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India in Support of France

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Why in News

Recently, **India came out in support of France's President** who has been criticised by Pakistan and Turkey for strongly defending the French people's right to freedom of expression.



Key Points

- **Background:**

- Recently, a French schoolteacher was murdered for showing caricatures of the Prophet to his students.
- Condemning the murder, French President defended the **freedom of expression and secular values**.
- In response, Turkey and Pakistan accused French President of running an anti-Islamic agenda and provoking Muslims.

Iran and Saudi Arabia too condemned the cartoon. There was a call in the entire muslim world to boycott French products.

- **India's Support to France:**

- **India condemned the criticism of Turkey and Pakistan** on French President, by calling the criticism in violation of the **most basic standards of international discourse**.

India also condemned the murder of schoolteacher as brutal terrorist attack.

- While France has seen repeated violent incidents around caricatures and cartoons that are deemed offensive, **it is unusual for India to wade into a controversy over religion in another country**.

In 2015, after the attack on Charlie Hebdo journalists and cartoonists, India condemned the incident by calling that India was on the side of those who condemn this barbaric incident.

- India's support for French President could have been influenced by the fact that the charge against the French President has been led by **Turkey and Pakistan, two countries that have repeatedly attacked India over Jammu and Kashmir and alleged human rights violations**.

- **India-France Ties:**

- **Strategic:** India has close strategic ties with France, especially on issues of mutual interest from **counter-terrorism to defence, and nuclear to space**.
 - **Terror:** France backed the India's proposal for a global conference on terrorism. Both the countries also support organising a new "**No Money for Terror**" - an International Conference on Fighting Terrorist Financing.
Two countries agreed to enhance their operational cooperation and launch fresh efforts to fight radicalisation, especially **Online Radicalisation**.
 - **Defence:** Both countries have a **defence dialogue** at the Ministerial level.
 1. The three services have regular defence exercises; viz.
 1. **Exercise Shakti** (Army)
 2. **Exercise Varuna** (Navy)
 3. **Exercise Garuda** (Air Force)
 2. Recently, the Indian Air Force (IAF) has **received its first batch (5 out of 36) of French Rafale aviation** combat aircraft at Ambala Air base (Haryana).
 - **Space:** Both have decided to deepen space cooperation to meet new challenges together, whether it concerns planetary exploration or human spaceflight.
 1. France has agreed to be part of India's Venus mission, scheduled for 2025.
 2. ISRO's Venus instrument, **VIRAL (Venus Infrared Atmospheric Gases Linker)** has been co-developed by Russian and French agencies.
- **Multilateral Platform:** France has been **extremely supportive of India at the UN Security Council** on Kashmir and Pakistan-sponsored terrorism, among other issues.
The **Prime Minister of India was a special invitee at the 45th G-7 Summit in Biarritz, France** where India was one of the "**Goodwill**" partners.
- **Climate:** The two countries have a close cooperation on climate change, and have formed the **International Solar Alliance**.

Way Forward

- India's relations with France is built on a foundation of shared democratic values and are informed by a commonality of interest in issues such as sustainable development and climate change.
- 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.

Source: IE