



Europe To The Centre

This editorial is based on [“Europe To The Centre”](#) which was published in Indian Express on 04/05/2022. It talks about India relations with Europe, primarily Germany and France and possible areas of cooperation.

For Prelims: Indo-France Relations, Indo-German Relations, European Union, European Commission, Indo-Pacific Region.

For Mains: Indo-European Relations - Implications of Russia-Ukraine War, Possible Areas of Cooperation.

India has recently witnessed a flurry of diplomatic activities with a long line of ministers, senior military officers and diplomats from a number of countries visiting Delhi and engaging with their Indian counterparts.

This attention being paid to India reflects not what India is but rather what India could become as **one of the key architects of a new international order**.

In this context, the Prime Minister’s recent visits to Berlin (Germany), Copenhagen (Denmark), and Paris (France) give us a glimpse of **India’s post-Russian strategic future in Europe**. As Russia, isolated by unprecedented Western sanctions, deepens its alliance with China, **Europe has begun to loom larger than ever before in India’s strategic calculus**.

What are the Recent Developments between India and Europe (Specifically Germany and France)?

- In April 2022, the President of the [European Commission](#) on her visit to Delhi unveiled the new contours of the EU’s strategic partnership with India by launching the India-Europe Trade and Technology Council. This is the EU’s second such council.
 - However, in the PM’s visit to Europe, the focus is on **India’s key bilateral partnerships with European majors - Germany and France** as well as a critical northern corner of Europe, the so-called **Norden**.
 - The visit will provide India with an opportunity to find ways to **limit some of the negative regional and global consequences of the [Russia-Ukraine war](#)** and explore the emerging possibilities for stronger cooperation with key European countries.
- The strategic convergence between [India and France](#) is based on the fundamental conviction of both countries in a multipolar world and in the concept of strategic autonomy.
 - France has stood by India since 1998 when **India conducted nuclear tests** and the entire world was against the latter.
 - In recent times, France has been **India’s “new Russia”** — its most important strategic partner.

- In the last few years, **France has emerged as a strong defender of India's interests** in the [UN Security Council](#) and a regional ally in the vast [Indo-Pacific theatre](#).
 - France has also been a major supplier of advanced arms to India.
- Germany and India do not have a traditional strategic partnership. It is a **green partnership based on trade, investment, technology**, functional collaboration, skill development, and sustainability.
 - There are several initiatives like the **Indo-German energy forum**, environmental forum, **partnership on urban mobility**, skill development and science and technology.
 - More recently, in January 2022, the [German Navy frigate Bayern landed in Mumbai](#) which was a remarkable step for Indo-German relations signifying a concrete outcome of the Indo-Pacific Policy Guidelines that Germany adopted in 2020.

What does the Ukraine Crisis hold for Indo-European Relations?

- The recent Russia-Ukraine war is **one of the key obstacles that could shadow India's good relations with the European Union**. However, the Western debate on Germany is even harsher.
 - Germany is tied far more deeply to Russia than India with its annual trade with Russia being about \$60 billion (while India's is at \$10 bn).
 - Germany's strategic dependence on Russia is also serious with its heavy reliance on Russian natural gas.
 - Unlike other European countries, France should be able to understand India's stand on this issue as both the leaders were constantly in talks with the Russian President regarding the issue.
- With sanctions imposed on Russia, the world along with the European Union is looking for better options for trade and investments. However, China with its muscular foreign policies is not a perfect partner anymore.
 - **India is an important partner** in this regard **due to its sustained economic growth and market size**.
 - The Ukraine crisis created an urgency to engage with India as part of Europe's Indo-Pacific Strategy for Cooperation.

What could be the Way Forward?

- **India, Europe and Indo-Pacific:** India will need Europe more than it has in the recent past, whether in building up its deterrent capabilities or accelerating its own economic and technological transformation.
 - India must **deepen its all-round partnership with Europe**, build a shared vision of an altered geopolitical landscape and **encourage Europe to play a greater role in the Indo-Pacific**.
 - The two can **mobilise massive economic resources for sustainable development** of regional infrastructure, **wield political influence** and **leverage their soft power to shape the Indo-Pacific discourse**.
- **Possible Areas of Cooperation with Germany:** Germany views **India as an important partner for resolving global issues**, including climate change, food security, energy and international peace and security
 - Having built up a significant engagement with Russia over the decades, both India and Germany are under pressure to disentangle from the Russian connection.
 - The **two leaders may jointly find solutions** regarding coping up with the Russian President.
 - Expansion of India-Germany bilateral ties is also crucial. Commerce is what really drives Germany.
 - **Making India an attractive new destination for German capital**, now under pressure to reduce its exposure to Russian and Chinese markets, should be the highest priority for India.
- **Possible Areas of Cooperation with France:** The return of President Emmanuel Macron to power offers a good moment for India to imagine the next phase in bilateral relations.
 - France has a critical role in making a success of India's ambitious current plans to **expand domestic production of weapons with greater participation of private and foreign**

capital.

- France is also a **preferred partner in the Indo-Pacific**, even more so now with a blueprint for cooperation in the form of a **Joint Strategic Vision for cooperation in the Indian Ocean Region** concluded by both countries in 2018.
- As for nuclear energy, the two leaders must **review progress in the joint construction** of the [world's largest nuclear park in Jaitapur, Maharashtra](#).
 - The project has stalled a bit and it could do with some political impetus.
- Apart from the above traditional areas, discussions between the two leaders may dwell on **newer areas of cooperation such as connectivity, climate change, cyber-security and science and technology**.
- **Keeping Nordic Countries in Circle:** The Nordic Five — Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden — have a population of barely 25 million but their **GDP at \$1.8 trillion** is greater than that of Russia.
 - In the last few years, India has rightly recognised that **every one of the European nations can contribute significantly** to India's development.
 - Tiny Luxembourg brings great financial clout, Norway offers impressive maritime technologies, Estonia is a cyber power, Czechia has deep strengths in optoelectronics, Portugal is a window to the Lusophone world, and Slovenia offers commercial access to the heart of Europe through its Adriatic sea port at Koper.
 - With Nordic countries, especially Denmark, **India could build on the unique bilateral green strategic partnership**.

Drishti Mains Question

“Western Europe has moved from the margins to the centre of India's foreign and security policies. The crisis in Ukraine has intensified the imperatives for deeper strategic cooperation between India and its European partners.” Discuss.