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## MILITARY - TECHNICAL COOPERATION BETWEEN THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA AND THE REPUBLIC OF INDIA

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### **Abstract**

*Diplomatic relations between the Republic of Armenia and the Republic of India were established on August 31, 1992. Last year political-economic relations between the Republic of Armenia and the Republic of India grew fast, which also contributed to the development of military-technical cooperation between the two states.*

*Especially, military-technical cooperation grew in 2022. This is determined by the fact, that after the invasion of the Russian armed forces of Ukraine, the Russian Federation cannot realize military contracts of supplying armament to Armenia. As a result, Armenia is trying to find other suppliers for recovering its heavy losses of military equipment, during the 44-day war. At the same time, India has been making focused efforts to increase defense exports in the scope of the 'Make in India' program.*

*In fact, Armenia becomes the main importer of Indian-made weapons. The military-technical cooperation between the two states creates a possibility for Armenia to get access to new military technologies, including western advanced technologies, which are used to develop the military-industrial complex of India.*

**Keywords:** military-technical cooperation, defense sector, arms trade, India, Armenia.

## **Introduction**

For centuries Armenia and India have had old historical and cultural relationships. Particularly, an Armenian strong community was formed in India. Achal Kumar Malhotra, a former Indian ambassador to Armenia, speaking about the Armenian diaspora in India, emphasizes its role in the history of India. “Even hundreds of Armenians lived in India during the medieval and British periods. They built at least five to six churches in India and the churches constructed by them in Chennai and Kolkata are still intact. At a time when India was heading towards Independence, they misread the situation and miscalculated India’s future” said Malhotra (Rao, 2018).

Diplomatic relations between the Republic of Armenia and the Republic of India were established on August 31, 1992 (Official website of the MFA of the RA, 2023). During last year political-economic relations between the Republic of Armenia and the Republic of India grew fast, which is also contributing to the development of military-technical cooperation between the two states.

## **The potential of military-technical cooperation between the two states**

The first steps in the defense sphere between the two states were done at the beginning of the 2000s. Particularly, the “Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation in the defense sphere between the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Armenia and the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of India” was signed on 23 May 2003 (Official website of the MFA RA, 2023). Relations between the two states in this sphere were activated after military aggression against the Nagorno-Karabakh Republic by Azerbaijani armed forces in April 2016. On 13 December 2016, the Secretary of the National Security Council Yuri Khachaturov received the Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador of India to the Republic of Armenia Yogeshwar Sangwan. They concurred that Armenia and India have wide

opportunities and unused huge potential for the development of cooperation in a number of prospective areas, including the security sector (Official website of the OSCRA, 2016).

During May 16-20, 2017, the delegation of the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Armenia was in India. As a result, agreements have been reached to cooperate in military, education, and military-technical areas between the Head of the Department of Defense Policy of the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Armenia Levon Ayvazyan, and Secretary of Planning and International Cooperation of the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of India Shambhu Kumaran, on May 20, 2017 in New Delhi. (Saroyan, 2017). These agreements were strengthened, when Shambhu Kumaran arrived in Yerevan and met with Vigen Sarkisyan, Minister of Defence of the Republic of Armenia, on March 28, 2018 (Official website of the MOD RA, 2018).

Since 2018 Armenia has shown an interest in the Pinaka multi-barrel rocket launchers. It was developed by Armament Research and Development Establishment (ARDE), which is a laboratory under the Defence Research and Development Organization (DRDO). Extensive firing trials of rocket launchers were carried out for the delegation of the Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Armenia at Pokhran in Rajasthan in July 2018 (“The Times of India”, 2018).

On September 25, 2019, Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan and Prime Minister of the Republic of India Narendra Modi held a bilateral meeting on the sidelines of the 74th United Nations General Assembly in New York: During the meeting, the leaders of the two states discussed the deepening relationship in different areas. Modi thanked Pashinyan for Armenia's consistent support for India's candidature for the permanent membership of an expanded UN Security Council (“The Times of India”, 2019).

At the same time, the Armenian side was interested in the Swathi counter-battery radars, which were developed by the

Defence Research and Development Organization (DRDO) and manufactured by Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL). As a result, India has bagged a deal worth \$40 million to supply four radars to Armenia and this agreement became a big achievement for the 'Make in India' program in the defense sector ("The Times of India", 2020). Interesting fact. Russian and Polish firms participated in an announced tender too and, each of them offered its products; Russian - Zoopark-1, Polish - RZRA-201 Liwec (Nersisyan, 2020), but the Armenian side decided to choose an Indian system. However, the Indian radars were supplied to Armenia in early 2021 (CAWAT, 2022,4) and therefore these systems were not used during the 44-day war of 2020 in Nagorno-Karabagh. Thus, these circumstances helped artillerists of the Azerbaijani armed forces to get an advantage over artillerists of the Armenian armed forces in the counter-battery fight.

Military-technical cooperation between the two States especially grows during 2022. Because after the invasion of the Russian armed forces of Ukraine, Russian Federation cannot realize military contracts of supplying armament to Armenia. As a result, Armenia is trying to find other suppliers for recovering its heavy losses of military equipment, during the 44-day war. In its turn, India has been making focused efforts to increase defense exports, with a target of Rs 35,000 crore (\$4,4 billion) worth of equipment to be sold abroad by 2025. In 2021, annual defense exports were close to Rs 13,000 crore (\$1,62 billion) (Pubby, 2022a). See also "BMPD", 2022a). Besides India in this way tries to counterbalance its enemy state Pakistan, which is part of the Turkey-Azerbaijan-Pakistan geostrategic pivot and one of the key suppliers of arms to Azerbaijan.

On October 13, 2021, the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan received the Foreign Minister of the Republic of India Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, and his delegation. In his welcoming speech, Prime Minister Pashinyan noted. "I hope your visit will be historic not only in terms of statistics but

also in terms of content". Nikol Pashinyan and Subrahmanyam Jaishankar considered developing ties in the spheres of infrastructure, tourism, pharmaceuticals, information technologies, diamond making, and other spheres (Official website of The Prime Minister RA, 2021). On April 25, 2022, the Foreign Minister of the Republic of Armenia Ararat Mirzoyan, who was in New Delhi for participating in the “Raisina Dialogue” conference,\* met with the Foreign Minister of India Subrahmanyam Jaishankar. Ministers commended the high level of political dialogue between the two countries and discussed prospects for further development of relations in the fields of information technologies, aviation, education, culture, tourism, and other spheres. A. Mirzoyan stressed that strengthening relations with India is one of the priorities of Armenia's foreign policy (Official website of the MFA RA, 2022).

From October 18 to 22, 2022, a high-level delegation of the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Armenia, participated in DefExpo 2022, which is Asia's largest event in the defense sector and held in Gandhinagar, Gujarat. Defense Minister of the Republic of Armenia Suren Papikyan met with Defence Minister of the Republic of India Rajnath Singh. S. Papikyan focused on the possibilities of expanding bilateral military and military-technical cooperation between the two countries (Sharma. 2022). From March 2 to 4, 2023, the delegation led by the Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Armenia, First Deputy Minister of Defence, Major-General Edward Asryan

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\*The Raisina Dialogue is India’s premier conference on geopolitics and geo-economics committed to addressing the most challenging issues facing the global community. The conference is hosted by the Observer Research Foundation in partnership with the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India. This effort is supported by a number of institutions, organizations and individuals, who are committed to the mission of the conference. See detailed <https://www.orfonline.org/raisina-dialogue/>.

was in India on a working visit. The delegation participated in the "Raisina Dialogue", the annual international conference dedicated to issues facing the global community. In the course of the meeting, a number of issues related to bilateral cooperation and regional security were discussed with the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), General Anil Chauhan, as well as possibilities of strengthening cooperation between Armenia and India in the sphere of defense.

Within the framework of the working visit, Major General E.Asryan also attended the discussions on Armenian-Indian defense cooperation and regional security held by the office of the National Security Council of India where he presented the security challenges facing Armenia (Official website of the MOD RA.6.03.2023. <https://www.mil.am/en/news/11352>).

According to "the Economic Times" newspaper, India has reportedly signed a \$250 million deal to export arms and ammunition to Armenia in 2022. This package includes, developed Pinaka multi-barrel rocket launchers and anti-tank rockets. Particularly Armenia, which has placed orders for four Pinaka batteries (two to be delivered first and an equal additional order later), will also get a range of new extended-range rockets as well as guided rockets (Pubby, 2022b). So, Armenia became the first importer country of this rocket system in the world. In addition to Pinaka, India is also reportedly exporting NAG anti-tank guided missiles (also called Prospina) to Armenia. The NAG ATGM is an Indian third-generation, fire-and-forget, guided missile with an operation range of 500 meters to 20 km. (Tashjian, 2022).

Autumn of 2022, Indian the Kalyani Strategic Systems Limited (KSSL) company, which is part of the Bharat Forge company, announced that it had been awarded an export order from an unspecified country for a 155-millimeter (mm) artillery gun platform to be executed over a three-year timeframe. The total value of the order is over Rs 1,200 crore (\$155.5 million). (Sneesh, 2022a). See also: Pubby, 2022c). However,



sources from the Ministry of Defence of the Republic of India have confirmed that the buyer country is Armenia and the order consists of 155 mm, 39 caliber howitzers that are mounted on trucks for mobility. The Armenian order will involve the purchase of four-to-five regiments of 155 mm mounted gun systems (MGS). Each regiment consists of 18-20 guns (Shukla, 2022). Particularly, it's about the Multi-terrain Artillery Gun (MArG). It is also called the 155 – BR, which the Bharat Forge group claims is the world's first truck-mounted 155/39 howitzer (Business World, 2023. See also: BMPD, 2022b). According to the Centre for Analysis of Strategies and Technologies, Armenia ordered 72MArG guns, which will be supplied till 2027 (CAWAT, 2023, 17).

According to “The Print”, Armenia is also interested in loitering munitions, produced in India by private companies like Tata Advanced Systems Limited (TASL) and Solar Industries as well as Indian-made Akash air defence systems (Snehesh, 2022b). Besides Armenia can buy Indian-made MR-SAM medium-range anti-aircraft missile systems and wants to replace medium-range anti-aircraft missile systems in its arsenal, like the Soviet-made S-125 "Pechora" (“Indian Defence Research Wing”, 2023.).

On 18 May 2023, the Government of the Republic of Armenia adopted a decision to create of a position of military attaché attached to the Embassy of the Republic of Armenia in the Republic of India (Decision, 2023). In Justification of Decision, noted, that the Armenian military attaché (residence in New Dheli) will be tasked with coordinating existing Indian-Armenian defense programs and proposing new initiatives (Justification, 2023).

### **Conclusion**

Thus, recent years, the fast growth of political-economic relations between the Republic of Armenia and the Republic of India contributed to the development of their relations in the defense sector, including military-technical cooperation.

Especially, military-technical cooperation grew during 2022. This was determined by the fact, that after the invasion of the Russian armed forces of Ukraine, Russian Federation cannot realize military contracts of supplying armament to Armenia. As a result, Armenia is trying to find other suppliers for recovering its heavy losses of military equipment during the 44-day war. At the same time, India has been making focused efforts to increase defense exports in the scope of the ‘Make in India’ program.

In fact, Armenia becomes the main importer of Indian-made weapons. The military-technical cooperation between the two states creates a possibility for Armenia to get access to new military technologies, including western advanced technologies, which are used to develop the military-industrial complex of India.

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