



DAILY EDITORIAL ANALYSIS

TOPIC

**SHARED UNDERSTANDING: INDIA-
FRANCE TIES**

www.nextias.com

SHARED UNDERSTANDING: INDIA-FRANCE TIES

Context

- India and France share a robust strategic partnership based on mutual respect, shared values, and cooperation on global challenges, reaffirmed during PM Modi's recent visit to France.

India-France Relationship

Historical Background:

- Diplomatic ties between India and France date back to 1947 when France recognized India's independence.
- The relationship transformed significantly, culminating in the establishment of a strategic partnership in 1998.
- France was among the first Western nations to support India after its nuclear tests, recognizing it as a responsible nuclear power.

Trade and Economic Partnership:

- France is India's 11th largest trading partner in the European Union, with bilateral trade exceeding \$12 billion in 2023.
- French companies like Airbus, Dassault, Renault, and Michelin have significant operations in India, while Indian IT firms like TCS, Infosys, and Wipro maintain a strong presence in France.
- At the 14th India-France CEOs Forum, PM Modi emphasized increasing investments in digital technology, green energy, and artificial intelligence.

Defense Cooperation:

- Defense Industrial Roadmap:** Aimed at co-designing and co-developing military hardware.
- Advanced Artillery & Technology Transfer:** Collaboration on advanced weaponry, joint military exercises (e.g., Varuna), and defense technology sharing.
- France-India Defence Startup Excellence (FRIND-X):** Initiative under *HORIZON 2047* and the India-France Defence Industrial Roadmap.
- Rafale Fighter Jets:** India procured 36 Rafale jets under a 2016 deal, with a recent agreement for Rafale-M jets to operate from India's aircraft carriers, set for delivery by 2029.
- Scorpène-Class Submarines:** France assisted India in building Scorpène-class submarines and plans integration of Air Independent Propulsion (AIP) under Project 75, along with a possible Integrated Combat System (ICS) in future P75-AS submarines.

Space Collaboration:

- ISRO and CNES collaborate on satellite launches and joint research, enhancing space technology applications.

Strategic & Geopolitical Cooperation:

- Shared vision for a **free, open, and inclusive Indo-Pacific**; strengthened naval collaboration to counter China's influence.
- France supports India's bid for a **permanent UN Security Council (UNSC) seat** and its membership in the **Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG)**.
- India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC):** A MoU signed at the G20 Summit to facilitate European market access, technological collaboration, and counter China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

Energy & Climate Cooperation:

- International Solar Alliance (ISA):** Co-founded by India and France in 2015 to promote solar energy worldwide.
- Collaboration on nuclear energy projects including nuclear reactors at Jaitapur, Maharashtra.
- Agreements for **Small Modular Reactors (SMRs)** and **Advanced Modular Reactors (AMRs)**.
- France supports India's **renewable energy ambitions** by investing in hydrogen energy and sustainable urban development.

- **India-France Indo-Pacific Triangular Development Cooperation:** Supports climate and SDG-focused projects in third countries in the Indo-Pacific.

Counterterrorism & Financial Security:

- Joint efforts against terrorism through designations of UN-sanctioned individuals and organizations.
- Commitment to **Financial Action Task Force (FATF) standards** and participation in **No Money for Terror (NMFT) initiatives**.

Health Infrastructure:

- Cooperation in **digital health, antimicrobial resistance, and exchange of health professionals** under the Indo-French Life Sciences Sister Innovation Hub.
- **Centre for Cellular and Molecular Platforms (C-CAMP)** collaboration for biotech innovation.

Cultural & Educational Exchanges:

- France remains a popular destination for Indian students, with over 10,000 currently studying there.
- Opening of the **Consulate General of India in Marseille** to strengthen cultural and business ties.
- **Young Professionals Scheme (YPS)** under the **India-France Migration and Mobility Partnership Agreement (MMPA)**.

Concerns in India-France Relations

- **Trade & Economic Frictions:**
 - ♦ **Lack of a Free Trade Agreement (FTA):** France supports an ambitious EU-India trade deal, but differences over tariffs, labor laws, and environmental clauses have delayed progress.
 - ♦ **Agricultural & Dairy Disputes:** France sees India's **protectionist policies** as a hurdle, particularly regarding dairy and wine market access. India seeks fewer restrictions on IT services and skilled labor mobility.
 - ♦ **Digital Taxation & Data Protection:** France's digital tax policies affect Indian IT firms, while India's data localization rules raise concerns for French businesses.
- **Technology Transfer Issues:**
 - ♦ **Barriers to Technology Transfer:** India's Make in India and Aatmanirbhar Bharat push for technology transfer, while France remains cautious, particularly in military technology.
 - ♦ **Delays in Project Implementation:** Indo-French defense projects, especially naval collaborations, have faced delays, raising concerns over cost escalations.
- **Geopolitical Challenges:**
 - ♦ **Russia-Ukraine War:** India's **neutral stance** contrasts with France's **pro-Western approach**, impacting defense trade and energy security.
 - ♦ **Multilateral Cooperation Issues:** Divergences on **UNSC reforms, climate change policy, and energy transitions** require negotiation.
 - ♦ **Rise of Protectionism & Visa Issues:** Stricter **work and study visa rules** affect business mobility.
 - ♦ **China Factor & Indo-Pacific Strategy:** France balances ties with China, sometimes conflicting with India's deepening **QUAD and AUKUS engagements**.

Conclusion & Way Forward

- While India and France share a strong, time-tested relationship, **geopolitical divergences, defense technology issues, and trade frictions** require diplomatic foresight and pragmatic solutions.
- Strengthening **defense collaboration, economic cooperation, and multilateral coordination** is crucial.
- Both nations are well-positioned to play a key role in **regional and global stability**.

Mains Practice Question

In light of the historical and strategic partnership between India and France, how can the two nations further deepen their shared understanding and cooperation in areas such as defense, trade, and climate action, while addressing potential challenges?

