



## India and Europe: A New Era of Strategic Partnership

This editorial is based on [What India can gain from Europe](#) which was published in The Indian Express on 12/07/2023. It talks about India-Europe relationships.

**For Prelims:** [EU-India Summit](#), [Sustainable Development](#), [North Atlantic Treaty Organisation](#), [ASEAN](#), [Scorpene submarines](#), [Rafale jets](#), [ISRO-CNES satellite constellation](#), [European Green Deal](#), [International Solar Alliance](#), [One Planet Summit](#), [Indian Ocean Region](#)

**For Mains:** Significance of Europe for India, Challenges for India's Engagement with European Security

The [25th-anniversary celebration of Indo-French](#) strategic partnership is a good moment to begin India's **re-engagement with European security**. Defence cooperation between India and France could contribute to Eurasian security this century. The **Prime Minister's visit to France** is expected to produce a bounty of new agreements, especially in defence and space, and raise the bilateral strategic partnership to a higher level. The visit is not just about what advanced technologies and arms France can give. It also highlights a theme not often discussed what India can do for France and Europe.

### Why is India's Contribution to European Security Important?

- **Historical Contribution:**
  - India has helped secure peace in Europe **during the two world wars**, when millions of Indian soldiers fought and died for the allied cause.
- **Economic Interest:**
  - India has a stake in the **stability and prosperity of Europe**, which is a major trade and investment partner, a **source of technology and innovation**, and a **fellow democracy**.
- **Security Concern:**
  - India has an interest in the resolution of the [ongoing war in Ukraine](#), which has **implications for Asian security and the global order**.
- **Diplomatic Role:**
  - India has an opportunity to play a constructive role in **bridging the gaps between Russia and the West**, as well as between China and Europe, on various regional and global issues.
- **Strategic Partnership:**
  - India has a potential to collaborate with France and other European countries on modernising its **defence industrial base, enhancing its maritime surveillance capabilities**, and promoting renewable energy and climate action.

### What is the Significance of Europe for India?

- **Employment:**
  - The European Union (EU) works closely with **India to promote peace, create jobs**,

**boost economic growth** and enhance sustainable development across the country.

- **Financial Assistance:**
  - As India graduated from a **low to medium income country** (OECD 2014), the **EU-India cooperation** also evolved from a traditional financial assistance type towards a partnership with a focus on common priorities.
- **Trade:**
  - The **EU is India's 2nd-largest trading partner** (after the US) and **India's 2nd-largest export market**. India is the EU's 10th largest trading partner, accounting for **2% of EU total trade in goods**.
  - Trade in services between the EU and India **reached 40 billion Euro in 2021**.
- **Exports:**
  - India's merchandise **exports to EU member countries stood at about USD 65 billion in 2021-22**, while imports aggregated at USD 51.4 billion.
  - In 2022-23, the exports aggregated at **USD 67 billion**, while imports stood at USD 54.4 billion in 2021-22.
- **Other Bilateral Mechanism:**
  - At the 2017 [EU-India Summit](#), leaders reiterated their **intention to strengthen cooperation on the implementation** of the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** and agreed to **explore the continuation of the EU-India Development Dialogue**.

## What are the Challenges for India's Engagement with European Security?

- **Historical Dependence:**
  - India's historical **dependence on Russia** for its defence needs and its **reluctance to criticise Russia's actions in Crimea and Ukraine**.
- **Institutional Gap:**
  - India's lack of institutional linkages with European security organisations such as [North Atlantic Treaty Organisation \(NATO\)](#), [Permanent Structured Cooperation \(PESCO\)](#), and Club de Berne.
- **Perceptual Gap:**
  - India's perception of Europe as a **secondary player in Asian security affairs** compared to the US, Japan, Australia, and [ASEAN](#).
- **Resource Constraint:**
  - India's **limited resources and capabilities to project** its influence and **presence in Europe** amid competing priorities in its neighbourhood and beyond.

## What are the Opportunities for India's Engagement with Europe?

- **Strategic Convergence:**
  - India's growing strategic convergence with France on various issues **such as counter-terrorism, maritime security, space cooperation, defence technology, and multilateralism**.
- **Cultural Collaboration:**
  - India's participation in the **Indo-French Year of Culture 2023-2024**, which will showcase the **cultural diversity and creativity** of both countries and foster people-to-people ties.
- **Regional Vision:**
  - India's alignment with the EU's vision of a **free, open, inclusive, and rules-based Indo-Pacific region**, which was articulated in a strategy document released in 2021.
- **Flagship Projects:**
  - India's involvement in some of the flagship projects with France such as the [Scorpene submarines](#), the [Rafale jets](#), and the [ISRO-CNES satellite constellation](#).
- **Green Cooperation:**
  - India's support for the [European Green Deal](#), which aims to make the EU carbon-neutral by 2050, and its **collaboration with France** on the [International Solar Alliance](#) and the [One Planet Summit](#).

## What are the Recent Initiatives taken by India and France?

- **Logistics Agreement:**
  - The signing of a **reciprocal logistics support agreement** between their armed forces in 2018, which allows them to access each other's military bases for refuelling and replenishment.
- **Joint Exercises:**
  - The holding of regular **joint exercises** between their navies ([Varuna](#)), **armies** ([Shakti](#)), **air forces** ([Garuda](#)), and **special forces** ([Shakti](#)).
- **Maritime Dialogue:**
  - The launch of a bilateral maritime security dialogue in January 2019, which covers issues such as **freedom of navigation, maritime domain awareness, anti-piracy operations, and capacity building.**
- **Cybersecurity Working Group:**
  - The establishment of a **joint working group on cybersecurity** in 2019, which **aims to enhance cooperation on cyber resilience, digital governance, data protection,** and cybercrime prevention.
- **Defence Dialogue:**
  - The creation of an annual defence dialogue at the ministerial level in October 2019, which provides strategic guidance to their defence cooperation.

## What Should be the Way Forward?

- **Potential Areas of Cooperation with Germany:**
  - Germany recognizes India as a crucial partner in resolving global challenges such as **climate change, food security, energy, and international peace and security.**
  - Given the need for India and Germany to disentangle from their connections with Russia, the leaders of both nations **can work together to find solutions and navigate this complex situation.**
  - India should prioritize making itself an appealing destination for German investment, especially as Germany seeks to reduce its exposure to the Russian and Chinese markets.
- **Potential Areas of Cooperation with France:**
  - France plays a critical role in India's ambitious plans to expand domestic weapon production with increased private and foreign investment.
  - France is an ideal partner in the Indo-Pacific, particularly in light of the Joint Strategic Vision for cooperation in the [Indian Ocean Region](#) established by both countries.
  - Discussions should encompass emerging areas of collaboration, including connectivity, climate change, cyber-security, and science and technology.
- **Engaging the Nordic Countries:**
  - Despite their modest population size, the [Nordic Five](#) **Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden** boast a combined GDP of \$1.8 trillion, surpassing that of Russia.
  - In recent years, India has recognized the **significant contributions each European nation** can make to its development.
    - Luxembourg **offers substantial financial clout**, Norway possesses impressive maritime technologies, Estonia excels in **cyber power**, Czech Republic demonstrates **expertise in optoelectronics**, Portugal serves as a **gateway to the Lusophone world**, and Slovenia provides commercial access to Europe through its **Adriatic Sea port at Koper.**
  - India should **focus on building a unique green strategic partnership with Denmark** and further engage with the Nordic countries to maximize their potential for cooperation.

### **Drishti Mains Question:**

Discuss the significance of India's engagement with European security in the context of the 25th-anniversary celebration of Indo-French strategic partnership. What are the challenges and opportunities for India in this regard?

**Prelims:**

**Q. Consider the following statements: (2023)**

**The 'Stability and Growth Pact' of the European Union is a treaty that**

1. limits the levels of the budgetary deficit of the countries of the European Union
2. makes the countries of the European Union to share their infrastructure facilities
3. enables the countries of the European Union to share their technologies

**How many of the above statements are correct**

- (a) Only one
- (b) Only two
- (c) All three
- (d) None

**Exp: (a)**

- **The Stability and Growth Pact is a political agreement that sets limits on the fiscal deficits and public debt of the Member States of the European Monetary Union (EMU). Hence, statement 1 is correct.**
- **These guidelines are intended to ensure sound management of public finances within the EMU in order to prevent one Member State's irresponsible budgetary policies from spilling over and undermining the economic stability of the entire euro area**
- **The European Union Stability and Trade Pact does not make any provision related to sharing of infrastructure and technology.**
- **Hence, statements 2 and 3 are not correct.**