

3. India-Greece Strategic Partnership- International Relation

Raksha Mantri holds bilateral talks with Minister of National Defence of Hellenic Republic in New Delhi

India and Greece have strengthened their Strategic Partnership with a new Joint Declaration on defence industrial cooperation and a Military Cooperation Plan for 2026. While both nations share strong political and maritime convergence—viewing Greece as a gateway to Europe via the IMEC corridor—challenges remain in connectivity, visibility, and navigating third-party influences like China and Türkiye.

Bilateral Defence Meeting

The Defence Minister of India held a bilateral meeting with his Greek counterpart in New Delhi to deepen strategic and defence ties.

Foundation- Both leaders reiterated that the India-Greece Strategic Partnership is anchored in shared values of peace, stability, freedom, and mutual respect.

Key Outcomes

Joint Declaration of Intent- Signed to strengthen defence industrial cooperation. This serves as a starting point for developing a comprehensive five-year roadmap.

Bilateral Military Cooperation Plan (2026)- Exchanged to chart the course for military engagements between the Armed Forces of both nations for the upcoming year.

India – Greece Bilateral Relations- An Overview

Political Ties

Historical Support- India and Greece have traditionally enjoyed friendly relations, characterized by consistent political support at international forums like the United Nations.

Strategic Upgrade- Relations were elevated to a Strategic Partnership in 2023 during Prime Minister Modi's visit to Greece.

Defence Ties

Joint Exercises- Both nations engage in joint naval exercises in the Mediterranean Sea and participate in multinational air force exercises like INIOCHOS-23, INIOCHOS-24, and INIOCHOS-25.

Historical Solidarity (1998)- Following India's nuclear tests in Pokhran (1998), when many European nations demanded sanctions, the then Greek Defence Minister signed an MoU on India-Greece Defence Cooperation, showing rare solidarity.

Make in India- Aspirations for co-production of military hardware and technology exchanges are being explored under India's "Make in India" initiative.

Economic Cooperation

Trade Goals- Both nations aim to double bilateral trade by 2030.

Current Status- Trade was valued at approximately US\$ 2 Billion in 2022-23.

Tourism- The tourism sector accounts for 25% of Greece's revenue, and the country is emerging as a popular destination for Indian tourists.

Connectivity

Strategic Gateway- Greece's vital location in the Eastern Mediterranean, combined with its dual membership in the EU and NATO, positions it as a potential gateway for India into Europe.

Challenges in the Relationship

Lower Public and Policy Visibility- Despite high-profile visits, there is a lack of sustained India-Greece discourse in major foreign policy circles. People-to-people engagement remains low due to limited tourism and diaspora exchange compared to other European nations.

Geographical Disconnect- There is currently no direct air connectivity between the two nations. This lack of direct flights hinders logistics, trade, and frequent exchanges.

Third-Party Interventions

The Türkiye Factor- Tensions between Greece and Türkiye can limit Indian diplomatic flexibility, especially given India's need to balance relationships in the broader West Asia region.

Chinese Influence- China's significant investments in Greece (e.g., Piraeus Port) through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) could create friction or limit India's influence in the Mediterranean region.

Asymmetric Focus- While Greece supports India on issues like UNSC reforms, its primary foreign policy focus remains deeply entrenched in the EU, NATO, and Mediterranean politics, which can sometimes overshadow bilateral engagement with India.

Opportunities for Cooperation

Strategic Maritime Convergence- India is a key player in the Indo-Pacific, while Greece is pivotal in the Eastern Mediterranean.

IMEC Corridor- Greek ports can act as critical access points for India into Europe under the proposed India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC).

Geopolitical Convergence- Both nations advocate for multipolarity, strategic autonomy, and a rules-based international order. There is strong alignment in UN votes regarding sovereignty and counter-terrorism.

Multilateral Support- Greece has consistently supported India's bid for a permanent seat in the UN Security Council (UNSC). Scope exists for coordinated diplomacy in areas like international law, climate change, and cultural preservation.

Way Ahead

Institutionalising Dialogue- 2+2 Dialogue Proposal- Initiate consultations for a 2+2 format (Defence and Foreign Ministers) to institutionalize strategic coordination, similar to India's arrangements with other key partners.

Advancing Maritime and Energy Cooperation- Utilize Greek ports such as Alexandroupolis and Thessaloniki as European gateways for Indian goods. Operationalize these links under the IMEC framework.

Renewable Energy Partnership- Encourage Indian public and private firms to explore investments in solar, wind, and green hydrogen in Greece, aligning with the EU's green infrastructure goals.

Ensuring Sustainability- Outline a forward-looking bilateral roadmap that transcends political cycles to build institutional memory for future governments and diplomats

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