clearly stated that the defence ties between India and Israel have strengthened in the past few years which include sophisticated training

⁷⁹ Timothy D. Hoyt, *Military Industry and Regional Defence Policy: India, Iraq and Israel* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 3.

⁸⁰ Masood-ur-Rehman Khattak, “Strategic Significance of Indo-Israel Defence Collaboration: Implications for Pakistan’s Security,” *IPRI Journal*, Vol. XVI, no. 2(2016), 65-66.

⁸¹ Nicolas Blarel, “India-Israel at 25: Defense Ties,” *Middle East Institute*, April 4, 2017, Available at: <https://www.mei.edu/publications/india-israel-25-defense-ties> (accessed on 4 April 2021).

⁸² Judah Ari Gross, “India used Israeli arms for strike inside Pakistan,” *The Times of Israel*, February 26, 2019.

and arms trade. According to him, “Israel has been assiduously lining itself up alongside India’s national BJP government...while India itself has now become the largest weapons market for the Israeli arms trade.”⁸³ Hence, India-Israel strategic and defence partnership is an existential threat to the national security of Pakistan and affecting regional security calculus as well.

For India, who is dreaming to become an “Asian giant,” Israeli military technology and security cooperation provides it with the finest way to cope with its security issues. Governed by geostrategic and geopolitical priorities, the strategic partnership with Israel is enabling India to attain its greatest policy objectives, i.e. to gain regional hegemony. It is being ensured by strengthening its defence sector, to expand its military power beyond its region. The goals are wide-ranging and also include geo-economic objective, blocking Pakistan’s access to and undermine its influence in the Middle East and Central Asian states. It seeks to ultimately destabilize and weaken Pakistan’s defensive balance capability both at the eastern and western front and counter China’s influence in the region. India aspires to annex the illegally occupied Kashmiri territory following Israel’s annexation policy. In short, India-Israel strategic alliance, indeed, is emerging as the major threat to strategic stability in South Asia and carries far-reaching implications for Pakistan’s security.

Analyzing the aspects of India-Israel growing proximity and defence ties, it is noted that the strategic equilibrium in the region is shifting in the favor of India. The progression in their relationship not only undermines the military balance of South Asia but also destabilizes the conventional balance vis-à-vis Pakistan. Harsh V. Pant stated that “the

⁸³ Robert Fisk, “Israel is Playing a Big role in India’s Escalating Conflict with Pakistan,” *Independent*, February 28, 2019, Available at: <https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/israel-india-pakistan-conflict-balakot-arms-trade-jaish-e-mohammed-a8800076.html> (accessed on 4 April 2021).

most immediate effects of this close defence relationship between India and Israel can be seen in Pakistan's worry that the strategic balance in the subcontinent is fast tilting against it. It finds it difficult to match the conventional military capability of Israel-India combined."⁸⁴ Hence, the conventional and unconventional military superiority of India is helping it to establish hegemony in the region and destabilize Pakistan's security. Moreover, India and Israel are constantly solidifying their military ties because it is not only India who is apprehensive about the nuclear arsenals of Pakistan, but Israel had also serious concerns about Pakistan's nuclear weapons program.⁸⁵ This specifies that India-Israel defence and missile cooperation is not only activating an arms race in South Asia but also destabilizing the deterrence equation besides affecting the strategic stability in the region.

Conclusion

An expansion of defence cooperation between India and Israel along with the acquisition of military and nuclear capabilities by India through its strategic partnership with Israel would not only undermine the regional balance but will also have severe consequences for the stability of South Asia in future. This cooperation reveals India's strong commitment to dominance and power projection in the broader Southern Asian region that includes Indian Ocean and Malacca Straits. Moreover, India considers Pakistan and China a major irritant in its quest for hegemony. Therefore, the defence partnership with Israel is seen as the guarantee to ensuring its ambitions.

All the major arms deal with Israel including the transfer of technology and production of missiles are part of Prime Minister Modi's *Make in India* initiative. The steady progress and cooperation

⁸⁴ Harsh V. Pant, "India-Israel Partnership: Convergence and Constraints," *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 8, no. 4 (2004), 66. and Moshe Yegar, "Pakistan and Israel," *Jewish Political Studies Review*, Vol. 19, no. 3/4 (2007), 131.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

in missile defence system with Israel under this initiative is generating a regional security dilemma by endangering the security of other states. Development and acquisition of defence system, as well as missile proliferation, is rigorously undermining the strategic stability and has the potential to accelerate arms race in the region. In this process India seems to have ignored that its actions are worsening the security dilemma, increasing insecurity, intensifying arms race and provoking Pakistan to take countermeasures, which in turn will further deteriorate the security environment of South Asian region.