



India-France Defence Partnership

Why in News

Recently, at the India-France strategic dialogue, both countries resolved to expand the defence and security partnership by enhancing intelligence sharing, bolstering capabilities, expanding military drills and pursuing new initiatives in maritime, space and cyber domains.



Key Points

▪ Highlights of the Dialogue:

- **Support to 'Atmanirbhar Bharat'**: France reiterated its commitment to India's vision of "**Atmanirbhar Bharat (self-reliant India)**" and defence industrialisation, joint research and technology development in India across a wide range of advanced capabilities.
- **France's Indo-Pacific Strategy**: France stressed its continuing commitment to the Indo-Pacific region as a "**resident power**", and partnership with India as a "major pillar" of its strategy for the region.
 - Moreover, the **French Presidency of the European Union (EU)** in the first half of 2022 is expected to give a further shape to the EU's engagement in the Indo-Pacific region.
 - A **resident power** is one that does not own territory or have a territorial presence in a particular region of the world, but is nevertheless a force to be reckoned with in the international politics of that region.

- **Significance of the Meeting:** France's reiteration to expand strategic cooperation with India has **come after the unveiling of a new [security alliance \(AUKUS\)](#) by Australia, the UK and the US.**
 - The unexpected announcement of the alliance, which involves building submarines for Australia, had angered the French government after Australia pulled out of a separate submarine deal with France.
 - **AUKUS** is a new trilateral security partnership for the Indo-Pacific, between Australia, the UK and the US (AUKUS).
- **India-France Strategic Relations:**
 - **Background:**
 - France was one of the first countries with which India signed a "strategic partnership" after the end of the Cold War, in January 1998.
 - France was one of the very few countries to support India's decision to test nuclear weapons in 1998.
 - **Defence Cooperation:** Both countries have a defence dialogue at the Ministerial level.
 - The three services have regular defence exercises; viz.
 - [Exercise Shakti \(Army\)](#)
 - [Exercise Varuna \(Navy\)](#)
 - [Exercise Garuda \(Air Force\)](#)
 - Recently, the Indian Air Force (IAF) has inducted [French Rafale multi-role combat aircraft](#).
 - India entered into a contract with a **French firm to build six Scorpene submarines** in India's Malegaon dockyards through a technology-transfer arrangement in 2005.
 - The two countries also signed the **Agreement regarding the Provision of Reciprocal Logistics Support.**
 - This agreement will help to facilitate the replenishment of fuel, rations, spares, and berthing and maintenance for the other nations' warships, military aircraft and troops during routine port calls, as well as during **Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR).**
 - **Indian Ocean, the Common Shared Interest:**
 - France needs to protect its colonial territorial possessions like reunion island and Indian ocean being the zone of influence for India.
 - Recently, **France became the 23rd member of the [Indian Ocean Rim Association \(IORA\)](#).**
 - It is the first time that a country whose mainland is not on the Indian Ocean has been brought into the fold of the IORA.
 - **Counter Terrorism:** 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.
 - **France Backing India:** France also continues to steadfastly back India on Kashmir while its relations with Pakistan have plummeted in the recent past and China has become an object of suspicion.

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.

Source: IE

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