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## AGREEMENTS BETWEEN RELIANCE DEFENCE LIMITED AND UKRAINIAN FIRMS: STRENGTHENING INDIA-UKRAINE BILATERAL RELATIONS

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On April 27, 2016 Reliance Defence Limited signed agreements with Ukroboronprom and its enterprises, Antonov and Spets Techno Export. These agreements included: 1) an agreement between the Ukroboronprom and Reliance Defence Limited focussed on a strategic partnership that involved joint projects in aircraft building, aviation repairing, modernisation of armoured vehicles, maintenance of marine machines, engineering, production and supply of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles. 2) Both Antonov and Reliance Defence Limited decided to bid together for the Medium Military Transport Aircraft program of Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) for the production of passenger and cargo aircraft AN-148, AN-158, AN-178. In the case of winning the tender, both sides will establish a joint venture for the production and supply of aircraft to commercial and government operators in India

in collaboration with Hindustan Aeronautics Limited. 3) An agreement on joint participation in the BMP-2 upgradation between Reliance Defence Limited and Spets Techno Export. The cooperation majorly focused on the upgradation of infantry fighting vehicle (BMPs) which included manufacturing and supply of components and systems for enhancing the BMPs mobility, sighting and fire control systems.<sup>1</sup> These agreements are the result of the participation of Ukroboronprom's enterprises in the DefExpo-2016. The partnership is an evidence of developing cooperation between India and Ukraine. It will facilitate India in upgrading its equipment as Petro Fedoruk (Chief Advisor to Ukroboronprom) said, "We are here now [in] India for the long term to manage Soviet-era headaches, which India cannot manage alone (sic)."<sup>2</sup>



## India-Ukraine Defence Cooperation

The above agreements cemented another successful chapter in India-Ukraine relations. India recognised Ukraine as a sovereign country in December 1991; and later on, both countries made meaningful strides in various areas, through bilateral agreements in the fields of diplomacy, culture, education, trade, science and technology, and tourism. Their relations further solidified after the visit of President Yanukovich to India in December 2012. His state visit focussed on aviation, space, energy, metallurgy, shipbuilding, engineering, chemistry, infrastructure building, agriculture, and tourism - fields of cooperation where Ukraine has a stronger hold. It led to the signing of agreements on Defence Cooperation and Exchange of Technical Information, Cooperation in Nuclear Defence and Radiation Protection; and Treaty on Mutual Legal Assistance in Civil and Commercial Matters.<sup>3</sup>

In a recent interview with Interfax-Ukraine, Manoj Kumar Bharti (Indian Ambassador to Ukraine) was optimistic on various fields of bilateral cooperation such as public health, pharmaceuticals, agriculture products, defence, connectivity, and transportation. At present, lack of information on accessing various opportunities is an obstacle for the proper development of bilateral relations as Ukrainians are more West-oriented than the East.<sup>4</sup> However, several actions are on track to solidify cooperation.

The defence sector is an area where India and Ukraine can ameliorate partnership. In the military sphere, both countries' endeavors became visible when then Air Chief Marshal Anil Browne led a delegation to Kiev in 2013 and both sides agreed on increasing cooperation between the Indian and Ukrainian Air Forces.<sup>5</sup> It should be noted that during the Soviet period, along with other republics like Belarus, Kazakhstan; Ukraine harbored Union's military industrial complex. The Soviet navy's ships, such as aircraft carriers, were constructed in Mykolaiv port, located on the Black Sea. In proximity to these shipyards, the Soviets built production centers for naval gas turbine engines and power plants. Ukraine also has two massive aerospace enterprises: Motor Sich in the city of Zaporizhia and Yuzhmash in the city of Dnipropetrovsk. Most of the Soviet helicopter engine came out of the Motor Sich plant.<sup>6</sup> The country was also a major missile and subcomponents manufacturer during the pre-dissolution period, which later allowed Ukraine to inherit ICBM design and production capabilities that included the Yuzhnoye Design Office and the Yuzhmash Machine building plants. Ukraine's expertise in the manufacture and upgradation of the military hardware is difficult to shrug off. The significance of Ukraine's defence sector can be noticed in Russia's eagerness to cooperate with Ukraine for its defence modernisation program.<sup>7</sup>

As India's military equipment will require modernisation and overhaul, cooperation with

Ukraine will facilitate the former in its efforts. Though it is visible that cooperation in the military field is gradual between both countries, the current agreements have opened new windows of opportunities. Given Ukraine's expertise in the defence sector since the Soviet period, these agreements will be helpful in further strengthening the tri-services. Companies from both sides can initiate projects under 'Make in India' program that will boost up joint research and development, combine military exports and transfer of technology.

*(Disclaimer: The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the position of the Centre for Air Power Studies [CAPS])*

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> SpetsTechnoExport, "A New large-scale Ukrainian-Indian partnership in the military-technology sphere was launched", 2016, URL: <http://spetstechnoexport.com/en/news/46> [Online web] Accessed on May 13, 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Sputnik, "Ukraine trying to take on Russia in market servicing Soviet military tech", 2016, URL: <http://sputniknews.com/military/20160401/1037342146/ukraine-russia-competition-soviet-tech-repair.html#ixzz44qLpYXqG> [Online web] Accessed on May 13, 2016.

<sup>3</sup> Ministry of External Affairs India, "India - Ukraine Relations", URL: [http://www.mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/Ukraine\\_11\\_01\\_2016.pdf](http://www.mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/Ukraine_11_01_2016.pdf) [Online web] Accessed on May 13, 2016.

<sup>4</sup> Manoj Kumar Bharti (Indian Ambassador to Ukraine), in discussion with the Interfax-Ukraine, March, 2016 URL: <http://en.interfax.com.ua/news/interview/331715.html> [Online web] Accessed on May 13, 2016.

<sup>5</sup> N. 3.

<sup>6</sup> Matthew Bodner, "How the Soviet Union Wrecked Russia's Military Industrial Complex", <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/business/article/523423.html> [Online web] Accessed on May 13, 2016.

<sup>7</sup> Charles Recknagel, "Complex Ties: Russia's Armed Forces Depend on Ukraine's Military Industry", URL: <http://www.rferl.org/content/russia-ukraine-military-equipment/25312911.html> [Online web] Accessed on May 16, 2016.

