



# How the Baaz flew

*MiG 29Bs provide escort to Beriev A50 of Indian Air Force. Credits: Indian Air Force*

## Shwetabh Singh traces how the MiG-29 came to be with the IAF

**I**t was in the 1970s-80s that the Indian Air Force was turning a new page and a lot of major acquisition programmes were initiated during the period to replace the older fleet making the air force practically brand new. These were done in the aftermath of one of the most influential aircraft deals by the Indian Air Force, of the MiG-21s. The post-MiG-21 era was significant, because it was that platform, whose acquisition and geopolitical context I have already discussed in my last piece, had seen a new boosted relation of India with the Soviet Union. That deal forged relations that would go on to play an important role for all of India till the USSR collapsed and to Indian Military with a new, albeit weakened, Russia. This era also saw the Indian Air Force being equipped with a diverse set of different platforms, yet the source of these platforms became less diverse, mostly from the USSR.

In this article, I would like to trace how the MiG-29 came to be with the Indian Air Force, though India's contribution to the development cycle of MiG-29 was not as impactful as with the MiG-21, for almost a decade the aircraft was India's Iron Fist against anything our neighbours, both North and West could throw against us, till the original counterpart of MiG-29 in VVS, the Su-30 was also inducted with the Air Force. Hence, it is important to trace the history of the fighter.

The process was although a bit more continual and smoother than what might appear out of this piece because of gaps in my knowledge of events and their motivations, nevertheless I would like to bridge them to the best of my ability. In my opinion, it began singularly with the DPSA programme of the Indian Air Force, which I believe snowballed into the Indian Air Force's composition in the 80s, which created the power dynamics with-respect-to other Air Forces that continued well into the 21st Century, with only the Su-30 acquisition having more impact until now.

### The DPSA

The DPSA or Deep Penetration Strike Aircraft programme which began in early 70s and reached its climax in the late 70s, wanted to replace the older air to ground strike aircraft (Hunter/Canberra/ Marut) of the Indian Air Force with a more modern solution. The programme was in consideration since the 1960s when the PAF had acquired its Mirage III platform (Chari). The programme involved participation of Anglo-French SEPECAT Jaguar, British Buccaneer, French Mirage F1, Swedish Saab Viggen. It involved an initial purchase of a



*Five Ferry pilots, Flt Lt R Burli, Flt KR Singh, Wg Cdr M McMahon, Flt Lt SCS Adhikari and Flt Lt NM Gupte standing in front of the Direct Supply Jaguars destined for the IAF in 1979. Credits: Bharat Rakshak*