



Exploring India-France's Partnership

This editorial is based on [“Exploring the blue in the India-France partnership”](#) which was published in the Hindu on 10/02/2023. It talks about the India-France's Partnership in various areas.

For Prelims: Climate Change, Paris Agreement, International Solar Alliance (ISA), Indo-pacific region, India, France, UAE Trilateral Initiative, Free Trade Agreement

For Mains: India France Relations, Effect of Policies & Politics of Countries on India's Interests

This year 2023, India and France are celebrating **25 years of their strategic partnership** and it provides a unique opportunity for introspection. Signed in 1998, **the time-tested strategic partnership has continued to gain momentum** over shared values and aspirations of peace, stability and, most importantly, their desire for strategic autonomy.

Over the past two and a half decades, **India and France have developed a close and dynamic relationship based on shared values and a commitment** to promoting peace, security, and sustainable development.

This strategic partnership **has been a major driving force behind their collaboration in key areas** such as trade, defence, science, technology, and culture. As the two nations celebrate this milestone, it is a **fitting time to reflect on the successes and achievements of this special relationship** and look ahead to a bright and prosperous future.

What are the Key Areas of Cooperation between the two Nations?

▪ Defence:

- France has emerged as a **key defence partner for India**, becoming the **second largest defence supplier in 2017- 2021**.
- France has emerged as a **major strategic partner for India with crucial defence deals** and increased military to military engagement.
- **Example:**
 - **Induction of the French Scorpene** conventional submarines, being built in India under technology transfer agreement of 2005, and the Indian Air Force having received 36 Rafale fighter jets.
 - The **Tata group has also tied up with Airbus to manufacture C-295 tactical transport aircraft** in Vadodara, Gujarat.
 - **Military Dialogues and Regularly held Joint Exercises:**
 - [Varuna \(navy\)](#), [Garuda \(air force\)](#), and [Shakti \(army\)](#)

▪ Economic Cooperation:

- France has **emerged as a key trading partner of India** with annual trade of USD 12.42

billion in 2021-22.

- It is the **11th largest foreign investor in India** with a cumulative investment of USD 10.31 billion from April 2000 to June 2022, which represents 1.70% of the total **foreign direct investment** inflows into India.
- **Civil Nuclear Cooperation:**
 - France was among the first countries with which India signed a **civil nuclear deal**.
 - Paris also played a critical role in limiting India's isolation in the **non-proliferation order** after the 1998 nuclear tests.
- **Cooperation at International Forum:**
 - France supports India's bid for **permanent membership of the United Nations Security Council** as well as its entry into the Nuclear Suppliers Group.
- **Climate Cooperation:**
 - Both countries are concerned about **climate change**, where India has supported France in the **Paris Agreement** expressing its strong commitment to mitigating the effects of climate change.
 - Both countries, as part of their joint efforts on climate change, launched the **International Solar Alliance** in 2015.
- **Maritime Ties:**
 - **Joint Strategic Vision of India-France Cooperation in the Indian Ocean Region** presents a blueprint for a strengthening of ties.
 - French - Indian joint patrolling in the Indian Ocean signals India's intent to expand its footprint in the Indian Ocean by engaging with like-minded partners.
 - Maritime security has further gained momentum as both countries have articulated their common vision for a free, fair and open Indo-Pacific.
 - India and France in September 2022 agreed to set up an Indo-Pacific **Trilateral Development Cooperation Fund** that will support sustainable innovative solutions for countries in the **Indo-pacific region**.
 - **India, France, UAE Trilateral Initiative** is aimed at ensuring maritime domain awareness and security from the east coast of Africa to the far Pacific.
- **Space Cooperation:**
 - India and France have continued to strengthen their cooperation in the field of space in recent years. Some of the recent developments in their space collaboration include:
 - **ISRO-CNES Joint Working Group:** In 2020, the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) and the French National Centre for Space Studies (CNES) established a Joint Working Group to further enhance their cooperation in the field of space.
 - **Joint Mars Mission:** In 2020, ISRO and CNES announced plans to collaborate on a joint Mars mission in the near future.
 - **Collaboration on Space Debris:** India and France have also been working together on addressing the issue of space debris.
 - **Joint Earth Observation Mission:** In 2021, ISRO and CNES announced plans to collaborate on a joint Earth observation mission, which will involve the development of a satellite to study the Earth's atmosphere and climate.

What are the Challenges in India-France Relations?

- **Absence of Free Trade Agreement (FTA):**
 - Despite having good relations, France and India don't have a **Free Trade Agreement (FTA)** between them.
 - Further, no progress is being made on the India-EU Broad based Trade and Investment agreement (BTIA) as well.
- **Defence and Security Cooperation:**
 - Despite a strong defence partnership, the **two countries have different priorities and approaches towards defence and security cooperation**.
 - India's focus on its neighborhood and its "non-aligned" policy can sometimes clash with France's global interests.
- **Trade Imbalances:**
 - Despite being significant trade partners, there is a trade imbalance between India and France, with France exporting more to India than the other way around.

- This imbalance has been a source of concern for India, and both countries are looking for ways to address it.
- **Intellectual Property Rights:**
 - India has been criticized by France for not adequately protecting **intellectual property rights**, which has affected French businesses operating in India.
- **China's Factor:**
 - China's increasing dominance in the Indian Ocean region has become a source of concern for both India and France, as it has the potential to disrupt the regional balance of power and undermine regional stability and security.

What should be the Way Forward?

- **Increased Trade and Investment:**
 - The two countries can work towards increasing bilateral trade and investment.
 - This can be done through measures like **setting up joint ventures, expanding trade agreements, and promoting cross-border investment.**
- **Defence Cooperation:**
 - India and France have a strong defense relationship, and this can be further strengthened through increased cooperation in areas like **joint military exercises, defense technology transfers, and collaboration** in defense production.
- **Cultural Exchange:**
 - Encouraging cultural exchange between the two countries through programs like student exchanges, arts and cultural events, and language programs can help to deepen the relationship and foster mutual understanding.
- **Climate Change and Energy:**
 - India and France can work **together to address the global challenges of climate change and energy security.** This can be done through collaboration on clean energy research and development, promoting the use of renewable energy, and reducing carbon emissions.
- **Scientific and Technological Cooperation:**
 - The two countries can collaborate in areas of science and technology, including research and development, innovation, and the transfer of technology. This can help to enhance the competitiveness of their economies and create new opportunities for growth.

Drishti Mains Question

What steps are India and France taking to enhance their bilateral relations and what are the potential benefits for both nations?

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)

- India and France launched the International Solar Alliance (ISA) to boost solar energy in developing countries.
- It was launched at the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Paris in November 2015 by the Indian Prime Minister and French President. Its secretariat is located in Gurugram, India. **Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- At the initial stage ISA was opened to membership of countries lying fully or partly between the Tropics of Cancer and Capricorn (torrid zone).
- In 2018, the membership of ISA was opened for all the UN members. However, all the member countries of the UN are not its members. **Hence, statement 2 is not correct.**
- Currently, 80 countries have signed and ratified the ISA Framework Agreement while 98 countries have signed the ISA Framework Agreement.
- **Therefore, option (a) is the correct answer.**

Mains

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

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