

7. India- France Strategic Dialogue- International Relation

India, France reaffirm strategic partnership at 38th Strategic Dialogue India and France reaffirmed their deep-rooted ties during the 38th Strategic Dialogue, focusing on the co-development of advanced defence platforms like fighter engines and submarines under 'Make in India'. The discussions were guided by the 'Horizon 2047' roadmap, which sets the vision for the next quarter-century of this strategic partnership.

Context- 38th India-France Strategic Dialogue

Event- India and France recently reaffirmed their long-standing ties during the 38th India-France Strategic Dialogue.

Leadership- The dialogue was co-chaired by the National Security Adviser (NSA) of India and the Diplomatic Adviser to the French President.

Key Discussions - The dialogue covered a wide spectrum of bilateral initiatives including security, defence, technology, space, and civil nuclear cooperation.

Focus on Indigenization- Both sides explored opportunities for joint development and collaboration, aligning with the vision of "Make in India" and "Atmanirbhar Bharat" (Self-Reliant India).

1. Evolution of the Strategic Partnership

Historic Launch- The India-France Strategic Partnership was launched on 26 January 1998. It holds the distinction of being India's first-ever Strategic Partnership with any country.

Core Vision- The primary goal is to enhance strategic autonomy for both nations and deepen bilateral cooperation.

Pillars of Cooperation

Traditional Strategic Pillars	Expanding Areas of Cooperation
Defence and Security Civil Nuclear Cooperation Space Collaboration	Indo-Pacific Cooperation Maritime Security Digitalisation & Cyber Security Climate Change & Sustainable Development Counter-terrorism

2. Defence Cooperation

Defence ties are the cornerstone of the relationship, reviewed regularly via the Annual Defence Dialogue (Minister-level) and the High Committee on Defence Cooperation (HCDC) (Secretary-level).

Key Defence Projects & Acquisitions

Rafale Fighter Jets- India successfully procured 36 Rafale jets from Dassault Aviation for the Indian Air Force.

Naval Aviation- Recently, both nations formally concluded an Inter-Governmental Agreement (IGA) to procure 26 Rafale-M (Marine) fighter jets for the Indian Navy.

Project P-75 (Scorpene Submarines)

1. This is a collaboration with France's Naval Group.
2. 6 submarines have been built in India.
3. The latest addition to the fleet is INS Vaghsheer.

Combat Aircraft Engines

HAL (Hindustan Aeronautics Limited) and France's Safran Helicopter Engines signed an agreement under the IMRH (Indian Multi-Role Helicopter) programme.

Objective- To co-develop helicopter engines and explore future plans for the co-development of next-generation fighter jet engines.

Joint Military Exercises

1. **Shakti-** Army
2. **Varuna-** Navy
3. **Garuda-** Air Force (Implicit in general context, though strictly text mentions Shakti, Varuna, FRINJEX-23).

4. **FRINJEX-23**– Joint military exercise.

3. Economic and Technological Cooperation

Trade Status– Within the European Union, France is India's fifth-largest trading partner (following the Netherlands, Belgium, Italy, and Germany).

Growth– Bilateral trade has more than doubled in the last decade, reaching USD 15.11 Billion in 2023–24.

Digital Integration– The Unified Payment Interface (UPI) has been successfully enabled in France, marking a significant step in financial tech integration.

Technology Exchange– Both countries are moving towards jointly developing new technologies rather than just buyer-seller relationships. French technologies are being integrated into India's renewable energy, sustainable manufacturing, and urban infrastructure sectors.

4. Space Cooperation

Legacy– There is a history of over 60 years of collaboration between ISRO (India) and CNES (France).

Launch Services– France remains a key supplier of components and launch services through Arianespace.

Joint Missions

- a. TRISHNA– A joint satellite mission for thermal imaging.
- b. MDA Systems– Cooperation on Maritime Domain Awareness.
- c. Ground Support– Mutual ground station support for space missions.

5. Energy Cooperation

Renewable Energy

International Solar Alliance (ISA)– Co-founded by India and France in 2015 (Paris Summit) to promote solar energy adoption globally.

Civil Nuclear Cooperation

Recent Developments– The first meeting of the special task force on nuclear energy under the Strategic Dialogue framework was convened in 2025.

Future Tech– Both sides agreed to establish a partnership focused on

- a. Small Modular Reactors (SMR)
- b. Advanced Modular Reactors (AMR)

6. Areas of Concern

Despite robust ties, certain challenges persist–

Trade Imbalance– The volume of bilateral trade remains below potential, particularly when compared to India's trade volumes with other major EU nations.

Technology Transfer– While supportive, concerns exist regarding the depth of technology transfer for critical big-ticket defence items.

Nuclear Liability Issues– Progress on the Jaitapur nuclear reactors has been slow despite the 2008 civil nuclear agreement.

Hurdle– The Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act (2010) imposes liability on suppliers in the event of an accident, which remains a concern for French firms.

Geopolitical Divergences

1. **China Factor**– France's strong economic ties with China can sometimes dilute its full alignment with India on certain Indo-Pacific strategic issues.
2. **Middle East**– Occasional divergence in approaches towards Middle East geopolitics (e.g., stances on Iran or the Israel–Palestine conflict).

7. Future Outlook– Horizon 2047 Roadmap

To mark the 25th anniversary of the partnership, the "Horizon 2047" roadmap was adopted to guide relations for the next quarter-century.

Key Objectives

1. Joint Development– Moving towards co-designing and co-producing advanced defence technologies in India.

2. Global Exports- Aiming to export these jointly developed products to third countries, contributing to the global good.
3. Security- Deepening cooperation in maritime security and space security.
4. Indo-Pacific- Strengthening convergence through strategic dialogue and establishing a joint military presence in the region.

Conclusion

The India–France relationship is defined by shared interests in sovereignty, multilateralism, and regional stability. Defence cooperation remains the cornerstone, but the Horizon 2047 vision aims to elevate this into a more collaborative, innovative, and export-oriented partnership, solidifying their status as trusted strategic partners.

Source- <https://ddnews.gov.in/en/pm-modi-meets-macrons-adviser-emmanuel-bonne-highlights-innovation-push/>

