



India-France Relations

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“The article is based on **Old new friends** that was published in The Indian Express on 24th August. It talks about the strengthening India-France bilateral relations in an uncertain world order.”

Context

- The Prime Minister of India, Mr Narendra Modi, visited France for an official visit at the invitation of the President of the French Republic, Mr Emmanuel Macron, for a bilateral summit on 22nd and 23rd August 2019 in Paris and to participate in the G7 Summit, on 25th and 26th August 2019, in Biarritz, under the French presidency of the G7.
- In his departure statement, the Prime Minister said his visit to France reflects the strong strategic partnership which the two countries deeply value and share. India and France have excellent bilateral ties, which are reinforced by a shared vision to cooperate for further enhancing peace and prosperity for the two countries and the world at large. The strong strategic and economic partnership is complemented by a shared perspective on major global concerns such as terrorism, climate change, etc.

Background

- As early as the 1980s, France wished to give greater scope to its relations with India. France bet on India’s strategic, diplomatic and economic emergence, and steadfastly **supported India’s requests** in several strategic matters: a permanent seat at the United Nations Security Council, better participation in the decisions taken at international fora (such as the expanded G8 and G20), access to civil nuclear cooperation.
- Defence cooperation with France began in the 1950s when India acquired the Ouragan aircraft and continued with the Mystères, Jaguar (Anglo-French), Mirage 2000.
- Both countries started joint naval exercises ‘**Varuna**’ in 1983.

- France is the first country with which we initiated a **Strategic Dialogue** after our 1998 nuclear tests when France refused to impose bilateral sanctions on us and displayed a far greater understanding of India's security compulsions compared to other countries.
- France helped India set up the Sriharikota launch site and assisted in engine development and hosting of payloads.
- After the Cold War, France decided that its preferred partner in the Indian Ocean Region would be India. The relationship progressed through many landmark agreements like **Strategic Partnership agreement 1998 and Civil Nuclear agreement 2008**.
- It was the first **P-5 country** to support India's claim for a permanent seat in an expanded and reformed UN Security Council.
- France supports India's membership of Multilateral Export Control regimes- NSG and MTCR. Its support was vital in India's admission to MTCR in 2016.

Area of Cooperation

- Enhancing bilateral cooperation in **strategic sectors**:
 - France has always been an important partner in the development of advanced technologies.
 - This is set to advance further with the consolidation of **civil nuclear cooperation** and enhancing **space cooperation**.
 - The summit this week saw the placing of artificial intelligence and the unfolding digital revolution at the top of the bilateral agenda.
- **Defence**:
 - The new commitment to go beyond the buyer-seller relationship in the field of weapons procurement.
 - Synergies between India's large defence market and the French strengths in armament production
 - The signing of Agreement regarding the Provision of Reciprocal Logistics Support
- **Political cooperation** began with French support for India in limiting international sanctions on Delhi after its 1998 nuclear tests. Today, France has emerged as India's most reliable partner on issues relating to terrorism and Kashmir.
- **Regional Cooperation**:
 - To intensify **maritime and naval cooperation** in the Indian Ocean and more broadly the Indo-Pacific.
 - There is a sweeping and ambitious ocean agenda awaiting the two countries — from maritime governance to oceanographic research and from interoperability between their armed forces to capacity building in the littoral.

- **Bilateral trade and Economic relations**

The India-France Administrative Economic and Trade Committee (AETC) provides an appropriate framework to assess and find ways to further promote bilateral trade and investment as well as to speed up the resolution of market access issues to the benefit of economic operators

- **Global agendas-** Climate change, biodiversity, renewable energy, terrorism, cybersecurity and digital technology, etc:
 - There have been joint efforts to limit climate change and develop the Solar Alliance
 - Both countries have agreed on a road map on cybersecurity and digital technology.

Way Forward

- France, which had sought strategic autonomy within the framework of its alliance with the US, and India, which has valued independent foreign policy, are **natural partners** in building the new coalitions for an uncertain era.
- France also **opens the pathway for deeper engagement with Europe** on global issues, especially after uncertainty in the region due to BREXIT.
- The new partnerships with France, Germany and other like-minded countries like Japan would hopefully turn out to be far more consequential for India's influence on the global stage.

Drishti Input

“Discuss the significance of strengthening India's relations with France and how it helps India to establish itself as a global leader.”