

# **Implications of Bangladesh's Eurofighter Jet Deal with Italy's Leonardo**

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## **Introduction**

As part of its modernisation plans, the Bangladesh Air Force (BAF) signed a letter of intent with Leonardo of Italy to purchase Eurofighter Typhoon multirole combat aircraft on 09 Dec 2025. The number of jets that the BAF plans to purchase was not disclosed. The Eurofighter contract, if it goes through, would be Bangladesh's first significant acquisition of a fighter jet manufactured in the West.<sup>1</sup> Given the current wave of anti-India sentiment in Bangladesh, it is important to study the implications of this development on New Delhi's national security in future.

## **Why does Bangladesh Air Force need Eurofighter jet?**

According to local media, Bangladesh may try to purchase up to 16 Eurofighters, which are manufactured by a four-nation alliance consisting of Italy, Germany, the United Kingdom, and Spain. Bangladesh currently uses Leonardo-built AW109 and AW139 helicopters.<sup>2</sup> Hence, this deal could be a continuation of the trust placed on Leonardo. Back in 2021, eight of the BAF's meagre fleet of 44 combat aircraft were MiG-29 BM/UBs, while the remaining were F-7 BGI/BG/MBs supplied by China. The Chinese reverse-engineered MiG-21, the F-7s, was on the verge of obsolescence.<sup>3</sup> Also, currently the BAF is not so confident to acquire Chinese J-10C.

The BAF's then-chief had argued that it should choose an aircraft that none of its neighbours possess, such as Sukhoi Su-30/35, which is flown by China and India, while supporting Eurofighters. He claimed that the Indian Air Force (IAF) already operates Rafale and felt that Bangladesh may become overly reliant on France and its whims and fancies if it chooses Rafale. He predicted that having an aircraft that is similar to adversaries is a disadvantage, as they are already aware of its capabilities. Secondly, he claimed that if the BAF purchases Rafale and the relations between France and Bangladesh worsen in the future, the aircraft's necessary overhauls, weaponry, and spare parts could be delayed. The Eurofighter is specifically designed to meet Bangladesh's requirement for more interceptor aircraft with secondary attack capability.<sup>4</sup>

A Bangladeshi official, however, confessed that possibility of deploying Eurofighter Typhoon has significantly increased due to the IAF's use of Rafale. India is purchasing 26 Rafale M's from French manufacturer Dassault for its navy, and already has 36 Rafale with its air force. Other factors could include land and water disputes with India. Since both nations

rely significantly on rivers for their economic and agricultural operations, disagreements could emerge over distribution of water supplies. The drawing of their respective borders is another divisive topic between Bangladesh and India. The ownership of enclaves, existence of border fences, and cross-border migration are the main reasons of contention in these disputes.<sup>5</sup>

### **Eurofighter Jet's Key Features**

The Eurofighter has a twin-engine canard delta configuration that combines digital flight controls with relaxed static stability to support great agility and energy retention. It has 13 external hardpoint structural provisions. The Captor radar family is one of the core avionics; a most recent Captor-E model offers improved tracking and electronic scanning capabilities. The defence package incorporates electronic countermeasures, radar warning receivers, missile approach warning, and towed decoy.<sup>6</sup>

A modular subsystem assembly that permits national variances in mission computers, communications, and data linkages is another key component of Typhoon's architecture. The Eurofighter is equipped with two Eurojet EJ200 afterburning turbofan engines, which provide rapid climb capability, near-Mach 2 speeds, and a service ceiling optimized for beyond-visual-range engagements.<sup>7</sup>

Because only 15 per cent of Eurofighter's surface is metallic, its manufacturers claim protection from radar-based opposing systems, which is a huge benefit during stealth missions. It has Passive Infra-Red Airborne Tracking Equipment system, which enables simultaneous tracking and detection of several moving targets. Additionally, its producers guarantee 1,200 flying hours without the need for unplanned repair.<sup>8</sup>

### **Why India Rejected Eurofighter Jet?**

Earlier, the Eurofighter was removed from India's USD 20 bn Medium Multirole Combat Aircraft (MMRCA) project to acquire 126 fighters for the IAF due to its substantially higher cost of acquisition and operation. According to sources in the Defence ministry, choosing Eurofighter over Rafale would have increased the total cost of the MMRCA project by about INR 25,000 cr. After thorough calculations of flight costs, spare parts, maintenance, and other expenses, it was discovered that life-cycle cost of operating Eurofighter over a 40-year period with 6,000 hours of flying was higher than Rafale.<sup>9</sup>

Secondly, Rafale is renowned for its versatility and can be used for a variety of tasks, such as conducting combat sorties deep within enemy territory, neutralising ground targets, including enemy defence systems, and using its manoeuvrability in dogfights. However, Eurofighter is not renowned for its prowess in air-to-ground combat missions. Further, Indian officials involved in negotiations informed that France was unconcerned about New Delhi

equipping its Rafale aircraft with nuclear weapons, while Germany, involved in Eurofighter consortium, was not. India's prior experience with Germany in transfer of aviation technology has not been positive, particularly regarding Germany's seeming unwillingness to transfer important technology to India's Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) program.<sup>10</sup>

Given that IAF had a history of using French fighters, India chose Rafale. It got an edge for 1999 Kargil War by using the Mirage 2000 by Dassault Aviation. Rafale outperforms Eurofighter in terms of operational experience. Strong operational combat experience and proven capabilities may have contributed to India's decision to acquire Rafale, which have been successfully battle tested in Libya, Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq, and Mali. However, Eurofighter has little experience in Libya, Iraq, and Syria.<sup>11</sup>

### **Preliminary Impact on India**

While the Eurofighter deal was not signed suddenly and was part of Bangladesh's modernisation plan, it could be assessed that this was in the pipeline during the rule of Sheikh Hasina's Awami League regime, which was friendly towards India. Even though the current regime is anti-India and has often shown disregard to its security concerns, New Delhi is more than well-prepared to tackle any ill feeling from Bangladesh in the long run. It is important to remember that this arrangement is still at the letter of Intent stage, which means that Bangladesh has shown an interest in acquiring Eurofighter and not began any actual discussion involving tests, price negotiations, opening of tenders, etc., which is still expected to take many years.

Further, even if this progresses further, it can be estimated that the BAF will not increase its fighter numbers beyond 50 fighters, keeping its fleet size well below India and China. Finally, India maintains an overwhelming airpower superiority in terms of technology, battle preparedness, and force-projection tactics to deny Bangladesh any advantage in the air domain in India's backyard.<sup>12</sup> The Eurofighter are not stealth 5<sup>th</sup>-generation fighters and can be easily detected by Indian S-400's. Last year, the Sudarshan S-400 air defence missile system accomplished a noteworthy milestone by effectively shooting down 80 per cent of enemy fighter aircraft package, causing surviving aircrafts to evacuate and abandon their objectives.<sup>13</sup>

### **Conclusion**

Going ahead, the IAF should keep a close watch on the Eurofighter developments taking place in Bangladesh and recalibrate its air defence strategy in the Eastern front with Bangladesh. India could also engage diplomatically with European Eurofighter consortium, especially Italy, and express its concerns if it detects any change in Bangladesh's attitude

towards India in future. The Eurofighter letter of intent will not alter the balance of air power with India in near future due to various factors like Bangladesh's dire economic situation, political instability, and its equation with China, the United States, and the European Union.

## Endnotes:

<sup>1</sup> Ruma Paul and YP Rajesh, "Bangladesh Signs Letter of Intent to Buy Eurofighter Typhoon Jets", *Reuters*, 10 Dec 2025, accessed 12 Dec 2025, <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/bangladesh-signs-letter-intent-buy-eurofighter-typhoon-jets-2025-12-10/>

<sup>2</sup> Tom Kington, "Bangladesh Signs up for Eurofighters in First Pick of Western Warplane", *Defense News*, 10 Dec 2025, accessed 12 Dec 2025, <https://www.defensenews.com/global/europe/2025/12/10/bangladesh-signs-up-for-eurofighters-in-first-pick-of-western-warplane/>

<sup>3</sup> "Bangladesh Looks to Buy Eurofighter Typhoons, Sideline Rafale Fighter Jets due to India Factor - Expert", *Eurasian Times*, 15 Oct 2021, accessed 12 Dec 2025, <https://www.eurasiantimes.com/bangladesh-eurofighter-typhoons-rafale-fighter-jets-india/>

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Boyko Nikolov, "India Operates Rafale, so Bangladesh can opt for Eurofighter", *Bulgarian Military Industry Review*, 11 Sep 2023, accessed 12 Dec 2025, <https://bulgarianmilitary.com/2023/09/11/india-operates-rafale-so-bangladesh-can-opt-for-eurofighter/>

<sup>6</sup> Jerome Brahy, "Bangladesh Signs Eurofighter Typhoon Jet Agreement with Italy as China's J-10 Loses Appeal", *Army Recognition*, 10 Dec 2025, accessed 12 Dec 2025, <https://www.armyrecognition.com/news/aerospace-news/2025/bangladesh-signs-eurofighter-typhoon-jet-agreement-with-italy-as-chinas-j-10-loses-appeal>

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Bechu S, "Bangladesh to Get Eurofighter Typhoon Jets. What Are Swing-Role Combat Aircraft and Why Do Air Force Pilots Love Them? 5 Points", *The Week*, 10 Dec 2025, accessed 12 Dec 2025, <https://www.theweek.in/news/defence/2025/12/10/bangladesh-to-get-eurofighter-typhoon-jets-what-are-swing-role-combat-aircraft-and-why-do-air-force-pilots-love-them-5-points.html>

<sup>9</sup> Rajat Pandit, "IAF Fighter Deal: Rafale Much Cheaper than Typhoon, Govt. Rules out Review", *The Times of India*, 10 Feb 2012, accessed 12 Dec 2025, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/iaf-fighter-deal-rafale-much-cheaper-than-typhoon-govt-rules-out-review/articleshow/11830845.cms>

<sup>10</sup> Dhairya Maheshwari, "Why India Chose France's More Expensive Rafale Jets over the Eurofighter Typhoon", *Sputnik International*, 10 Sep 2020, accessed 12 Dec 2025, <https://sputnikglobe.com/20200910/why-india-chose-frances-more-expensive-rafale-jets-over-the-eurofighter-typhoon-1080416350.html>

<sup>11</sup> "When Rafale Jets 'Shot-Down' Eurofighter Typhoons to Win Lucrative Indian Fighter Jet Contract", *The Eurasian Times*, 11 August 2020, accessed 12 Dec 2025, <https://www.eurasiantimes.com/when-rafale-jets-shot-down-eurofighter-typhoons-to-win-lucrative-indian-fighter-jet-contract/>

<sup>12</sup> "Bangladesh's LoI for Eurofighter Typhoon Marks Major Air Power Upgrade, primarily a MiG-29 Replacement but with Strategic Implications for India and Myanmar", *Indian Defence Research Wing*, 10 Dec 2025, accessed 12 Dec 2025, <https://idrw.org/bangladeshs-loi-for-eurofighter-typhoon-marks-major-air-power-upgrade-primarily-a-mig-29-replacement-but-with-strategic-implications-for-india-and-myanmar/>

<sup>13</sup> "IAF's Sudarshan S-400 'Shot Down' 80% of Enemy Aircraft in Exercise", *FirstPost*, 27 Jul 2024, accessed 12 Dec 2025, <https://www.firstpost.com/india/iafs-sudarshan-s-400-shot-down-80-of-enemy-aircraft-in-exercise-13797669.html>

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