



The Future of Indian-Russian Security Cooperation

OE Watch Commentary: India's partnership with Russia has become strained over the past couple of years and there have been indications that this could impact Russian sales of weapons and equipment to the Indian Armed Forces. The accompanying excerpted articles report on India's recent decision to solicit bids for a contract to overhaul a large number of its fighter aircraft and a possible deal to acquire the Russian S-400 surface-to-air missile system. Both developments could be a good indicator of how the downturn in Indian-Russian relations will impact Russian arms sales to India.

The article from the English-language daily newspaper *The Times of India* reports on India's decision of "re-inviting global aviation majors to compete for producing fighter jets in India" through an agreement which includes a requirement that "85% are to be built in India with a domestic strategic partner or production agency." The article also notes that a large percentage of the Indian Air Force's current inventory of fighters are Russian with "10 existing squadrons of old MiG-21s and MiG-27s" and that these are set to be retired in a few years. The Indian Air Force also has several dozen MiG-29 fighters in its inventory. The article mentions that Russia's MiG-35 will be in consideration for the new bid, but it is believed that the bid's requirement of producing a large percentage of the aircraft in India will not be feasible with a Russian company.

The article from the Indian English-language newspaper *The Asian Age* provides an update on the deal to acquire the S-400 surface-to-air missile system that Indian Defense Minister, Nirmala Sitharaman, looked to finalize on a recent visit to Moscow. Many in India believed that the deal would be finalized, but as the article mentions, it "only progressed to the extent of agreeing to expedite negotiations for the military platforms." It is possible that the deal for the S-400 could still go through, but the article also notes that "India has griped about the delays in procuring critical spares and equipment from Russia" and this is reportedly one of the things holding it up. Overall, the Russian government remains in a position to maintain close security cooperation with India; however, if the bid for fighter aircraft and the lack of a deal for the S-400 are any indication, the Indian government could be looking for other options. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**

Source: Pandit, Rajat. "\$20 billion defence project: India kicks off process to procure 110 fighter jets for IAF," *The Times of India*, 6 April 2018. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/20-billion-defence-project-india-kicks-off-process-to-procure-110-fighter-jets-for-iaf/articleshow/63646424.cms>

...India has kicked off a fresh dogfight for its \$20 billion "mother of all defence deals" by re-inviting global aviation majors to compete for producing fighter jets in India under the government's "strategic partnership" policy. The Indian Air Force on Friday issued a preliminary global tender or RFI (request for information) to acquire 110 fighter jets, of which 85% are to be built in India with a domestic strategic partner or production agency. The aviation majors have to submit their responses to the RFI, which also stipulates that 75% of the fighters will be single-seat jets, by July 3...

...the aim is to set up a second fighter manufacturing line in India to supplement the long-delayed production of indigenous Tejas jets. IAF, after all, is grappling with just 31 fighter squadrons (each with 18 jets) when at least 42 are required to tackle the "collusive threat" from Pakistan and China. Moreover, the 10 existing squadrons of old MiG-21s and MiG-27s are slated for retirement by 2022.

The RFI comes after the NDA government scrapped its two-year-old plan to produce 114 single-engine fighters with foreign collaboration...But this will ensure a repeat of the original MMRCA (medium multi-role combat aircraft) project for 126 jets, which was initiated by the previous UPA regime in 2007 but could never be inked due to a deadlock in the final commercial negotiations with the eventual winner of the contest, the French Rafale fighters...

The new RFI has also been issued to the six contenders in the scrapped MMRCA project, which were F/A-18 'Super Hornet' and F-16 'Super Viper' (US), Gripen-E (Sweden), MiG-35 (Russia), Eurofighter Typhoon and Rafale, who will now field their latest variants for the new contest...It had then gone in for the off-the-shelf acquisition of 36 Rafales under the 7.8 billion Euros (Rs 59,000 crore) contract inked in September 2016...The 36 Rafales alone, which will be delivered in the 2019-2022 timeframe, will of course not make up the fast-depleting number of fighter squadrons, especially because HAL has so far managed to deliver only six of the 324 Tejas fighters planned for induction in the long-term.

Source: "S-400 missile system, Kamov copter deals still some way off," *The Asian Age*, 5 April 2018. <http://www.asianage.com/india/all-india/050418/s-400-missile-system-kamov-copter-deals-still-some-way-off.html>

Belying hopes that defence minister Nirmala Sitharaman would ink the deals to buy S-400 missile systems and the state-of-the-art Kamov helicopters from Russia during her ongoing visit, the minister's talks with her Russian counterpart General Sergey Shoygu and industry and trade minister Denis Manturov in Moscow only progressed to the extent of agreeing to expedite negotiations for the military platforms...

...India is expected to buy five S-400 systems, the delivery of which will be completed in 54 months time on the deal being inked...Defence ministry officials here said that during the talks, both sides also agreed to further ramp up bilateral defence cooperation. Ms Sitharaman is on a three-day visit to Russia...

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"While historically India and Russia have cherished close military ties with Russia accounting for almost 60 percent of India's defence exports, India has griped about the delays in procuring critical spares and equipment from Russia..."