

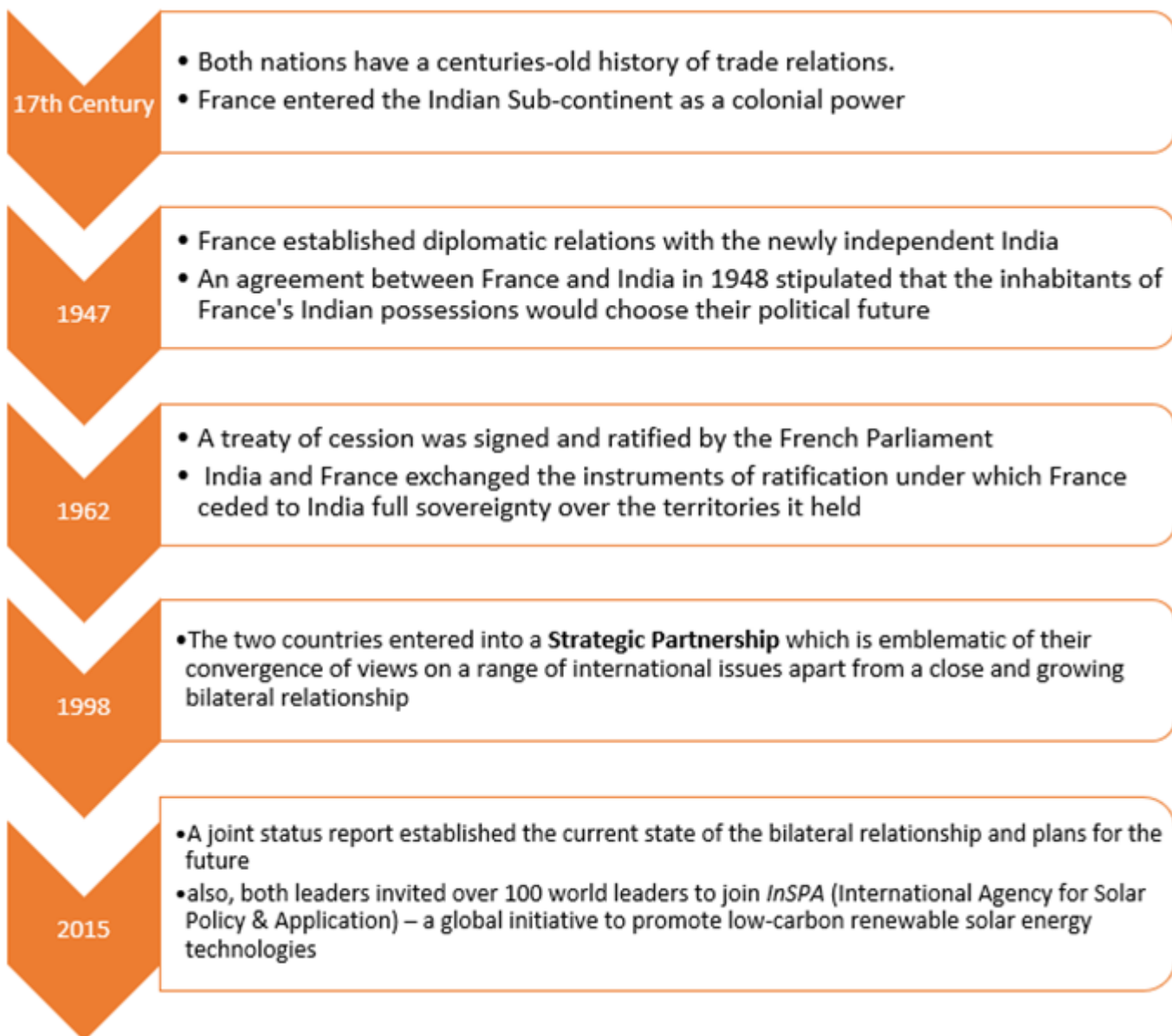


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India-France ties

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Why is in news? Emmanuel Macron is Republic Day chief guest: The bright arc of India-France ties



In 1998, then French President Jacques Chirac expressed the **idea of “a partnership for the 21st century” with India**. “I came with the proposition to build a strong relation between our two countries, a global partnership grounded on our complementarities and our common interests,” he had said, speaking as the Republic Day Chief Guest.

That was Chirac’s second visit in the capacity — he had accepted the same invitation 22 years ago, then as France’s Prime Minister.

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The **durability of Indo-French ties** can be witnessed by the fact that **Chirac agreed to be the Chief Guest in 1976**, when India was **under Emergency and facing criticism from western democracies**.

Later, after Chirac's 1998 visit, **India conducted nuclear tests** in May that year, and even as many western powers slapped sanctions, the **French did not condemn India**.

Both these instances testify to the French pragmatism and foresight in how they have managed diplomatic ties with India.

In December 2023, when India invited French President Emmanuel Macron for Republic Day after US President Joe Biden was unavailable, this pragmatism was at play again.

Macron accepted despite knowing he was the second choice, showing the comfort between the French and the Indian system.

This will be the **sixth time** that a French leader will be the Chief Guest at the Republic Day celebrations.

25th anniversary of strategic partnership:

Macron's visit caps a milestone year for India-France ties — the **25th anniversary of their strategic partnership**.

The India-France Strategic Partnership, the **first that India signed with any western country**, has seen considerable progress in bilateral, regional and international contexts.

The partnership draws strength, trust and consistency from a shared sense of strategic autonomy and sovereignty, a quest for a multi-polar world, and a natural affinity for democratic values and rule of law.

Defence and security, civil nuclear matters, and space constitute **principal pillars of this partnership**, which now also includes a strong Indo-Pacific component.

The **comprehensive Roadmap between India and France**, which was adopted last year in July during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit as Guest of Honour for Bastille Day, was classified **under three pillars** — Partnership for Security and Sovereignty; Partnership for the Planet; and Partnership for People.

Major pillars of cooperation:

Post India's Independence:

Diplomatic relations were established after India's Independence.

French aircraft and helicopters like Ouragan, Mystere, Alize, Alouette, Jaguar have been part of the Indian air fleet since 1960's.

In 1984, France stepped in to **supply nuclear fuel to Tarapur power plant** after the US backed out citing domestic constraints.

France supported **India's space programme** since its inception, like setting up Sriharikota launch site and Centaure and Viking rocket technologies in the 1970s.

However, the Cold War Constraints, did not let the development of a fully developed relationship.

Post-Cold War Era:

India and France entered into Strategic Partnership in 1998.

The areas of defence & security cooperation, space cooperation and civil nuclear cooperation constitute the principal pillars of our Strategic Partnership

Defence:

India and France have had a strong and robust defence partnership.

Bilateral defence cooperation between the two sides is reviewed under **Annual Defence Dialogue** (Defence Minister level) and **High Committee on Defence Cooperation** (Secretary level).

A DRDO office was **opened in the Embassy in 2023** for strengthening technology cooperation.

It has become the **second-largest defence supplier** in 2017-2021.

Major Military equipments imported from France include **Rafale and Mirage 2000 Fighter Aircraft and Scorpene Submarines**.

India and France have been regularly conduct joint exercises- **Varuna (Naval), Garuda (Air Force) and Shakti (Army)**.

India and France have been **undertaking 'joint patrolling' in the Indian Ocean Region** and are striving towards maritime domain awareness in the Indian Ocean region.

Space:

There's a rich history of cooperation in the field of space for **over 50 years** between ISRO and the French Space Agency, Centre National D'Etudes Spatiales (CNES).

France remains a **major supplier of components and equipment** for the Indian space programme.

They are **collaborating on reusable launchers**, the **TRISHNA Earth observation satellite**, a constellation of maritime surveillance satellites in the Indian Ocean, and protecting satellites from collisions in orbit.

India and France are jointly constructing the **world's largest nuclear park in Jaitapur, Maharashtra**.

France is the **first European country to accept the UPI payments** system.

Civil Nuclear Cooperation:

During the PM's visit to Paris in July 2023, both leaders welcomed the progress made during discussions related to the **Jaitapur Nuclear Power Project (JNPP)**.

However, the progress here has been slow, though the first pact was agreed in 2008.

The two sides have also agreed to establish a **partnership on Small Modular Reactors (SMR) and Advanced Modular Reactors (AMR)**.

Economic:

France is the **11th largest foreign investor** in India with FDI inflow of US\$ 659.77 million for FY 2022-23 (as of June 2023) and a cumulative FDI stock of \$10.76 billion from April 2000 to September 2023.

There are **over 70 Indian companies** employing over 8,000 employees in France.

For FY 2023-24 (till August 2023), Indian **exports** to France totalled \$3.06 billion and **imports** from France totalled \$2.36 billion.

India's **main exports** include engineering goods, petroleum products, pharmaceutical products, electronic equipment and ready-made garments.

The **main imports** from France are aviation products, machine equipment, electrical equipment and chemical products.

Digital:

In July 2023, **Unified Payments Interface** (UPI) was launched from the Eiffel Tower, offering secure and convenient transactions for Indian visitors and NRIs.

C-DAC and M/S Atos, an European multinational IT service and consulting company based in France, have developed **14 supercomputers for India** so far, including the fastest supercomputer **Param Siddhi** at 4.6 petaflops/second.

Education:

It is estimated that there are about 10,000 Indian students in France. An **agreement on mutual recognition of degrees** was signed in 2018.

The **Indo French Campus for Health** was also launched in June 2022 to offer double degrees.

A scheme that allows Indian students to stay in France **up to two years** after finishing their Master's degree, to look for jobs, was renewed in October 2022.

In July 2023, it was agreed to increase the number of Indian students in France to 30,000 by 2030.

During Modi's visit, France announced the **issuing of a five-year Schengen visa to Indian alumni** who have completed at least one semester of their Master's degree in France, a first for alumni from any country.

Tourism:

About **2.5 lakh French travelled to India in 2019** while about 7 lakh Indians went to France for tourism.

Rajasthan continues to lead among all Indian destinations for French tourists.

Foreign tourist arrivals into Rajasthan are growing at a double digit since 2016.

Diaspora:

Around 109,000 of Indians, **largely originating from French enclaves** of Puducherry, Karaikal, Yanam, Mahe and Chandernagore live in France.

Also, a sizable number of Indian-origin population lives in the French Overseas Territories of Reunion Island (280,000), Guadeloupe (60,000), Martinique (6,000) and Saint Martin (300).

Indo-Pacific:

A roadmap is being adopted for joint actions in the Indo-Pacific, covering various aspects of their comprehensive strategy for the region.

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They are also working on an **Indo-French development fund** for sustainable development projects in the Indo-Pacific.

Support on international fora:

France has continued to support India's claim for **permanent membership** of the United Nations Security Council and the reforms of the United Nations.

France's support was vital in India's **accession to the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR), Wassenaar Arrangement (WA) and Australia Group (AG).**

France continues to **support India's bid for accession to the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG).**

India and France have resolved to **work together for adoption** of the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism (**CCIT**) **in the UN.**

In this visit:

The current visit will give Modi and Macron an **opportunity to exchange notes on issues of mutual interest** — the Russia-Ukraine war, Israel-Hamas war, China's assertiveness in the Indo-Pacific, and defence and security cooperation.

French diplomats say that Chirac, an admirer of India who had studied Sanskrit, saw India as a major emerging power and pushed for boosting political and economic cooperation.

Macron, on his third visit to India as the French President — he came in March 2018 and September 2023 — will have the chance to elevate it further.

Way Forward:

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

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

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

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