



India in Support of France

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.
 - a. 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.
 - a. The three services have regular defence exercises; viz.
 - i. **Exercise Shakti** (Army)
 - ii. **Exercise Varuna** (Navy)
 - iii. **Exercise Garuda** (Air Force)
 - b. 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.
 - a. France has agreed to be part of India's Venus mission, scheduled for 2025.
 - b. 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

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