



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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