



# 25 Years of Indo-French Strategic Partnership

Center of Policy Research and Governance

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# 25 Years of Indo-French Strategic Partnership

Center of Policy Research and Governance



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# About CPRG

*Transforming ideas into impactful policies*

Center of Policy Research and Governance (CPRG) is a Delhi-based independent think tank that aims to promote responsive and participatory policy-making through cutting-edge research and analysis across a wide range of policy areas.

We seek to bring together multiple stakeholders to provide effective solutions for contemporary policy challenges. CPRG works in close cooperation with leading public policy practitioners and scholars from across the globe. We actively provide training and opportunities for young individuals interested in pursuing a career in policy-making and governance.



AMBASSADE  
DE FRANCE  
EN INDE

# Foreward

As we commemorate the 25th anniversary of the Indo-French Strategic Partnership, it is with great pleasure that I pen this foreword for the special edition report on 25 years of Indo-French Strategic Partnership, compiled by the Center of Policy Research and Governance (CPRG). This publication embodies the enduring bond between our nations, serving as a symbol of our shared commitment to cultivating a more inclusive, sustainable, and harmonious world.

The Indo-French partnership is a shining example of two nations harnessing their collective strengths and leveraging their complementary expertise to tackle pressing issues of global importance. Over the past quarter-century, our collaboration has grown in depth and breadth, spanning a multitude of sectors and themes. From defense and economics to education and culture, our partnership has been marked by mutual respect, shared values, and a common vision for the future.

This special edition report not only highlights the milestones of our partnership but also explores the potential expanding areas of cooperation between our nations,

following Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to France as the Guest of Honor at the National Day of the French Republic on 14th July 2023. It provides a comprehensive analysis of the possibilities and challenges for the India-France relationship, offering valuable insights into the transformative power of strategic partnerships.

As we look back on our journey, we are reminded of the remarkable achievements we have accomplished together. Yet, we must also look forward, recognizing the potential for further growth and collaboration. The world we live in is increasingly interconnected, and the challenges we face transcend national boundaries.

Now, more than ever, strategic partnerships like ours are instrumental in addressing these global challenges. In this spirit, I am confident that the Indo-French Strategic Partnership will continue to flourish, paving the way for a brighter future. As we embark on the next chapter of our journey, let us continue to foster dialogue, cooperation, and collective action, guided by our shared commitment to a more inclusive, sustainable, and harmonious world.

In conclusion, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to all those who have contributed to this report, thereby enriching our understanding of the Indo-French relationship. May this document serve not only to inform but also to inspire further collaboration and united action.

**Emmanuel Lenain,**  
**Ambassador of France to India**



# Preface

At its core, the Indo-French Strategic Partnership embodies a resolute pursuit of peace and prosperity and envisions a world order grounded in the principles of a rules-based and multipolar system. Yet, what truly distinguishes this partnership is its richness and depth that goes far beyond the confines of mere strategic considerations. Our intertwined history, which spans centuries of interactions, our cultures that have thrived in parallel, and the genuine warmth of people-to-people interactions serve as a vibrant tapestry woven into the very fabric of our partnership.

The resonance of these convergences is palpably reflected in the commitment of our governments who have been working tirelessly to harness aligned interests, public diplomacy, and foreign policy action to promote a partnership that is robust and symbiotic.

As we reflect on the achievements of the past 25 years, we are motivated to strengthen this partnership and forge ahead with renewed determination, and towards this, we earnestly hope that our publication will stand as a testament to the growing synergies between India and France.

By studying the successes and lessons learned from the Indo-French partnership, we can pave the way for a brighter future, where the Indo-French strategic partnerships can play a critical role in tackling global challenges.

Our heartfelt gratitude extends to all the

contributors who have shaped this report into a comprehensive resource for Indo-French enthusiasts. Let this publication serve as a beacon, guiding us forward in our joint pursuit of an inclusive, stable and sustainable global order.

As India and France take steps towards asserting their strategic autonomy, they find willing partners in each other. Together, they embark on this journey with determination, ready to shape the course of history and create a legacy that will endure for generations to come.

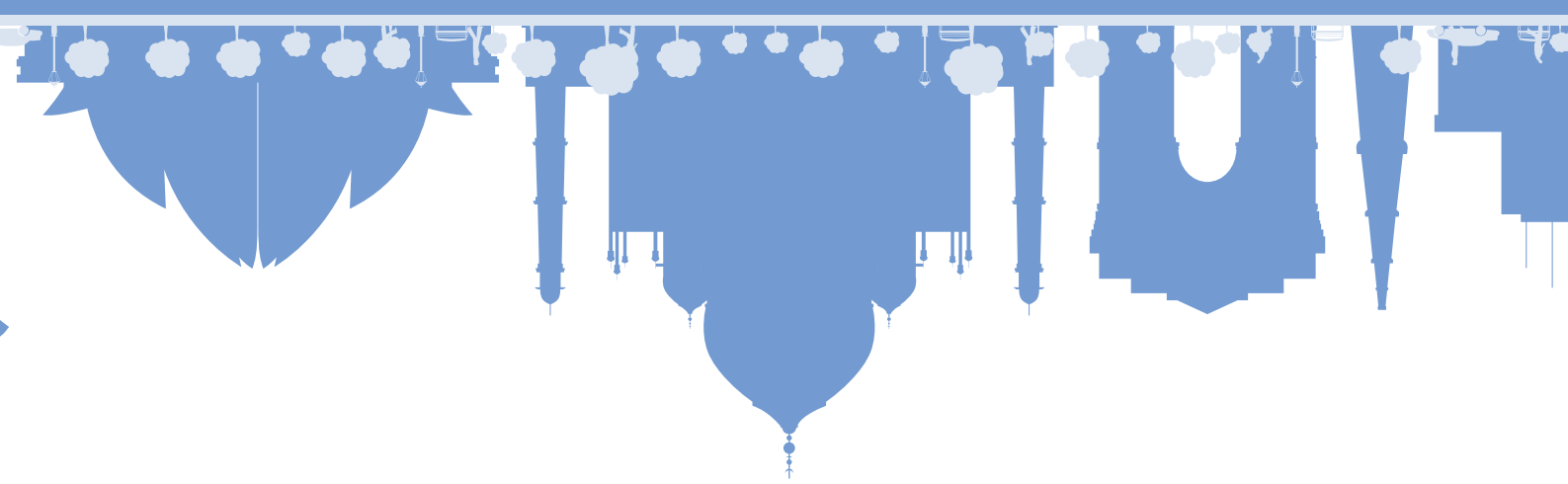
**Dr. Ramanand,  
Director,  
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We are celebrating 25 years of our strategic partnership. We are making a roadmap for the next 25 years on the basis of the strong foundation of the previous 25 years.

**-PM Modi, 14th July, 2023**





INDIA

# I. Introduction

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It is a presumption that in International Relations, there are no friends or foes, but there are some partnerships that are formed on a strong foundation of shared values. These partnerships transcend the binary of amity and animosity. Indo-French partnership is one such example of a partnership founded on the common values of agency or strategic autonomy, collective rationality, and scientific temperament. France's unwavering support in the aftermath of the Pokharan nuclear tests of 1998, in India's counter-terrorism efforts at UNSC, and towards the reformation of multilateralism to better reflect the values of 21st century, have led many scholars to term it as India's natural ally.

This report delves into the multifaceted Indo-French Strategic Partnership and explores the expanding areas of cooperation between the two nations. India's first-ever strategic partnership was established with France in January 1998. This partnership is built on the shared core principles of democracy, respect for human rights, and a dedication to multilateralism and international law. This alignment of values forms the basis for their collaboration on global issues and their joint efforts to promote a rules-based international order. The focal points of the strategic alliance between India and France range from defense, civil nuclear energy, and space, to the Indo-Pacific Region and security matters. These components enable both nations to uphold their strategic autonomy by minimizing external dependence. As

India and France continue to strengthen their partnership and capitalize on their synergies, new domains of critical importance have emerged. These include areas such as trade & investment, environment, culture, education, and health.

This report provides a comprehensive overview of these evolving domains and is dedicated to separate explorations into each of them. It aims to shed light on the growing significance of these areas and how they contribute to the multifaceted collaboration between the two nations. Furthermore, through a collection of essays, the report analyzes the possibilities and challenges faced by the India-France relationship and provides an in-depth assessment of specific areas of collaboration. It chronicles the existing bridges between India and France and identifies avenues through which both countries can strengthen their partnership for the future. The enduring partnership between India and France stands as a testament to their unwavering commitment and dedication to fostering strong bilateral ties that have flourished over time. These pages showcase the remarkable journey of their alliance, which has transcended challenges and boundaries, reflecting their shared determination to further enhance and deepen their relationship.

The Indo-French relationship is unique to any other bilateral relations that India has. The novelty stems from the French recognition of the Indian vision of maintaining a respectful distance from

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the geopolitical blocs. With each passing year, the underlying spirit with which the strategic partnership began, remains consistent. In times when polarity is increasingly becoming a compulsion in making geopolitical choices, the core value of preserving one's strategic autonomy, that binds the two nations, remains crucial.



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Since the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries in 1947, and the upgrading of the partnership to the strategic level in 1998, our two countries have consistently acted together, building on a high level of mutual trust, shared commitment to the principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter and common values rooted in international law.

**-India-France Joint Statement, 14th July, 2023**





## II. A Brief History of Indo-French Relations



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# From Early Trade Ventures to Freedom Struggle Support

India's historical ties with France can be traced back to as early as the 16th century when the first French commercial venture to India took place under the reign of King François I, with two ships being sent to the eastern part of the world from the French city Rouen to expand trade (Hugh, 1911). Later, in the 17th century, a French traveler named Francois Bernier visited India during the Mughal rule and wrote the 'Travels in the Mugol Empire' (Bose, 2021). His travels and writings on India during the Mughal rule have become essential historical sources for understanding the political dynamics of the Indian subcontinent during the 17th century.

As the other European powers such as the British and the Dutch began to expand in India, the French also started establishing their presence, particularly in port towns along the coast (Gupta, 2009). The Compagnie des Indes Orientales (French East India Company) set up enclaves in the territories of Pondicherry, Mahe, Karikal, and Chandannagar (Formerly known as Chandernagore) (Dibadj, 2011). The town of Chandannagar, regarded as India's 'Mini Europe', became an integral part of France's plan to compete with the British for economic and political dominance in India. The town developed as a trading center in the late 1680s, and French officials began to travel from other parts

of India to Chandannagar to tap into the flourishing trade opportunities there [5]. Joseph François Dupleix, a French officer, played a crucial role in the colonization of Chandannagar, using it as a tool to challenge the British [6]. He fortified the town, which was previously engaged solely in maritime commerce alongside Pondicherry.

In the early 19th century, the maritime prowess of Pondicherry and Chandannagar diminished due to the increasing dominance of Madras and Calcutta under British rule. Despite this, successive Governors of the French colonies focused on enhancing infrastructure, industry, and education in the region throughout the following centuries in a bid to maintain control and extract the maximum possible economic benefits from their territories.

French colonies possessed distinct qualities that set them apart from others, notably, their active involvement in the freedom movement against British rule and their role as a refuge for freedom fighters from around the country. One such example is Pondicherry, which played a pivotal role in providing refuge to Subramania Bharathi, the celebrated national poet who faced persecution from the British due to his revolutionary writings. Pondicherry's significance as a safe haven for Indian nationalists is



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further exemplified by the case of Aurobindo Ghosh, a prominent figure in the independence struggle. After facing trial for his nationalist activities, Aurobindo Ghosh was eventually acquitted of charges and chose to make Pondicherry his permanent residence (Sen, 2012).

Chandannagar also played a significant role in facilitating the activities of freedom fighters opposing British rule. It became a hub for subversive actions, including arms trade for revolutionaries. Despite the British making both overt and covert attempts to curtail these activities, the French showed reluctance to intervene. Sailendra Nath Sen, in his book Chandernagore (2012), describes its strong desire to merge with mainland Bengal. Due to its unwavering hospitality, Chandannagar attracted all factions opposing British rule, becoming a secure haven for many martyrs during British colonial rule.

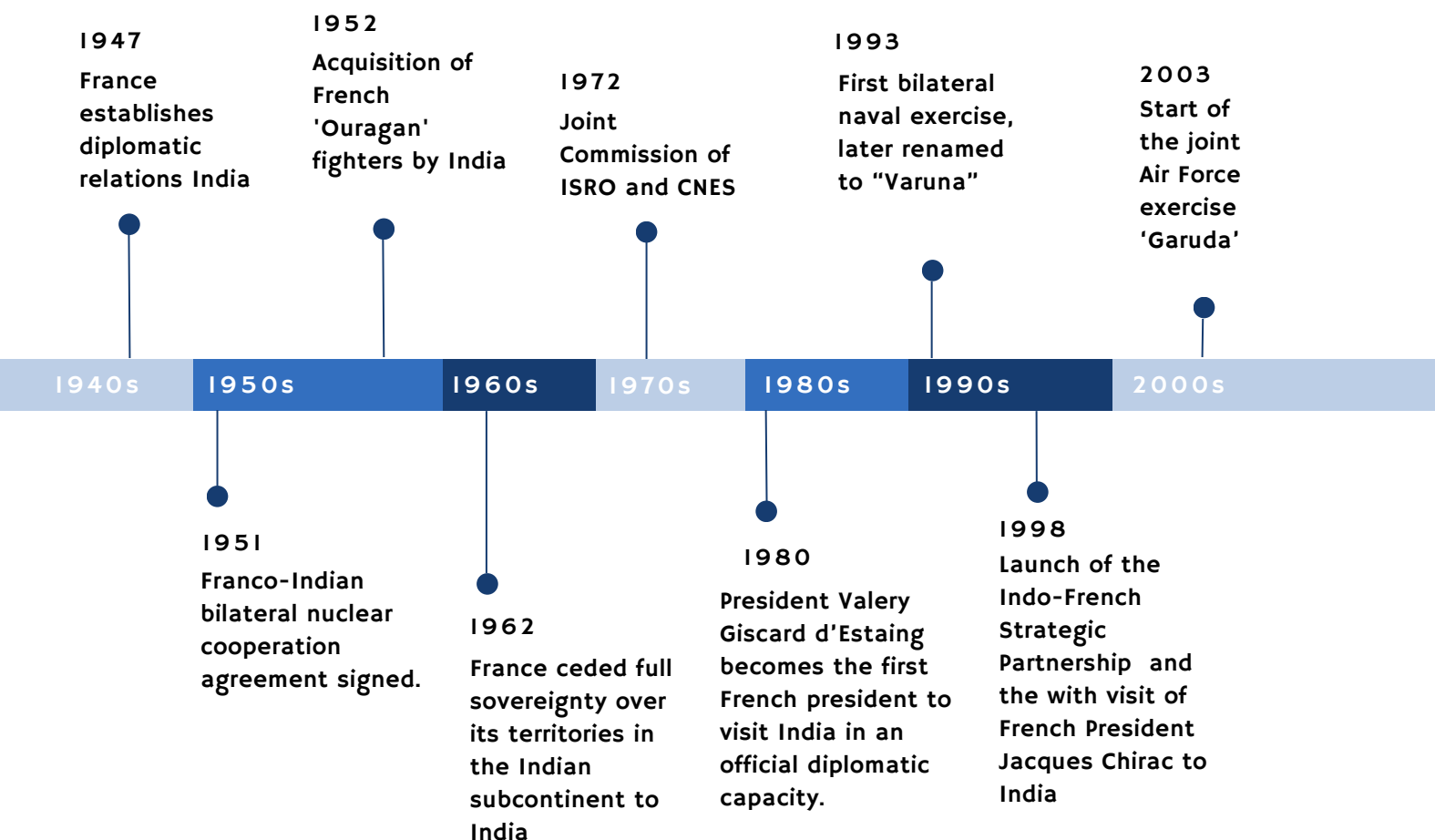
These events had profound implications for the Indo-French relationship and greatly impacted India. The support and refuge provided by French territories like Pondicherry fostered a sense of solidarity and cooperation between Indian freedom fighters and the French administration. Moreover, the presence of prominent Indian figures like Subramania Bharathi and Aurobindo Ghosh in French territories showcased the importance of these towns as intellectual and cultural hubs of the Indo-French relationship, as they facilitated the exchange of ideas and ideologies. This underscored the depth of

the Indo-French relationship and left a lasting impression on India's quest for freedom.

# The Making of a Strategic Partnership

The relationship between India and France took on a new dimension following India's independence in 1947. France was among the first countries to extend recognition to the newly independent India, marking the beginning of an era of bilateral relations. This early recognition laid the groundwork for the subsequent development of robust diplomatic, economic, and cultural ties between the two countries.

Cooperation in defense emerged as a pivotal element of the bilateral relationship. India and France actively participated in joint military exercises, exchanged technologies and engaged in defense equipment procurement, thereby enhancing their defense capabilities and promoting deeper strategic collaboration. A similar spirit of collaboration was evident in their endeavors related to space

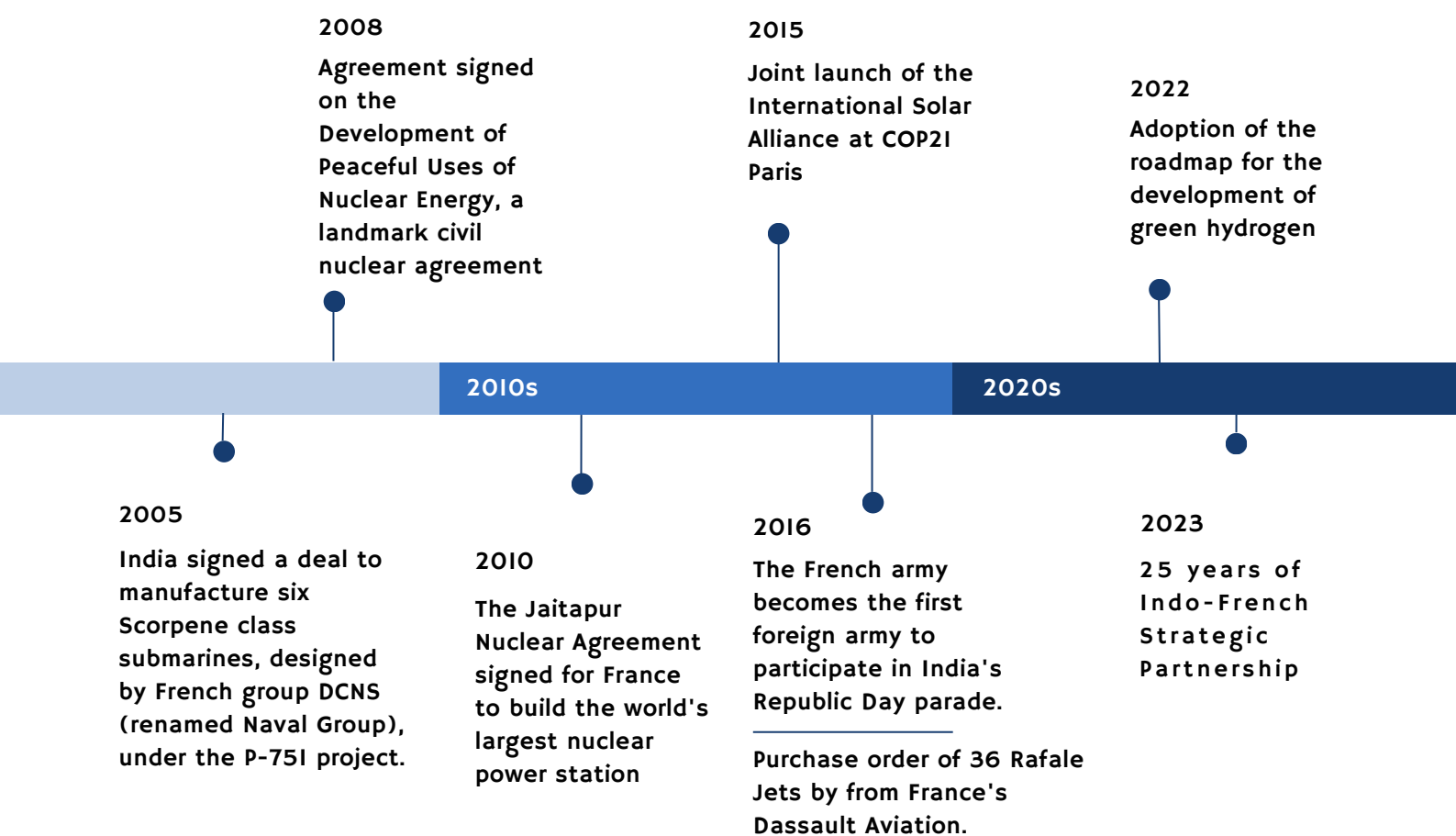


exploration and civil nuclear energy. The two nations formalized this synergy by establishing a strategic partnership in 1998. In recent years, the focus has expanded to include sustainable development, education, and health. Both nations recognize the urgency of addressing global challenges

One of the fundamental objectives of this dynamic partnership is to enhance the strategic autonomy of both nations and promote bilateral convergence for global peace and

stability. Amidst the ever-changing currents of global economics and geopolitics, France acknowledges and supports India's ascent as a responsible world power.

It is also noteworthy that France endorses India's pursuit of a permanent seat at the United Nations Security Council, emphasizing the significance of democratic principles and the need for enhanced security considerations in global decision-making.



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Both nations have also actively explore new avenues for collaboration, including high-growth sectors such as start-ups, greenfield investments, and intellectual property. Joint research and development in scientific and technological fields, including healthcare, space, and defense, further deepen their partnership and foster innovation.

Furthermore, India and France place great importance on enhancing flexibility in the mobility of human and physical capital. They strive to promote educational exchanges, facilitate cross-cultural understanding, and cultivate a mutual appreciation for each other's rich heritage.



## COTE DES INDES FRANÇAISES

Superficie : 509 kil.

Population : 279,000 hab.



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Our political and diplomatic engagements are among our closest and most trusted. Our defence and security partnership is strong and extends from seabed to space.

-Joint Communiqué, 13th-14th July  
2023





INDIA

### III. Strategic Partnership and Beyond

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# Defense

The Indo-French defense collaboration began with the procurement of the French Ouragan fighters, renamed Toofani, by the Indian Air Force (IAF), marking the first export of French combat aircraft in decades. The introduction of Mystere IVa aircraft in 1957 further bolstered the IAF's capabilities, serving as a replacement for the Ouragan. These aircraft played a vital role in interdiction and ground-attack operations during the 1965 and 1971 wars (Bedi, 2020).

In 1962, Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) licensed the production of the Alouette III-Chetak helicopters, enabling indigenous manufacturing and self-reliance. The collaboration resulted in the production of over 680 light-utility aircraft, which continue to serve in the three branches of India's defense force. The 1970s witnessed landmark development. The Mirage 2000, offered to India in 1979, played a crucial role in countering the F-16s acquired by Pakistan, further strengthening the Indo-French defense ties (PTI,2019). The signing of the Rafale deal in 2016 marked a significant milestone in Indo-French defense cooperation. The acquisition of 36 Rafale fighter aircraft from Dassault Aviation addressed India's need for advanced fighter capabilities (Tran & Raghuvanshi, 2016). The collaboration also gave impetus to indigenous production, with Dassault setting up a manufacturing plant in Nagpur and

partnering with Indian firms for various equipment. Moreover, the acquisition of Airbus C295 military transport aircraft strengthens India's airlift capabilities and contributes to its efforts towards defense modernization (Peri, 2021). This deal underscores France's support for India's self-reliance initiatives in defense manufacturing, creating skilled job opportunities in the aerospace sector.

The Indo-French defense relationship transcended equipment acquisitions and evolved into strategic agreements and joint military exercises. The signing of the defense agreement for the use of each other's military bases in 2018 exemplified the deepening cooperation and interoperability between the Indian and French forces. This agreement facilitates logistical support and joint exercises, contributing to maritime security cooperation in the Indian Ocean region.

Furthermore, the Varuna naval exercises, initiated in 2001, have grown larger in scale and frequency, allowing the navies of both nations to learn from each other's best practices. The joint Air Force exercise, Garuda, which began in 2003, has further enhanced operational knowledge and experiences, particularly with shared aircraft platforms like the Mirage 2000 and Rafale.

Defense relations between India and France have only grown deeper with the



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passage of time. It has transformed from conventional buyer-seller relations to a dynamic partnership, reflecting their commitment to enhancing military cooperation and strategic partnership.

## Space

Space-based cooperation has become a cornerstone of the Indo-French strategic partnership, representing a long-standing area of collaboration between the two nations. The collaboration is fostered by their respective space research organizations, the Centre National D'Etudes Spatiales (CNES) of France and the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO). The journey of their joint efforts traces back to 1963 when they collaborated on the launch of an American-made Nike Apache rocket from India, carrying a French payload (Bangla, 2016) and worked on developing projects on multiple fronts, ultimately leading to the Satellite Telecommunications Experimental Project (STEP) which related to numerous experiments on the Symphonie to assess various technical aspects of the satellite such as the communication and telecommunication systems in particular (Rajagopalan & Narayan, 2017).

In 1993, ISRO and CNES signed an agreement that covered a number of new arenas (ISRO, 1994). Part of this was based on the recognition of the potential benefits of exploring outer space, as long as it was for peaceful purposes. There was a renewed interest in cooperation relating to satellites for a diverse range of

research purposes including meteorology and communication. Space was further placed in the limelight under the 1998 Strategic Partnership, which declared it a key priority area for India-France relations.

Over the course of the early 2000s, India used French rockets (Ariane 5) to launch numerous satellites used for purposes such as communication. Likewise, there was an agreement for an Indian PSLV to be utilized for the launch of various European satellites. This frequent coordination ultimately led to the Framework Agreement of 2008 which placed a heavy emphasis on closely coordinating research, particularly along the lines of climate and transfer of technology on a frequent basis (Ambassade de France, 2008).

## Security

India and France's collaboration in counter-terrorism exemplifies the depth and strength of their strategic partnership in security. By condemning terrorism in all its forms, combating the financing of terrorism, and enhancing security cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region, both countries are actively contributing to global efforts to counter the threat of terrorism. Through their joint initiatives, India and France are working towards a safer and more secure world, built on the principles of democracy, the rule of law, and respect for human rights.

The 15th Meeting of the Joint Working

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Group on Counter Terrorism between France and India, held in Paris in 2021, reaffirmed their strong commitment to fight global terrorism. They emphasized counter-terrorism cooperation as a key aspect of their strategic partnership, particularly in the Indo-Pacific region. Both nations condemned terrorism in all its forms, including cross-border terrorism, and stressed the need for preventing the use of territories for terrorist activities. Discussions covered countering illegal drug and arms smuggling, radicalisation, financing terrorism, and preventing misuse of the internet for terrorist purposes. Both nations have committed to working closely together to address these challenges and deepen engagement between their respective counter-terrorism agencies. They also discussed cooperation in multilateral forums, including the United Nations and the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), and expressed their willingness to actively coordinate (Ambassade de France, 2021).

Furthermore, France and India have intensified their responses to cyber-security threats, having experienced attacks by state and non-state actors. The bilateral cyber dialogue between the two, held in Paris in 2019, facilitated the sharing of threat analysis, developments in cyber policies, and steps taken to protect critical national infrastructure (Diplomatie, 2019). They have also engaged in discussions and initiatives in multilateral forums, addressing peace and security in cyberspace, digital sovereignty, and internet governance.

Both nations are committed to open, reliable, secure, stable, and peaceful cyberspace, emphasizing the applicability of international law and the need for responsible behavior of states. Their commitment to a multi-stakeholder approach to Internet governance further strengthens their synergy. France and India have identified areas for deepening their cooperation, including information sharing, threat intelligence, capacity building and training, cyber-security policy, and legislation.

## Civil Nuclear Energy

Indo-French partnership in civil nuclear energy dates back to 1951 when the Indian Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) and the French Alternative Energies and Atomic Energy Commission (CEA) initiated nuclear cooperation. India and France have demonstrated their commitment to the responsible use of nuclear power by signing agreements on trade, training, and technology exchange.

Both nations have shared a common outlook on nuclear issues, including their refusal to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 1968, citing concerns about its discriminatory nature. France notably supported India's right to conduct nuclear tests (Pokhran-I) in 1974, even in the face of Western criticism.

When the international community sought to restrict fuel supply to India

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following the test, France stepped in as a third-party supplier for the reactors at Tarapur in 1983, without imposing any conditions (Sarkar, 2015).

Despite becoming an NPT signatory in 1992, former French President Chirac visited India in 1998 in the wake of Pokhran-II and set into motion the 1998 Strategic Partnership which included civil nuclear energy among its core domains, signifying the intent of both countries to produce low-carbon energy and strengthen their strategic independence.

September 2008 marked another height in the bilateral relations with France being the first country to sign a civil nuclear agreement with India, following the grant of India-specific waiver by the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG). As per the agreement, France agreed to build six European Pressurised Reactors (EPR nuclear reactors) with a capacity of 1,650 MW each. Additionally, they committed to expedite the development of the Jaitapur Nuclear Power Project (JNPP) with a massive capacity of 9,900 MW.

The Jaitapur Nuclear Power Project is expected to become the largest nuclear power project in the world upon completion. Its substantial capacity of 9.6 GW will significantly contribute to India's efforts to achieve its goal of generating 40% of its energy from non-fossil sources by the year 2030. This collaboration in the field of civil nuclear energy is a testament to the strengthening of ties between the two nations in the pursuit of sustainable and

clean energy solutions.

The Indo-French nuclear cooperation also extends to participate in international projects. India has become a partner in the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor (ITER) project, an international nuclear fusion research and engineering mega-project, with support from France and the United States (Mohan & Agarwal, 2019). Additionally, India's Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) is one of two non-European research consortium members involved in the construction of the Jules Horowitz Reactor. The relationship between the two nations in energy sector has been further strengthened over time. In 2010, former French President Nicolas Sarkozy visited India, resulting in numerous agreements related to fuel supply, construction, information confidentiality, protection of intellectual property rights, radioactive waste management, and research and development in nuclear technologies (Ambassade de France en Inde, 2020).

Under the leadership of Presidents Emmanuel Macron and PM Narendra Modi, both countries have continued to emphasize nuclear growth. In 2018, they signed an "Industrial Way Forward" agreement that addressed issues such as costs, safety concerns, and liabilities. This agreement ensured that India's laws on nuclear damage liabilities align with the internationally established Convention on Supplementary Compensation (CSC).

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On the tenth anniversary of the 2008 Civil Nuclear Agreement, India and France reaffirmed their commitment to the development of the Jaitapur reactors. They emphasized the need for cost-effective electricity generation, competitive financing from France, guaranteed fuel supply, technology transfer, and efforts to localize manufacturing in India (PIB, 2018)

## Trade & Investment

The economic and commercial relations between India and France have played a foundational role in strengthening their bilateral ties. Both governments are actively working to enhance their engagement through joint technology development, collaborative ventures, and market integration. These initiatives aim to attract investments to and from India, as demonstrated by the establishment of innovation centers in France by Indian companies like Tata Technologies and L&T Tech Services. The integration of French technologies, especially in areas such as renewables, sustainable manufacturing, and urban infrastructure development, further exemplifies the deepening business ties between the two countries (AFD, n.d.)

To facilitate and promote commercial relations, various clubs, and business associations have been established, such as the France-India Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCIFI) in Boulogne-Billancourt and the

India-France Business Club (Business Club France-Inde). These organizations play a vital role in fostering business connections between India and France, while the latter specifically assists Indian businesses and entrepreneurs in their investment endeavors in the Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur Region of France (IFFCI, n.d.).

The bilateral trade and economic ties between India and France have witnessed significant growth and diversification in recent years. With substantial increases in both goods and services trade, as well as in investments, the Indo-French commercial relationship has emerged as a strong and mutually beneficial partnership. French companies have made substantial contributions to India's economy, generating employment opportunities and fostering innovation across various sectors.

As per the India-France Comprehensive Economic and Commercial Brief (MEA, 2021), from January to December 2021, the India-France bilateral trade in goods (excluding military equipment) stood at €12.58 billion (+39.17% as compared to the corresponding period the previous year). India's exports to France were valued at €6.70 billion, up by 39.36% during this period. Indian imports from France also increased by 38.98% to €5.88 billion. While Indian exports of services to France witnessed a slight decrease of 5.84% in 2021, amounting to €2.37 billion, several service categories still recorded notable growth.

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Maintenance and repair services (+68.96%), building and public works (+66.66%), transport (+30.07%), cultural, leisure, and personal services (+5.26%), and telecommunication, computer, and information services (+0.27%) emerged as the top performers. On the other hand, financial services (-62.99%) and pension and insurance services (-58.33%) experienced a decline.

Indian imports of services from France saw a substantial surge of 73.81% in 2021, reaching €3.90 billion. The sectors driving this growth included transport (+136.02%), other services to businesses (+110%), commission for the use of intellectual property (+58.87%), travel (+55.35%), maintenance and repair services (+19.11%), manufacturing services supplied by physical inputs held by third parties (+18.96%), and cultural, leisure, and personal services (+14.28%). France has become a significant source of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) for India, with over 1,000 French establishments operating in the country. From April 2000 to December 2022, France emerged as the 11th largest foreign investor in India, with a cumulative investment of USD 10.49 billion, representing 1.68% of total FDI inflows. The services sector attracted the highest FDI equity inflows at 18.05%, followed by cement and gypsum products (9.29%), and air transport (IBEF, 2021).

## Environment

India and France have consistently demonstrated a shared commitment to

achieving sustainable development without compromising their growth trajectory. Since the Paris Accords that were adopted in 2015, the world has witnessed both countries, not just improve individually, but emerge as one of the most powerful alliances formed to mitigate climate change. Under the leadership of India and France, the International Solar Alliance (ISA) was formed on 30 November 2015, aiming to mobilize \$1 Trillion of investment by 2030 to boost the massive deployment of solar energy among the 93 member states of the Alliance (PIB, 2020). India plans to generate 280 gigawatts (GW) of solar power by 2030, while France aims to produce 35-44 GW of solar energy by 2028 hence making ISA one of the most important initiatives (ISA, n.d.).

The Indo-Pacific Parks Partnership was established in February 2022 with the aim of enhancing collaboration between the Agence Française de Développement (AFD) and India Exim Bank to provide sustainable finance in the Indo-Pacific region. The partnership focuses on supporting the development of protected areas and national parks in the region, thus promoting conservation and environmental sustainability. By intensifying their cooperation in this area, both countries seek to expand the scope of their joint efforts in the Indo-Pacific, fostering stronger ties and contributing to the preservation of natural resources in the region (AFD, 2012).

India and France have set ambitious

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targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and increase the share of renewable energy in their respective energy mix. India aims to achieve net-zero emissions by 2070 and to source 50 percent of its installed electricity generation capacity from non-fossil-based energy resources by 2030. France, on the other hand, has committed to reaching net-zero emissions by 2050 (TOI, 2021). These shared goals demonstrate a strong alignment between the two countries' long-term visions for a sustainable and low-carbon future.

Furthermore, India has set a target to increase its forest and tree cover to 95 million hectares by 2030, while France has pledged to plant 50 million trees to repopulate its forests. French authorities' knowledge and expertise were utilized in the Assam Project for Forest and Biodiversity Conservation (APFBC) in India. The project focused on reforestation, involving local populations, and raising awareness among administrative staff to preserve the natural heritage. India's emphasis on infrastructure aligns with France's expertise in urban planning and sustainable city development. The CITIIS project facilitates collaboration between the two countries, implementing innovative solutions for sustainable urban development in Indian cities. It addresses climate change, energy efficiency, waste management, and transportation, creating model cities and opportunities for technology transfer (AFD, 2012). By leveraging their complementary strengths and working

together, India and France have the potential to make a significant impact in the global fight against climate change and inspire others to follow suit. Their joint efforts not only benefit their own nations but also contribute to the collective goal of building a more sustainable and resilient world for future generations.

## Indo-Pacific

The partnership between India and France in the Indo-Pacific region is based on the shared values of a free, open, inclusive, secure, and peaceful Indo-Pacific. Both countries are committed to ensuring equal access to global commons, promoting prosperity and sustainability, and upholding the rule of international law while respecting sovereignty and territorial integrity (MEA, 2023).

Their cooperation covers various sectors, including defense, security, economic, connectivity, infrastructure, and human-centric development. The collaboration spans from maritime security and naval visits to development cooperation with other countries in the region.

India and France are actively engaged in regional forums, such as the Indian Ocean Rim Association and the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium, among others. They are also committed to strengthening maritime security coordination through various initiatives, including IFC-IOR in India and Atalanta in the UAE (Gainsbourg, 2023).

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During French President Emmanuel Macron's visit to India in March 2018, the two countries signed a significant agreement allowing access to each other's military facilities, including naval bases for warships. This move aimed to improve the reach and deployment of Indian naval forces in the southern Indian Ocean. Fourteen agreements were signed during the visit, with a key defense agreement facilitating reciprocal logistics support between their armed forces. Moreover, The two countries jointly support initiatives like the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative, focusing on sustainable development of maritime resources and combating illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing. They have launched the International Solar Alliance and are dedicated to the deployment of renewable energies in the region (Ambassade de France, n.d.) .

They are also working on establishing the India-France Indo-Pacific Triangular Development Cooperation Fund to support the region's development needs.

Moreover, India and France aim to establish the Indo-French Health Campus for the Indo-Pacific, promoting research and academia in the region. Their partnership is seen as a crucial pillar in the interconnected and intersecting arrangements in the Indo-Pacific, contributing to a peaceful and prosperous future for the region.

As two nations with rich intellectual traditions and a strong commitment to scientific advancement, France and India have naturally become partners in higher education and joint research. Within the framework of their bilateral relationship, both countries seek to expand their collaboration in academic institutions and universities, particularly in India's Institutes of Eminence and France's Grandes écoles (Agarwal, 2022).

France's ambition to host over 20,000 Indian students by 2025 demonstrates its commitment to educational cooperation. Numerous cooperation agreements exist between higher education institutions in both countries, facilitating faculty and student exchanges.

Moreover, there exists a robust determination to promote knowledge-sharing and foster international research collaborations, all while enhancing student mobility through the mutual recognition of academic qualifications. An instrumental platform in this pursuit is the Indo-France Knowledge Summit, which serves as a dynamic arena for dialogue and collaboration. This summit brings together esteemed academicians, successful alumni, businesses, and other stakeholders, creating an environment that unlocks the full potential of the bilateral relationship.

Linguistic exchanges between the two nations also play a significant role, with French being the most popular foreign language taught in Indian high school, after English.

## Education

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Institutions such as Institut français India (IFI) and Alliance française (AF) actively promote the French language and culture while facilitating Indo-French exchanges (The Hindu, 2021).

## Health

India's reputation as a low-cost pharmaceutical manufacturer and a sought-after medical tourism destination complements France's prestige in research and development. This synergy sets the stage for fruitful cooperation.

Their partnership has achieved remarkable milestones, particularly during the challenging times of the COVID-19 pandemic. India supplied essential medicines to France, while France reciprocated with financial assistance. This cooperation exemplifies the strength of their alliance in times of crisis (ANI, 2022).

The scope of collaboration extends beyond emergency situations. India and France engage in medical research, training, and trade, as evident in initiatives like the Indo-French Healthcare Symposium 2022 and joint research on emerging diseases. The focus also extends to areas such as tele-medicine, technology transfers, and the promotion of traditional medicine, harnessing the potential of both ancient and modern healing practices (IFCCI, 2022).

## Culture

The roots of the Indo-French cultural relationship can be traced back to the 16th century when the French East India Company established trade posts in India, such as Puducherry and Mahe (Anderson, 1983). These trading centers facilitated commerce between the two countries and also became conduits for the exchange of cultures. French colonial power in India gradually declined, but the influence and cultural imprint it left behind is still evident in places like Puducherry, which has become a prominent symbol of French culture in India.

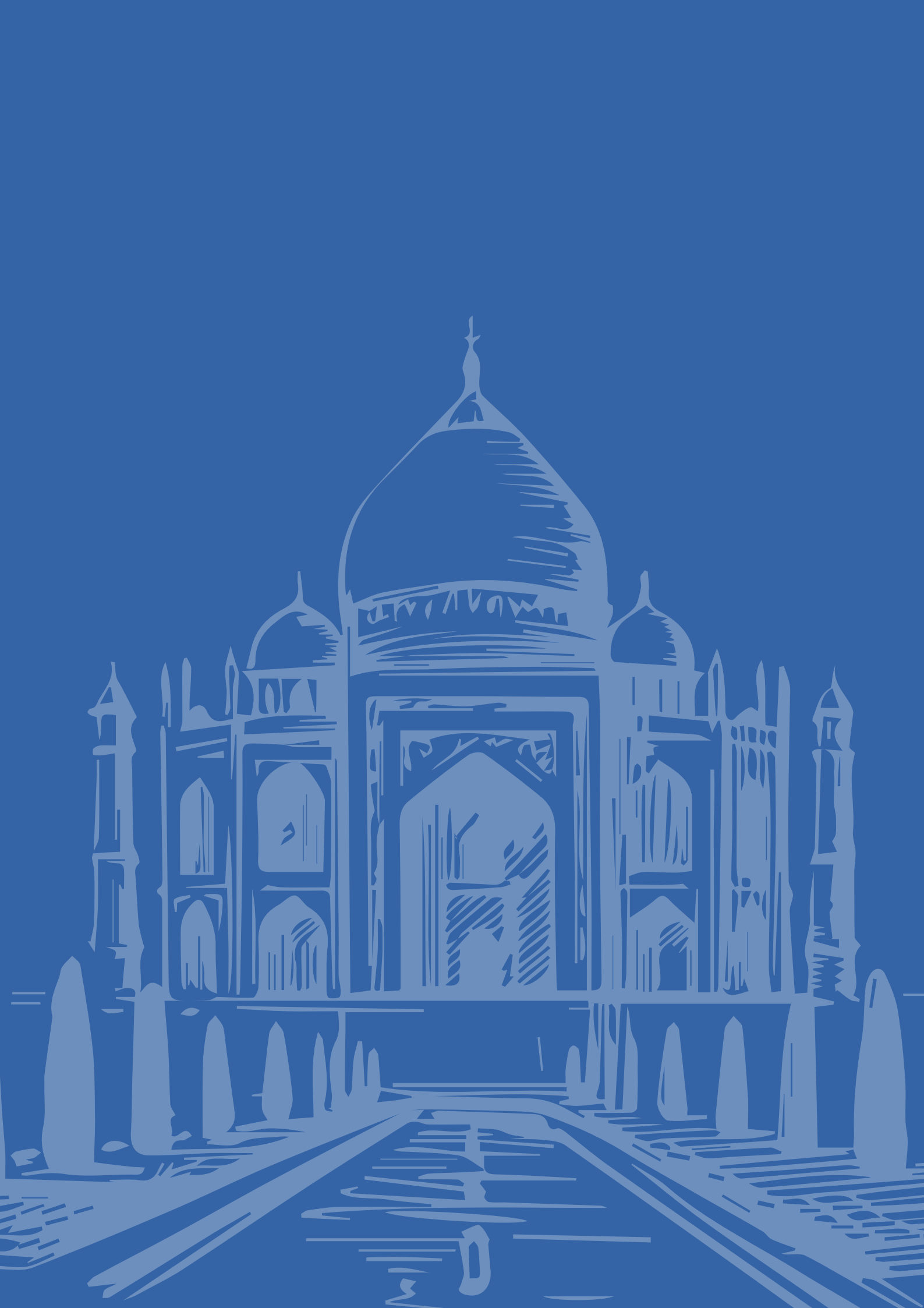
A noteworthy manifestation of the Indo-French cultural relationship is Auroville, an experimental township founded in 1968 near Puducherry. Designed by the French architect Roger Anger, Auroville was influenced by French utopian city designs of the 1960s (Jazeel, 2023). Although Auroville did not fully realize its founders' aspirations, it has become a major tourist attraction in South India. Auroville also reflects a unique blend of French colonialism and Indian culture, highlighting the ongoing cultural amalgamation between the two nations.

People-to-people exchanges have been instrumental in enabling the Indo-French cultural relationship. Thousands of Indians reside in France, contributing to a flourishing Indian community that brings with it diverse customs, languages, and artistic expressions. Indian artists, including tabla players and Bharatnatyam dancers, have settled in France and have played a crucial role



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in promoting Indian culture. Reunion Island, a French overseas territory, holds particular significance as it houses a concentrated Indian population, allowing for more localized cultural interactions within a closely-knit community.





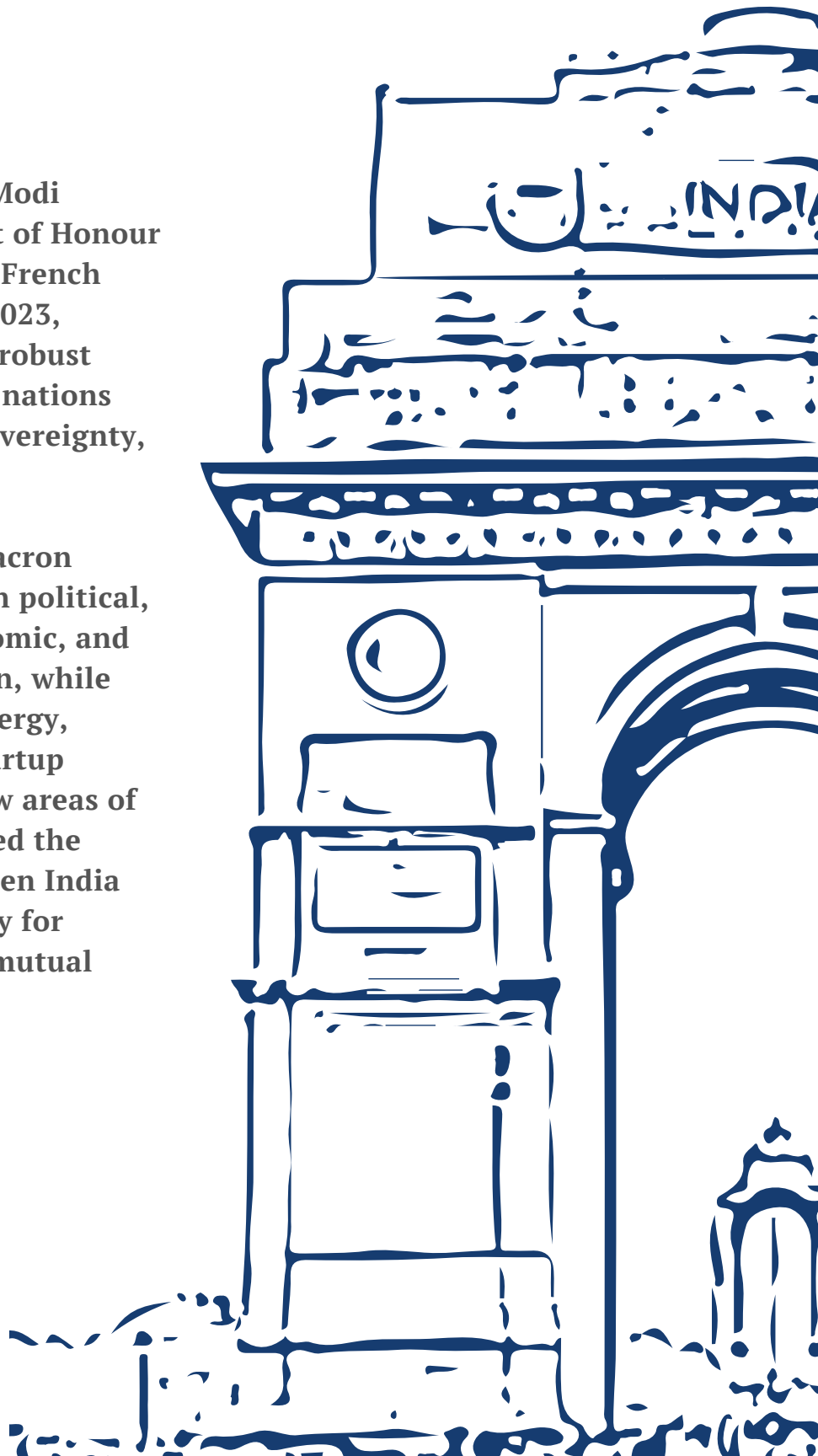
# IV. Horizon 2047

Towards A Century of India-France  
Relations

# Visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to France

Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited France as the Guest of Honour at the National Day of the French Republic from 13-14 July 2023, further strengthening the robust relations between the two nations based on shared values, sovereignty, and strategic autonomy.

PM Modi and President Macron highlighted the progress in political, diplomatic, defense, economic, and environmental cooperation, while also emphasizing clean energy, digital innovation, and startup partnerships as crucial new areas of growth. The visit showcased the enduring friendship between India and France, paving the way for deeper collaboration and mutual prosperity in the future.



# Key Outcomes: Horizon 2047

Both leaders adopted the "Horizon 2047 Roadmap on the 25th Anniversary of the Indo-French Strategic Partnership: Towards a century of French-Indian relations", outlining their shared vision for the future. The roadmap sets ambitious goals for the next 25 years, leading up to the centenary of India's Independence and the Indo-French strategic partnership.

The roadmap for bilateral relations has three pillars: Partnership for security and sovereignty; Partnership for the planet; Partnership for the people.



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# Partnership for Security and Sovereignty

## Defense

India and France plans to continue their collaboration on fighter jets and submarines, building on the successful delivery of 36 Rafale jets for the Indian Air Force and the achievements of the P75 program. The two nations have agreed on the construction of three additional submarines and the co-development of fighter jet engines. In addition, India and France are collaborating on industrial cooperation for the motorization of heavy-lift helicopters as part of the Indian Multi-Role Helicopter (IMRH) program. To facilitate progress on the IMRH program, a Shareholders' Agreement has been finalized between Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) of India and Safran Helicopter Engine for the development of the engine.

These ventures exemplify the mutual trust and successful experience in technology transfer that exists between India and France, as they share and jointly develop critical components and technology building blocks. Finally, in view of the uptick in defense industrial collaborations between the two countries, India is setting up a Technical Office of the DRDO at its Embassy in Paris.

## Space

Both countries are enhancing their scientific and commercial partnership through various agreements between France's CNES (National Centre for Space Studies) and ISRO (Indian Space Research Organisation).

The scientific and commercial partnership between CNES and ISRO will be reinforced, focusing on two key areas.

Firstly, they will collaborate on climate and environment-related projects, including the TRISHNA mission and activities within the Space Climate Observatory (SCO) to address topics such as water resource management, marine resources, and air quality monitoring.

Secondly, they will work together on space exploration ventures, including missions to Mars and Venus, maritime monitoring, launcher technology, and manned flights as part of India's Gaganyaan program.

Additionally, NSIL (NewSpace India Limited) and Arianespace are planning to join forces in the realm of commercial launch services.

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## Civil Nuclear Energy

India and France welcome the progress made on the 6-EPR power plant project in Jaitapur. In line with India's Skills India initiative, French organizations will collaborate with Indian counterparts to strengthen nuclear field training and facilitate internships for Indian students. Furthermore, both countries have agreed to work on establishing a partnership for low and medium-power modular reactors, including Small Modular Reactors (SMRs) and Advanced Modular Reactors (AMRs). Cooperation on the Jules Horowitz Research Reactor (JHR) for nuclear technology development will continue, and exchanges in this area will be further enhanced.

## Indo-Pacific

India and France share overlapping visions of the Indo-Pacific region. Building on the cooperation initiated under the Joint Strategic Vision of India-France Cooperation in the Indian Ocean Region in 2018, they` have adopted a new Indo-Pacific Roadmap.

Their joint commitment is to enhance their economic and security interests, promote open access to global commons, foster partnerships for sustainable development, uphold international law, collaborate with other regional and global actors, and establish a stable and balanced order that respects sovereignty

and territorial integrity. The two countries will focus on strengthening their cooperation with active participation from French territories such as New Caledonia and French Polynesia. The French overseas territories in the Indian and Pacific Oceans will play a significant role in the Indo-Pacific partnership between India and France.

India and France will strengthen trilateral cooperation with like-minded partners in the Indo-Pacific region, including the United Arab Emirates and Australia. They plan to establish the Indo-Pacific Triangular Cooperation Fund, supporting climate and SDG-focused innovations and start-ups from third countries in the region.

This initiative aims to scale up green technologies and provide transparent funding alternatives to innovators in the Indo-Pacific, aligning with the India-EU Connectivity Partnership.

## Multilateralism

India and France have expressed their commitment to promoting renewed and effective multilateralism that upholds the principles of the United Nations Charter and reflects contemporary realities. They are advocating for the reform of the UN Security Council to expand its membership and support the inclusion of the G4 countries, including India, as new permanent members. The two nations are also pushing for better representation from Africa and exploring ways to regulate the use of veto power.

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## Science, Technology & Academic Cooperation

In the realm of science, technology, and academic cooperation, India and France are focusing on strengthening their partnership to address 21st-century challenges. The India-France Joint Strategic Committee will be responsible for issuing project calls in collaboration with the French National Research Agency (ANR), focusing on mutually agreed-upon priority areas such as space, digital technology, critical technologies, energy, ecological and urban transition, and health, among others. Both countries are collaborating on critical digital technologies such as supercomputing, cloud computing, AI, and quantum technologies, with an emphasis on tackling climate change and health issues.

## Health

India and France signed a Letter of Intent to intensify cooperation in health and medicine, focusing on Digital Health, AI for Healthcare, Medical Waste Treatment Technology, Biotechnology, and combating antimicrobial resistance. They will also collaborate on health emergencies preparedness and response, pharmaceuticals, human resources and Digital Health technologies. The Indo-

French Campus for Health in the Indo-Pacific region is making progress, offering dual Master's degree programs and fostering bilateral research projects in areas like cancer studies and biotechnology.

## Counter-terrorism

France's GIGN (National Gendarmerie Intervention Group) and India's National Security Guard aim to strengthen their cooperation in countering terrorism. India and France will enhance their collaboration on all fronts to proactively address the evolving threat landscape. This includes bolstering operational cooperation, engaging in multilateral efforts, countering online radicalization, and combating terrorism financing. They will focus on initiatives like No Money for Terror (NMFT) and the Christchurch Call to Action to Eliminate Terrorist and Violent Extremism Content Online.

## Cyber Cooperation

India and France have reaffirmed the growing strategic significance of cyberspace, emphasizing the role of cyber dialogue in enhancing cooperation. They both appreciate each other's perspectives on ongoing UN cyber processes and commit to working closely together on mutual interests.

Recognizing the rapid advancements in digital technologies, both countries aim to leverage their strengths and converge



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philosophies in digitalization. They are focused on deepening cooperation in areas such as digital public infrastructure, cybersecurity, startups, AI, supercomputing, 5G/6G telecom, and digital skills development.

In line with their joint roadmap on Cybersecurity and Digital Technology, India and France pledge to collaborate and mobilize their cybersecurity agencies and ecosystem partners to promote a peaceful, secure, and open cyberspace.

Additionally, both nations recognize the significant potential of startups in driving innovation, job creation, and economic growth. They commit to facilitating bilateral cooperation by enhancing connectivity between their respective startup and entrepreneurial networks. India's active participation in events like Vivatech further highlights its crucial role in the global digital domain.

## Digital Public Infrastructure

India and France are committed to nurturing a thriving digital ecosystem that empowers their citizens and fosters active participation in the digital era. Recently, NPCI International Payments Limited (NIPL) and France's Lyra Collect signed an agreement to implement Unified Payment Interface (UPI) in France and Europe.

Both countries share a belief in the power of a Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI)

approach to create inclusive digital economies and societies. Through platforms like InFrastructures (India France Structures) and InFinity (India France Innovation in Information Technology), they are working together to advance this vision.

India and France have identified potential high-impact initiatives in areas like mobility, commerce, and culture to showcase the benefits of interconnectedness between platforms using open protocols. They welcome further collaborations and aim to extend this approach to other countries in the Indo-Pacific, Africa, and beyond.

## Partnership for the Planet and Global Issues

### Energy Security

India and France have embarked on a cooperative journey towards achieving a low-carbon economy. Their joint efforts revolve around meeting the rising energy demand while simultaneously enhancing energy security and aligning with the

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objectives outlined in SDG7 and the Paris Climate Agreement.

Both nations recognize the paramount significance of clean energy sources, with a particular focus on nuclear energy as a sustainable solution in the fight against climate change. Collaborating on various initiatives, such as the International Solar Alliance and the production of decarbonated hydrogen, they strive to promote and develop renewable energy sources. Furthermore, the two countries prioritize cooperation in the areas of hydropower and energy efficiency to ensure an environmentally conscious and efficient energy landscape.

## Urban & Ecological Transitions

Both countries pledge to work together towards the adoption of an international treaty aimed at addressing plastic pollution throughout the entire life cycle of plastic products. France's Development Agency will provide 923 crore INR in financing for the second phase of India's sustainable cities program "CITIIS 2.0". Additionally, Proparco will offer 246 crore INR in financing for the South Asia Growth Fund (SAGF III) to support energy efficiency, clean energy, and resource optimization in the region. Another 164 crore INR financing from Proparco will be provided to Satya Microcapital to facilitate women in rural India's access to microfinance.

## Green Financing

India and France are also focused on strengthening trade ties and facilitating investments for sustainable growth. With the aim of building resilient value chains, they actively engage in policy exchanges and resolve trade-related challenges faced by exporters and investors. Encouraging cross-investment, they seek to enhance economic cooperation and increase bilateral investment presence, fostering mutually beneficial opportunities for businesses in both countries.

## Decarbonized Hydrogen

A partnership between McPhy and L&T will focus on manufacturing electrolyzers in India under the Indo-French roadmap for decarbonized hydrogen.

## Blue Economy

A partnership between France's French Research Institute for Exploitation of the Sea (IFREMER) and India's National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT) has been launched for ocean research following the roadmap on Blue Economy and Ocean Governance adopted in 2022.

## Partnership for the People

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## Student Mobility

The objective is to welcome 30,000 Indian students to France by 2030. A 5-year short-stay Schengen visa will be issued for Indian students with a Master's degree who have studied at a French university. The resources of the Campus France network in India will be significantly increased, and international classes will be introduced to facilitate the integration of non-French-speaking Indian students into the French higher education system. Two MoUs between the Institut Polytechnique de Paris (IPP) and IIT Delhi and IIT Madras have been signed.

France also plans to establish "International Classes" in its universities and higher education institutions to provide training in the French language and academic subjects for Indian students. This initiative will enable Indian students to subsequently enroll in Bachelor programs conducted in French. The French government will initiate the creation of these classes, while the Indian government will support and promote them within India's secondary education system.

## Diplomatic and Consular Network

Both countries will open a Consulate General of India in Marseille and a Bureau de France in Hyderabad.

## Research

Funding for the Indo-French Centre for the Promotion of Advanced Research (IFCPAR/CEFIPRA) will be increased to support new joint projects.

## Civil society

The objective is to double the number of solidarity and civic service international volunteers in India and France by 2025.



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As strategic partners, India and France consult and support each other on international matters in a spirit of mutual understanding and commitment to the benefit of the international community at large.

**-India-France Joint Statement, 10th  
April, 2015**





# V. Essays



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# Indo-French Defense Collaborations: Towards Make-in-India, Technology Transfers and Beyond

*by Ananya Singh*

During PM Modi's recent visit to France, he expressed, "Defense cooperation is a key pillar in our ties that reflects the two countries' deep trust in each other. Hindustan Times, 2023). Under the guidance of this shared vision, India and France further solidified their defense relations through additional joint ventures in critical defense technologies.

The two nations have cultivated strong relations in the defense sector, with France emerging as the second biggest arms supplier to India in recent times, and its exports increasing more than tenfold in the 2017-21 period (Pubby, 2022). The synergies between the two nations saw a major upswing following the 2015 Rafale deal in which India procured 36 Dassault Rafale multi-role combat aircraft from France. India and France also conduct routine joint military exercises, namely Exercise Shakti (Army), Exercise Varuna (Navy), and Exercise Garud (Air Force), indicating an atmosphere of utmost trust and confidence between the two.

One of the key areas of cooperation between India and France under the "Make in India" initiative is in the field of defense manufacturing and technology transfer. Currently, India is one of the largest importers of defense equipment

in the world, accounting for 11% of the total global imports (Perri, 2023). As India pursues its goal of self-reliance through the Aatmanirbhar Bharat initiative in the domain of defense, it finds a willing partner in the French. PM Modi reiterated this during his visit to France in July 2023, stating, "France is an important partner in the Make in India and Atmanirbhar Bharat initiatives" (Hindustan Times, 2023)

Defense is touted by many as possibly the most important component of Atmanirbharta - Reeling back from dependency on other states for defense equipment is a necessary step to propel India to the status of a superpower. France has expressed its wish to be India's "best partner" in augmenting its defense manufacturing and its intent to share the best technologies and equipment in sync with the growing trust between the two sides (PTI, 2022). French ambassador Emmanuel Lenain further reaffirmed France's support of Make In India and its willingness to co-develop and co-produce space and defense equipment with India. He said: "We understand that also because we are a highly independent country and we have been through that process also. We want to be a partner in the process to build a national industrial base for defense

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industries in India" (PTI, 2023).

Make in India was also a focal point of discussion at the 4th India-France defense Dialogue held in New Delhi between Defense Minister Rajnath Singh and the Minister of Armed Forces of the French Republic, Mr Sebastien Lecornu, where future collaborations and potential co-production opportunities were discussed. The two sides discussed global security environment, expanding the scope of defense cooperation to include co-development of futuristic technologies in line with India's priorities of Make in India and Atmanirbhar Bharat," (MEA, 2023) stated the Government of India, following the strategic dialogue chaired by NSA Ajit Doval and Emmanuel Bonne, the French President's diplomatic advisor in May 2023. A major ongoing collaboration between India and France in this context is the Indian Navy's Project 75, signed in 2006 which is being executed by the Mazgaon Dock Shipbuilders Limited (MDL). This collaboration represents a significant milestone in the defense ties between India and France, fostering technological exchange and strengthening the naval capabilities of the Indian Navy.

Furthermore, India and France have engaged in defense research and development cooperation. Organizations such as the Defense Research and Development Organization (DRDO) of India and the French Directorate General of Armaments (DGA) have been involved in joint projects focused on technology development and innovation. During the

Bastille Day visit, it was also announced that India will be setting up a Technical Office of the DRDO at its Embassy in Paris.

India and France's defense cooperation has become a cornerstone of their bilateral relationship, driven by a shared commitment to the Make in India initiative. During Prime Minister Modi's recent visit to France, both nations reaffirmed their intent to collaborate on defense manufacturing and technology transfer, aiming to enhance their respective capabilities and strengthen the foundation of their strategic partnership. It is imperative that India takes advantage of these developments to build a national industrial base in the field of defense and achieve the tenet of self-reliance, especially as New Delhi looks to reduce its dependence on Russia for military equipment.

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# Exploring the Potential of the India-EU Free Trade Agreement for Strengthening India-France Bilateral Ties

*by Raghav Bansal*

Over the years, India and France have cultivated robust bilateral trade and investment relations, fostering an environment of cooperation and shared opportunities. Recognizing the untapped potential that lies ahead, both India and France have reiterated their dedication to reviving negotiations on the India-EU Free Trade Agreement. This renewed commitment aims to tap into the full potential of bilateral trade and economic relations, paving the way for deeper collaboration and shared prosperity.

There is significant potential for an expanded trade relationship between the two nations. According to the Indian Embassy in France, in the year 2021, the total value of Indian exports to France was an estimated \$6.7 billion while French exports to India amounted to approximately \$5.88 billion (considering trade in goods, excluding military equipment) (Embassy of India, France & Principality of Monaco, 2021).

Delving into the year-wise fluctuation in percentage, a negative growth rate was solely observed in 2020, attributable to the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The persistent rise of India's exports to France, thus suggests the competitiveness of Indian products in the

French market. Furthermore, France's high volume of exports to India shows the demand for French goods in the Indian market. Through an EU-India FTA, both countries can remove trade barriers, streamline regulatory frameworks, and enable a conducive business environment for further trade expansion.

The imposition of heavy tariffs on the primary trade products of the two countries further underpins the case for expanding trade ties. Notably, refined petroleum, which is India's top export product to France, faced a substantial tariff of 7.54% in 2018 (OEC, 2019.). Similarly, the tariff imposed on France's top export products, namely planes, and spacecraft, reached an estimated 3.27% in 2018 (OEC, 2019). Considering the significant volume in which these products are traded, the cumulative tax figures touch almost 50 million dollars. If this tax value is added up across all traded products, it becomes evident that signing an India-EU Free trade agreement could save up to hundreds of millions of dollars in trade for both countries. This would lead to a stronger bilateral economic relationship between India and France.

Moreover, India's decision to reduce



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participation in the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) has prompted countries to call for increased integration of India in the global economic space (Jain, 2021). The Covid-19 pandemic has accentuated notions of deglobalization and economic decoupling, causing disruptions to supply chains. In response, countries are seeking to establish more region-specific trade blocks to mitigate the risk of economic isolation during emergencies. Furthermore, there is a growing strategic imperative in the geopolitical environment to forge trade relationships with countries with similar policies and political structures. Thus, trade is increasingly being viewed as a strategic, rather than a purely economic concern. This has the potential to breed distrust by isolating countries that do not align geographically and ideologically. To avoid this from spiraling further, India and France can leverage the free trade agreement to not only further their economic goals but also respond to the challenges of today (Stiglitz, 2022).

In continuation, India and France can leverage the synergy between the Make in India policy and French expertise in technology and manufacturing (Anand, 2015). Launched in 2014, the Make in India policy aims to make India a global manufacturing powerhouse by promoting domestic manufacturing and attracting Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) (Nagarjuna, 2022). France's strengths lie in its technological advancements, making it a potentially ideal partner for India to expand manufacturing. A free

trade agreement would allow an efficient exchange of technological know-how, allowing French industries to profitably invest in India and collaborate with domestic firms. Furthermore, the Indo-French partnership in sectors like defense, aerospace, and renewable energy can be further enhanced through a free trade pact. It would help India gain essential experience in research and development while providing French companies with a good manufacturing base to expand their production. Overall, this mutually beneficial partnership would increase the global competitiveness of both countries.

There are several bureaucratic hurdles that the Broad-Based Trade and Investment Agreement (BTIA) entails like the tariffs on spirits and dairy products from the EU (Pant, 2022). However, the long-term economic benefits present a strong argument for why India and France should consider trade expansion using the Indo-EU FTA.

The strong bilateral relationship encompassing defense collaboration, cultural exchange, and aligning geopolitical views supports this cause. It would not only be beneficial for the two countries but also foster growth in the entire Indo-Pacific and European regions, given the influence the two involved parties bear.

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# Digital Empowerment for Global Growth: India-France Collaboration on DPIs

*by Sahil Garud*

India and France have joined hands to embrace the digital century, committing to empowering their citizens and promoting inclusive digital societies. At the heart of this collaboration lies the vision of harnessing the potential of 'Digital Public Infrastructure' (DPI). India's remarkable success in implementing DPI can serve as a guiding beacon for France to tap into its capabilities and extend its benefits to developing countries.

India's DPI, known as India Stack, rests on three pillars. The first is a national identification system developed in 2010 called Aadhar. Through its biometric security, each citizen's unique identification allows them access to a range of public and private services that earlier relied on costly paper-based verification. This has made KYC (know your customer) processes low-cost and efficient for banks and has led to record penetration of bank accounts across India. In the world's most populous country, over 90% of Indians reap the benefits of digital identity (Carrière, 2021). This makes opening bank accounts, obtaining loans, and receiving cash transfers from government schemes extremely convenient.

The second pillar is a payments system called UPI (Unified Payments Interface)

which has transformed India from a paper currency to a digital payments economy in seven years. India's fintech ecosystem has produced various digital wallets which utilize UPI networks to provide digital payment capabilities to the unbanked section of Indian society as well. UPI boasts some of the lowest transaction fees across conventional payment channels (e.g. debit cards and online transfers) which benefits small-scale retailers and vendors who have suffered from technology constraints and high merchant discount rates on transactions (Alonso, 2023). To foster this in France, NPCI International Payments Limited (NIPL) and France's Lyra Collect finalized an agreement to introduce the Unified Payment Interface (UPI) in France and Europe. This landmark payment mechanism is set to commence by September 2023.

The third pillar of this stack replaces paper documents with digital documents for profile verification through the 'DigiLocker' application. Digital verification of driving licenses, Aadhar cards, school mark sheets, etc. creates greater trust within the system and improves safety and efficiency for users and verifying entities (government offices, banks, etc.). Overall, these pillars form the backbone of India's DPI approach. An approach that India is offering to the world for

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global-level adoption so that more nations can reap the benefits of DPIs along their growth trajectories.

France's Summit for a New Global Financing Pact aims to renew the international financial architecture to combat the multidimensional challenges of the pandemic, climate change, and liquidity crises in many developing nations (France Diplomacy, 2023). It believes that international solidarity is critical for protecting the most vulnerable nations from these challenges, similar to India's vision of 'One Future' under its G20 Presidency. Achieving this common future requires efforts toward a digital transformation of vulnerable economies. India's exemplary use of digital capabilities displays the potential of DPIs in strengthening financial systems, boosting financial penetration, and accelerating economic growth through accessible credit. France has taken the lead in initiatives to protect and empower developing nations and thus, has a unique opportunity to encourage and enable the adoption of DPIs at a global scale. France has expressed serious concerns for the fiscal stability of many developing economies facing significant levels of public debt. Two-thirds of low-income countries are facing high risks of excessive debt. Stabilizing these developing economies is a priority. To achieve this, DPI can be integrated into domestic financial systems to promote social inclusion through its low-cost and accessible characteristics. As seen in India, this will

promote the formalization of various sectors, contributing to greater economic efficiency and tax revenues- mitigating their debt burden. Given its successes in this space, India can join hands with France to develop DPI in low-income countries, leveraging their respective expertise to ensure global financial inclusivity and stability.

The benefits of DPI go beyond economic gains, allowing countries and people to reclaim their digital sovereignty. DPI provides an alternative to traditional data ownership which currently rests in the hands of a few major technology firms such as Google, Microsoft, and Apple. DPIs allow countries to localize their data and customize regulations, making data ownership more democratic and secure. This security is essential for countries integrating into the digital economy as it reduces their dependency on American or Chinese companies that could leverage their control over data for geopolitical concessions. France understands these concerns and has taken steps towards localizing their data centers under its 'Cloud de Confiance' doctrine for asserting digital sovereignty. DPIs can provide emerging economies with similar capabilities of maintaining sovereignty over their data (Hoeffnagel, 2022). France and India are uniquely positioned to digitally empower a vast portion of the world through the effective adoption of DPI. Having co-chaired the International Financial Architecture working group and hosted the Summit for a New Global Financing Pact, France holds immense

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credibility and influence in the restructuring of the global economy.

France's influential position and economic might must partner with India's advanced technological and implementation capabilities in providing effective DPI programs across the world. They must build on the momentum generated by their recent landmark agreement for the use of India's UPI payments system in France. Building resilience for future crises, DPI is essential for vulnerable nations to survive and thrive in the coming years.

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# Shared Values, Common Goals: India and France in the Indo-Pacific

*by Anubhava Singla*

Comprising 60% of the world's populace, with a contribution to 2/3rd of the global GDP growth, and 46% of the world's merchandise trade, the Indo-Pacific is set to become a significant driver of global economic expansion in the coming 30 years (Ghosh, 2022). Its geopolitical landscape has emerged as a strong catalyst for India and France to not only enhance their bilateral relations but also bolster their respective positions within the region. India's strategic geographical position makes it a pivotal player in the region while France's vested interests can be attributed to its territories in the Indian and Pacific Oceans. As reiterated in their Indo-Pacific Roadmap, India and France believe in "a free, open, inclusive, secure and peaceful Indo-Pacific region" (MEA, 2023). With the Indo-Pacific region becoming a major driver of global economic expansion, India and France recognize the significance of their converging perspectives and are actively working to deepen ties and forge a robust partnership to promote regional stability and maritime security. India and France have made significant strides in improving their strategic cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region, encompassing various dimensions, including defense, security, trade, and the environment. With their shared interests, both India and France have taken active steps to expand their presence in the Indo-Pacific

region. They have made persistent efforts to foster diplomatic relations with other countries in the region and collaborate on initiatives to counter climate change while promoting sustainable development. The International Solar Alliance, a landmark agreement led by India and France, has brought together 93 countries worldwide, committing to invest a staggering 1 trillion dollars by 2030. Remarkably, 19 out of the 23 countries in the Indo-Pacific region have actively participated in this initiative, showcasing their strong support in the region.

India and France have also joined hands to establish the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI). This ambitious initiative seeks to enhance the resilience of critical infrastructure against natural and man-made hazards, ensuring continuity and swift recovery in the face of adversity. By strengthening disaster risk reduction measures and promoting resilient infrastructure projects, the collaboration aims to minimize the region's vulnerability and enhance its capacity to withstand future challenges (ANI, 2023)

India and France have further demonstrated their shared commitment to assume leadership roles in the Indo-Pacific by establishing trilateral pacts

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with key partners like the United Arab Emirates and Australia. These strategic partnerships signify the countries' concerted efforts to prevent any power imbalances in the region and promote stability and cooperation. Furthermore, the two sides plan to establish the India-France Indo-Pacific Triangular Development Cooperation Fund and the Indo-French Health Campus for the Indo-Pacific, which will be a regional hub for research and academia.

The scope of Indo-French relationship in the Indo-Pacific region, particularly in the areas of security and trade, has been steadily expanding in recent years. Given the growing importance of the Indo-Pacific as a strategic maritime region, India and France have bolstered their maritime security cooperation, focusing on Joint Naval exercises, Patrolling, and information sharing. The 21st naval exercise program VARUNA, the bilateral naval exercise between India and France was conducted over five days from 16th to 20 January 2023 and witnessed advanced air defense exercises, tactical maneuvers, surface firings, and other maritime operations (PIB, 2023). Similarly, FRINJEX-23 marks a significant milestone as the first-ever joint military exercise between the Indian Army and French Army, conducted in a team format with a company group. The primary objective of the exercise was to enhance interoperability, coordination, and cooperation between the two forces at the tactical level. These exercises represent a step forward in strengthening the strategic partnership and military ties

between India and France, fostering mutual learning and preparedness for future joint operations (The Hindu, 2023).

Importantly, regional stability and collective security are at the core of their strategic partnership. Advocating for respect for international law, freedom of navigation, and adherence to the rules-based order, India and France work together to maintain peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific. As they celebrate the 25th anniversary of their strategic partnership, they are poised to deepen their collaboration in the Indo-Pacific further. Their engagement, spanning defense, security, trade, and the environment, lays a strong foundation for fostering peace, stability, and prosperity in the region.

Moreover, their joint efforts toward environmental sustainability serve as a model for addressing global challenges, underscoring their commitment to a greener and more secure Indo-Pacific. Through their collective endeavors, India and France contribute significantly to shaping the future of the Indo-Pacific, reinforcing the strategic significance of their partnership in the region.

Lastly, maritime trade and security are pivotal for expanding influence and gaining economic control in the Indo-Pacific. India and France have always prioritized regional stability, and maritime security, and have upheld the vision of a Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP). Together, they have also

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been able to bolster their maritime capabilities to counter dominant players, ensuring a balanced power dynamic and fostering a rules-based order. This is an opportune moment for both countries to build on these shared commitments and expand their cooperation to leverage maximum benefits. Such proactive measures are also necessary to reinforce a rules-based order that respects international law, freedom, and democracy in the Indo-Pacific.

The Indo-French partnership holds immense potential for shaping the future of the Indo-Pacific region. The initiatives and sectors point towards a path where India and France can emerge as leaders in the region. By leveraging their shared interests, expertise, and strategic collaborations, both countries can position themselves as key influencers, fostering sustainable growth and establishing a rules-based order that promotes economic prosperity, stability, and environmental stewardship in the Indo-Pacific. The groundwork laid by their ongoing efforts, rooted in shared values, promises a future where India and France play instrumental roles in shaping the destiny of the Indo-Pacific region.

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# Role of Soft Power in Nurturing Indo-French Relations

*by Chahat Mahajan*

The dynamics of international relations have undergone rapid changes marked by significant transformations from a unipolar world to the modern era of interdependence. Amidst the evolving nature of geopolitics, India and France have endured the test of time due to their shared values of peace, stability and strategic autonomy. Twenty-five years of their Strategic Partnership has not only witnessed extensive cooperation in space, defense and civil nuclear sectors but also saw the engagement of two countries in areas like culture, language and education, climate change, sustainable growth and the International Solar Alliance (Nayar, n.d.).

With the strong presence of India and France in each other's countries, their relationship has taken a new turn with Indian culture enjoying wide admiration in France and vice versa. Namaste France and Bonjour India (MEA, n.d.) bear testimony to the people-to-people relations since these events showcase the cultural, social, artistic and educational rendezvous between the two countries (Horizon 2047, 2023). The Government of India has also offered scholarships to French Nationals to study Sanskrit in India. India's Lalit Kala Akademi (LKA) has been helping Indian Artists participate in festivals in France and will continue this support in the interest of

generating broader interest in Indian artistic traditions among the people of France.

France's contributions to literature, cinema, fashion, and gastronomy have found a warm reception among the Indian people which has further facilitated more meaningful diplomatic ties between the two countries.

As far as Educational Diplomacy is concerned, the number of Indian students studying in France has increased steadily over the years and both countries encourage partnerships between higher education institutions, research centers, and private companies to strengthen cooperation in vocational and language training. There is a consistent growth in the number of Indians learning French in India (The Hindu, 2019). The two countries mutually recognize degrees to facilitate the pursuit of higher education by Indian students in France and French students in India and increase their employability. The Indo-French Centre for the Promotion of Advance Research (CEFIPRA) established in 1987 is playing a significant role in funding joint proposals for research in sciences and evaluation of existing research projects. (Horizon 2047, 2023) Joint Indo-French research projects funded by CEFIPRA have led to several patents. Several



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other bilateral cooperation programmes including the establishment of an Indo-French Ministerial-level Joint Committee on Science and Technology have played a crucial role in furthering the Indo-French ties.

The completion of 25 years of strategic partnership between India and France has led to the adoption of a roadmap to set the course for their partnership up to 2047 and Partnership for the People is one of the three components of the framework. Under the Horizon 2047 Roadmap, India and France will promote the development of joint training programmes based on the model of the Indo-French Campus on Health for the Indo-Pacific. France has also re-affirmed its ambition to welcome 20,000 Indian students by 2025 and it will also create "International Classes" in French universities and other higher education institutions, where Indian students would be trained in French language and academic topics.

The countries also wish to establish programmes for cultural exchanges by promoting cooperation in the fields of museums and heritage, cinema, artistic and literary cooperation and linguistic cooperation. France, the largest film market in Europe and India, the largest film producer in the world are facilitating export of their productions and supporting co-productions as well. India and France are committed to having three hundred Villa Swagatam laureates by 2035 in both countries. With the deepening of friendship, both the

countries are trying to broaden the areas of cooperation.

India and France share a commitment to working together to safeguard their economic and security interests while ensuring equitable and unhindered access to global commons. They strive to foster partnerships that promote prosperity and sustainability in the Indo-Pacific region, with a focus on establishing a balanced and stable order that respects the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity. Through collaboration and mutual respect, both nations seek to enhance regional cooperation and contribute to the peace and progress of the Indo-Pacific. They intend to work to provide solutions to the triple challenge of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution. Both nations are also keen to promote a more inclusive and environmentally friendly development and encourage initiatives that contribute to the financial inclusion of women and vulnerable populations.

India and France's long-lasting friendship can be attributed to the shared love for art, creativity and culinary delights and the presence of the Indian diaspora in France. The promotion of exchanges and regular dialogue between our cultures bears testimony to the instrumentality of soft power in nurturing Indo-France relations. Such exchange of culture, education, language and values has nurtured a deep sense of friendship and understanding between the two countries making soft power the basis of strong bonds and friendship.



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India and France agree on the need for greater international cooperation to deal with challenges facing mankind. Both countries are committed to international peace and security, nuclear non-proliferation, the fight against terrorism and the need to ensure food security and energy for all countries.

**-India-France Joint Statement, 30th  
September, 2008**





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## VI. Way Forward

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The evolution of the Indo-French Strategic Partnership to its three pillars - from maintaining non-interference, strategic autonomy, and defense cooperation to Partnership for people, planet, and sovereignty- reflects the widening and deepening of the ambits of this long-standing partnership.

The visit of Prime Minister Modi to France and his participation as the Guest of Honour at the Bastille Day parade in Paris reaffirms the deepening Indo-French strategic partnership and its commitment to fostering a rules-based international order, and a shared vision of strategic autonomy in the international arena. The synergies between India and France go beyond diplomatic offices and executive-level meetings. The proximity between India and France has cultivated a strong partnership, extending across various domains, from defense to culture. Both countries prioritize national security and environmental concerns while upholding the principles of a global rules-based framework. This dynamic collaboration serves to strengthen their bond as equal partners, constantly evolving and enriching each other's societies. Together, they look forward to a future of shared prosperity and mutual growth.

India and France possess unique and complementary strengths that can be leveraged to foster mutual growth and development. Looking ahead, it is crucial for India and France to continue nurturing their bilateral relationship, enhancing diplomatic exchanges, and

exploring new avenues of cooperation. The way forward for the Indo-French strategic partnership lies in building on the existing momentum and deepening collaboration in key areas. This includes promoting joint research and development projects, technology transfers, skill development initiatives, and trade partnerships. Additionally, strengthening cultural exchanges, especially focusing on youth engagement, will further deepen mutual understanding. Addressing emerging challenges in the Indian Ocean through closer cooperation and adherence to international norms and rules will contribute to ensuring peace and prosperity in the region.

The challenges of this partnership also evolve with the evolution of the cooperation. No matter how deep these divergences run, such as variance in response to the Ukraine crisis, the Indo-French strategic partnership continues unabated. France has committed to proactively participating in the affairs of Indo-Pacific countries as the most available means of countering China.

In the joint statement released in the aftermath of the bilateral meeting on the sidelines of the G20 meeting, issues pertaining to space and nuclear technologies were discussed. France also upgraded its global development commitment to 0.5% of its GDP. The intensity of the perceptual difference on the ongoing Ukraine war was also alleviated as French President Macron stated that G20 is an economic forum,

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not suited for geopolitical discussions. This reiterates the premise of the Indo-French partnership - a shared worldview of an equitable and inclusive global order.

In conclusion, the Indo-French strategic partnership is a vital relationship that holds immense potential for both countries and the wider global community. By capitalizing on their shared values, complementary strengths, and mutual understanding, India and France can forge a future of shared prosperity, further enriching their bilateral ties and contributing to a more stable and interconnected world.

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