



INDIA - FRANCE RELATIONS - GS II MAINS

Q. Horizon 2047 agreement between India and France lays down the future roadmap of India-France collaboration for the next 25 years. Discuss the prospects of India-France relationship across times since Indian independence. (15 marks, 250 words)

News: *India-France defence ties take a bigger leap*

What's in the news?

- French President Emmanuel Macron was on a two-day State visit to India. He was also the Chief Guest for India's Republic Day.
- The 2nd Infantry Regiment of the French Foreign Legion also participated in this year's Republic Day Parade.
- This year, we are celebrating the 25th anniversary of the India-France Strategic Partnership.
- PM Modi was the Guest of Honour at the Bastille Day Parade held on 14 July 2023 in Paris.

Key Outcomes of the Visit:

1. Roadmap for India-France Defence Industrial Partnership:

- The main goal of this roadmap is to find areas to work together on making military equipment.
- This includes designing, developing, and producing things together, as well as creating supply chains for defence goods between the two countries.
- It aims to foster collaboration in cutting-edge technologies, including robotics, artificial intelligence (AI), autonomous vehicles, platforms, and cyber defence.
- The defence roadmap will cover both air and space technologies, maritime technology, including underwater domain awareness.

2. Defence-Space Partnership:

- The two sides also signed a new agreement for a defence-space partnership that will see them collaborate on space situational awareness.

3. Airbus-TATA Chopper Deal:

- Tata and Airbus Helicopters have entered into an industrial partnership for the production of H125 helicopters, fostering collaboration in the defence sector.
- Two mega multi-billion-dollar deals in the pipeline between the two countries are currently in the cost negotiation phase. These are as follows.
 - The 26 Rafale-M fighter jets for the Indian Navy's aircraft carriers
 - Three additional Scorpene-class conventional submarines.

4. Cooperation in Satellite Launches:

- An MoU was sealed between New Space India Ltd and France's Arianespace, signifying cooperation in satellite launches and advancing space exploration initiatives.

5. Introduction of the Young Professional Scheme:

The scheme facilitates:

- Exchange of individuals between 18-35 years of age.



- Extension of visa validity to five years for Schengen visas for Indian students pursuing master's degrees in France.

6. Other Areas of Cooperation:

- Both sides also agreed on cooperation in healthcare, which would include education, training and research, and the use of AI in healthcare.

Indo-France Bilateral Relations:

- Since the establishment of diplomatic ties in 1948, India and France have enjoyed 75 years of close and friendly relations.
- In 1998, India and France elevated their diplomatic relationship to Strategic Partnership which completed 25 years in January, 2023.
- This Strategic Partnership, first for France outside the EU, has been instrumental in the comprehensive growth of India-France relationship.

Key Pillars of India-France Cooperation:

1. Defence Cooperation:

- The Agreement on Defence Cooperation signed in 2006 and renewed for another 10 years in 2016 gives the framework for all defence cooperation activities between India and France.
- A DRDO office was opened in the Embassy in 2023 for strengthening technology cooperation.
- The procurement of Rafale jets as part of India's air power is a testament to the deep defence ties.

2. Space Cooperation:

- ISRO and the French Space Agency, CNES have been carrying on various joint research programmes and collaborating in satellite launches.
- For example, on 22 June 2022, GSAT-24 communication satellite of New Space India Ltd (NSIL) was successfully launched on-board Ariane-5 from Kourou, French Guiana.

3. Civil Nuclear Cooperation:

- An agreement on civil nuclear cooperation was signed between India and France in 2008.
- France is involved in the construction of the Jaitapur Nuclear Power Project. However, the progress here has been slow (the first pact was agreed in 2008).
- The two sides have also agreed to establish a partnership on Small Modular Reactors (SMR) and Advanced Modular Reactors (AMR).

4. Economic Cooperation:

- They have important bilateral investments and trade and commercial cooperation, particularly in sectors involving IT corridors, smart-cities, railways, capital and trade exchanges, skill development, etc.
- Bilateral trade reached an impressive \$13.4 Bn in 2022-23, marking a significant 7.72% increase from the previous year.
- France has emerged as the 11th largest investor in India, with FDI inflow of \$10.5 Bn from April 2000 to March 2023.



5. Digital Cooperation:

- India-France Roadmap on Cyber security and Digital Technologies was one of the outcomes of the visit of the PM of India to France in 2019.
- In July 2023, Unified Payments Interface (UPI) was launched from the Eiffel Tower, offering secure and convenient transactions for Indian visitors and NRIs.

6. Culture and Tourism Cooperation:

- There are many Indo-French cultural associations which organise various events across France.
- For example, the Government of India organised 'Namaste France' cultural festival in several cities of France in 2016.
- Marine and Maritime Cooperation: Indo-French Maritime Cooperation is based on the India-France Roadmap on Blue Economy and Ocean Governance adopted in 2022.

7. Community in France:

- The Indian community, including NRIs in mainland France number around 109,000, largely originating from French enclaves of Puducherry, Karaikal, Yanam, Mahe and Chandernagore.

Significance of India-France Relations:

1. Securing the Indo-Pacific:

- India requires French support for maintaining the stability and security of the Indo-Pacific region and to counter the growing Chinese aggression.
- For example: India-France Joint Strategic Vision for cooperation in the Indian Ocean Region in 2018.

2. Strategic Autonomy:

- The India-France relation is strategically autonomous in its truest sense, as it is not constrained either by the Anglo-Saxon views (in France) nor the anti-western thoughts (In India).
- For example: France supported India after the 1998 Pokhran Nuclear Test.

3. Entry to Key Organisations:

- France's support is crucial to India's entry into important organisations like the UNSC and the NSG.

4. Global Stability:

- India-France relations are crucial for checking Russia's assertiveness in Europe and China's assertiveness in Asia.
- This will ensure global stability and power parity in the emerging world order.

5. Horizon 2047 Agreement:

- Horizon 2047 agreement between India and France lays down the future roadmap of India-France collaboration for the next 25 years.
- The collaboration between India and France in emerging domains such as supercomputing, cloud computing, artificial intelligence, and quantum technologies holds significant importance for India's future.



Challenges in India-France Relationship:

1. Absence of Free Trade Agreement:

- The absence of the Free Trade Agreement has impacted the deepening of India-France economic relations (Bilateral trade between India and France is less than half of India's trade with Germany).
- Stalled progress on the India-EU Broad based Trade and Investment agreement (BTIA) has prevented further deepening of India-France relation.

2. Trade Imbalances and IPR Issues:

- India-France economic relation is a concern for India as it suffers from trade imbalances (France exports more to India).
- India has been criticized by France for inadequate protection of intellectual property rights (IPRs) of French businesses operating in India.

3. Stalled Projects:

- The India-France relations also face the challenge of non-operationalisation of the negotiated projects.
- For example: Stalled Jaitapur nuclear project.

4. Differences in Geo-political Approaches:

- While France has openly criticized the Russian Invasion in Ukraine, India has taken a nuanced approach.
- France's stand on China's BRI contrasts with that of India.

5. Emerging Geo-political Scenario:

- The Middle East disturbances like the Hamas-Israel War, Chinese aggressiveness in the Indian Ocean region and the chances of Donald Trump in the USA are the emerging geopolitical tensions in India-France relations.

WAY FORWARD:

1. Early Conclusion of FTA:

- India must leverage its good relations with France and convert the idea of India-EU BTIA into reality at the earliest.

2. Implementation of Agreement on Migration and Mobility:

- India and France must work jointly to increase the mobility of students, graduates, professionals and skilled workers while strengthening their efforts to combat irregular migration.

3. Increased Trade and Investment:

- The two countries must work towards increasing bilateral trade and investment with measures like setting up joint ventures, expanding trade agreements and promoting cross-border investment.

4. Expedition on stalled projects:

- A joint working group must be created to expedite the completion of the stalled projects like Jaitapur Nuclear Power Plant.