



## India-France: Partnership for the Planet

This editorial is based on "[France: India's steady partner in green growth](#)" which was published in The Hindu on 03/07/2024. The article emphasises India's long standing importance as a partner for the French Development Agency (AFD) Group. The AFD has pledged over Euro (€) 4 billion for nearly 100 projects in India since 2008.

**For Prelims:** [India and France](#), [French Development Agency \(AFD\)](#), [Rafale jets](#), [P75 program](#), [Supercomputing](#), [Blue Economy](#), [Exercise Shakti](#), [Exercise Varuna](#), [Exercise Garuda](#), [United Nations Security Council](#), [International Solar Alliance](#), [Paris Agreement](#), [Indo-Pacific Region](#), [Indian Ocean Region](#), [Indo-Pacific Triangular Development Cooperation Fund](#).

**For Mains:** Significance, Challenges and Cooperation Areas in Indo-France Relations

In a recent event in Paris, [India and France](#) emphasised the '**Partnership for the Planet**' as pivotal to the **Indo-French Horizon 2047 Roadmap**, highlighting their enhanced cooperation on climate change, biodiversity, health, and environmental issues.

The **partnership is evolving** to encompass [Indo-Pacific biodiversity initiatives](#) and emphasise innovation. France, through the [French Development Agency \(AFD\)](#), remains committed to supporting India's journey towards resilience and equity, with plans to showcase collaborative innovations during the upcoming **Indo-French Year of Innovation in 2026**.

Additionally, it underscores a **joint commitment** to harmonising **socio-economic development** with [environmental protection](#), addressing global disparities, and advancing further cooperation and development **towards sustainable solutions**.

### India-France Relationship: Historical Development

#### ▪ **Post-Independence Period (1947-1991):**

- Diplomatic ties were established soon after India gained independence.
- Military cooperation began in the 1960s with French aircraft and helicopters (**Ouragan, Mystere, Alize, Alouette, Jaguar**) joining India's air fleet.
- France provided critical support in 1984 by supplying nuclear fuel to the Tarapur power plant when the US withdrew.
- Early space collaboration included French assistance in establishing the Sriharikota launch site and providing Centaure and Viking rocket technologies in the 1970s.
- Despite these collaborations, **Cold War dynamics** limited the full development of bilateral relations.

#### ▪ **Post-Cold War Era (1991-Present):**

- India and France formalised a Strategic Partnership in 1998, marking a significant expansion in bilateral ties.

- The partnership focuses on three key pillars:
  - Defence and security cooperation
  - Space collaboration
  - Civil nuclear cooperation

## What are the Key Sectors and Initiatives Related to the Indo-French Horizon 2047 Roadmap?

### ▪ Partnership for the Planet and Global Issues:

- **Environment:** Indo-France both countries are committed to promoting environmental sustainability through initiatives that focus on sustainable **urban development, waste management, and water conservation**.
  - Projects like the **Pune metro system** and **Chandigarh's water supply system**, supported by AFD, emphasise sustainable urban infrastructure development.
  - Commitments to curb plastic pollution through international agreements, recycling programs, and innovative solutions.
- **Climate Change:** Support for [clean energy technologies](#), [decarbonized hydrogen production](#), and financing initiatives for sustainable energy projects. This includes promoting renewable energy, enhancing energy efficiency, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.
  - The [International Solar Alliance](#), co-founded by **India and France**, promotes solar energy deployment in solar-rich countries to reduce dependence on fossil fuels.
  - Since 2008, France has invested over **4 billion Euros** through agencies like the **French Development Agency (AFD)** in climate projects in India, supporting initiatives from renewable energy to climate-resilient infrastructure.
- **Biodiversity:** Both countries are engaged in conservation efforts to protect biodiversity hotspots and endangered species. Projects such as the **conservation of one-horned rhinos in Assam**, supported by AFD, demonstrate joint efforts to preserve India's rich biodiversity.
  - India is the **top partner for the AFD** in terms of financial commitment. A substantial **63%** of its portfolio is dedicated to addressing **gender equality**.

### ▪ Partnership for People:

- **Student Mobility:** Targeting 30,000 Indian students in **France by 2030** and issuing **5-year short-stay** visas for Indian Master's degree holders.
- **Diplomatic and Consular Network:** Opening new consulates in Marseille and Hyderabad.
- **Culture:** Collaboration on establishing a new National Museum in New Delhi and exchanging audio-visual content.
- **Research:** Increased funding for the Indo-French Centre for Advanced Research.

### ▪ Partnership for Security and Sovereignty:

- **Indo-Pacific:** India and France have jointly strategised to enhance cooperation in the [Indo-Pacific](#), focusing on maritime security, economic collaboration, and forming strategic partnerships with regional nations.
  - They conduct joint military exercises across all branches - **Shakti (Army)**, [Varuna \(Navy\)](#), and [Garuda \(Air Force\)](#).
- **Defence:** Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) has approved the acquisition of [26 Rafale aircraft for the Navy](#). He noted that negotiations on pricing and contractual procedures are progressing actively, although an official announcement may not be imminent.
  - Additionally, the DAC has sanctioned the construction of three additional Scorpène submarines (known as Kalvari class).
- **Space:** [ISRO and the French Space Agency \(CNES\)](#) have been carrying on various joint research programmes and collaborating in satellite launches.
  - For example, in 2022, the [GSAT-24 communication satellite](#) of [New Space India Ltd \(NSIL\)](#) was successfully launched on board Ariane-5 from Kourou, French Guiana.
- **Civil Nuclear Energy:** An agreement on **civil nuclear cooperation** was signed between India and **France in 2008**. France is involved in the construction of the [Jaitapur Nuclear](#)

## What is the Significance of Indo-France Relations?

- **Indo-Pacific Security:** France's support is crucial for India in maintaining stability in the Indo-Pacific region and countering Chinese assertiveness in this region, This is exemplified by the 2018 India-France Joint Strategic Vision for Indian Ocean cooperation.
- **Mutual Strategic Autonomy:** The relationship is uniquely balanced, free from Anglo-Saxon influences in France and anti-Western sentiments in India. Moreover, after the nuclear tests in May 1998, when India declared itself a nuclear-weapon State, France was the first major power to open talks with India.
- **International Organization Access:** France's backing is vital for India's aspirations to join key bodies like the [UN Security Council and the Nuclear Suppliers Group](#).
- **Global Power Balance:** Indo-France partnership plays a role in moderating Russian influence in Europe and Chinese influence in Asia, contributing to global stability and a balanced world order.
- **Defence Cooperation:** France holds substantial significance for India's defence sector through robust strategic partnerships and collaborations. The procurement of Rafale fighter jets from France, Additionally, France and India engage in **joint military exercises, technology transfers, and collaborations** in defence research and development,
- **Future-Oriented Collaboration:** The **Horizon 2047 agreement outlines a 25-year roadmap** for bilateral cooperation. It emphasises collaboration in advanced technologies like [supercomputing, AI, and quantum computing](#), which are critical for India's future development.



## What are the Challenges Related to Indo-France Relations?

- **Economic Limitations:**
  - The absence of a [Free Trade Agreement](#) hinders deeper economic ties and progress on the India-EU [Broad-based Trade and Investment Agreement \(BTIA\)](#) has stalled, limiting further economic integration.
- **Trade and Intellectual Property Issues:**
  - Trade imbalance **favours France**, with **higher exports to India** and more often France has expressed concerns about inadequate **protection of intellectual property rights** for French businesses in India.
    - Some negotiated projects face operational challenges, such as the Jaitapur nuclear project.
- **Divergent Geopolitical Stances:**
  - Differing approaches to global issues are evident. For instance, France has openly criticised Russia's invasion of Ukraine, while India has maintained a more neutral stance.

## What Steps Need to Be Taken to Accelerate Indo-France Relations?

- **Economic Engagement:**
  - Accelerate negotiations on the **India-EU BTIA with France** as a key supporter within the EU. Explore a bilateral economic partnership agreement as an interim measure. The **Indo-French Centre for the Promotion of Advanced Research (CEFIPRA)** model could be expanded to other sectors.
    - The Japan-India Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement could serve as a model.
- **Negotiating Trade and Intellectual Property:**
  - Establish a **joint working group on IP** protection and technology transfer. Create sector-specific trade facilitation mechanisms.
    - Involve private sector expertise to overcome technical and financial hurdles. The success of the **Rafale jets** deal shows how political will can overcome obstacles.
- **Managing Geopolitical Positions:**
  - Increase strategic dialogues to align perspectives on global issues and collaborate on areas of mutual interest, such as **Indo-Pacific security**.
    - The India-France-Australia trilateral initiative demonstrates the potential for aligned interests.
- **Addressing Emerging Global Tensions:**
  - Enhance **intelligence sharing and joint strategic assessments**, and develop joint crisis response mechanisms. The Quad (India, US, Japan, Australia) framework could be expanded to include France in specific areas.
    - Collaborate on **humanitarian aid and conflict resolution initiatives**.
  - Strengthen naval cooperation in the Indian Ocean against China's Assertiveness, Example: Expand joint naval exercises like **Varuna to include other regional partners**.

## Conclusion

As global dynamics shift, the **India-France partnership** is poised to play a significant role in shaping a balanced and stable international order. By leveraging their **complementary strengths and addressing existing challenges**, India and France can elevate their partnership to new heights, benefiting not just **both** nations but contributing to global peace, security, and prosperity.

### **Drishti Mains Questions:**

Q. What are the significance and challenges of the Indo-French relations? Suggest measures needed to be taken to further Improve their relations.

## UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

### **Prelims:**

**Q. Consider the following statements: (2016)**

1. The International Solar Alliance was launched at the United Nations Climate Change Conference in 2015.
2. The Alliance includes all the member countries of the United Nations.

**Which of the statements given above is/are correct?**

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

**Ans: (a)**

**Mains:**

**Q. How will the I2U2 (India, Israel, UAE and USA) grouping transform India's position in global politics? (2022)**

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