

India-France Partnership under the Leadership of Emmanuel Macron and Narendra Modi: An Analysis of Strategic Cooperation and Future Prospects

Індійсько-французьке партнерство під керівництвом Еммануеля Макрона та Нарендри Моді: аналіз стратегічної співпраці та майбутні перспективи

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Received: April 4, 2023 | **Revised:** April 18, 2023 | **Accepted:** April 30, 2023

DOI: 10.33445/sds.2023.13.2.7

Purpose: is to analyze the strategic cooperation between India and France in the post-2014 period, with a focus on the achievements, challenges, and prospects for future collaboration.

Method: the research utilizes the qualitative method and draws on empirical findings from a range of primary and secondary sources, including official statements, reports, and media coverage.

Practical consequences. the research findings indicate that as India and France mark 25 years of their strategic partnership, there is immense potential for it to become a formidable driver of stability, prosperity, and security in the region. However, realizing this potential will necessitate continuous efforts from both nations to address challenges and seize opportunities.

Paper type: theoretical.

Мета роботи: аналіз стратегічної співпраці між Індією та Францією в період після 2014 року з акцентом на досягненнях, викликах і перспективах майбутньої співпраці.

Метод дослідження: у дослідженні використовується якісний метод і спираються на емпіричні результати з ряду первинних і вторинних джерел, включаючи офіційні заяви, звіти та висвітлення в ЗМІ.

Практична цінність дослідження: результати дослідження показують, що, оскільки Індія та Франція відзначають 25 років свого стратегічного партнерства, існує величезний потенціал для того, щоб стати потужним рушієм стабільності, процвітання та безпеки в регіоні. Однак реалізація цього потенціалу вимагатиме постійних зусиль обох країн для вирішення проблем і використання можливостей.

Тип статті: теоретична.

Key words: India, France, defence, Indo-Pacific, strategic partnership.

Ключові слова: Індія, Франція, оборона, Індо-Тихоокеанський регіон, стратегічне партнерство.

1. Introduction

At the end of the Cold War India signed 'Strategic Partnerships' agreements with various nation-states. An agreement was signed with France in 1998 during French President Jacques Chirac's visit to India where he mentioned his desire to establish a strategic group with India which will help 'to facilitate a better understanding of [their] defence doctrines and increased military cooperation.' (Sood, 2020) His speech, entitled 'India and France: A Partnership for the Twentieth Century', provided the base for the aspirations of both states to formulate successful strategic ties. It marked the first visit of a French President since Mitterand in 1989 and was much more impactful which led to the establishment of strategic relations between the two states.

The India-France strategic partnership was built on defence cooperation. France exported arms to India since the early years of its independence which continued during the Cold War. Despite the cordial dealings between both nation-states, the bilateral dialogues remained limited till the 1990s. President Chirac's visit was marked as a historic step towards the establishment of

India-France relations with aspirations to go beyond the defence partnership and make it a multi-level cooperation. India and France have cooperated on many projects; Civil Nuclear Cooperation, Defence Cooperation, Maritime security & Indo-Pacific Cooperation, Counter-Terrorism Cooperation, Space Cooperation, and Cybersecurity Cooperation (French Embassy, 2022).

Following 2014, the India-France defence cooperation was defined by a strengthening strategic alliance between the two nations. The common threat perceptions, expanding economic links, and alignment of strategic interests are the main factors that have strengthened this partnership. The two nations have signed several significant agreements to strengthen their defence cooperation, including the one for the Rafale fighter jet, the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA), and the Information Exchange Agreement (IEA).

The visit of PM Narendra Modi to France in May 2022 grasped the essence of the cooperation between France and India, which is based on shared trust, adherence to international law, and a vision for a *"multipolar world shaped reformed and effective multilateralism"* (Rajagopalan, 2022).

The descriptive analysis in this research is used to determine how India and France can collaborate more closely in the areas of the economy, defence, culture, and the Indo-Pacific region. The bilateral relationship has been concentrating on various forms of cooperation and advancing strategic partnerships every year, especially since the leadership was taken by PM Narendra Modi in India and President Emmanuel Macron in France. The research makes an attempt to highlight the new areas of cooperation apart from the defence. The research also tries to discuss suggestions to further improve their partnership.

2. Literature Review & Historical Background

Mahan A.T. explains the importance of being a sea power to achieve national greatness in his book *'The Influence of Sea Power Upon History'*. He also recognised the power potential of China and the fact that one day the United States would fear its rise (Sempa, 2014). His theory was further developed by Sir Halford Mackinder who proposed *'The Heartland Theory'*. The theory suggests that the key to controlling the heartland is controlling the "rimland" (the areas surrounding the heartland), which can be achieved by forming alliances with smaller states and establishing naval bases along the rimland. India is situated at the southern edge of the Eurasian landmass and borders the Indian Ocean, which is a key area for global maritime trade. As per the Heartland Theory, India's location on the rimland could make it an important ally for France in its quest for dominance over the heartland.

France has historically formed alliances with smaller states in the heartland, such as Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, to gain influence over the region. India's strategic location and diplomatic ties with Central Asian nations could make it a valuable partner for France. According to the Heartland Theory, establishing naval bases along the rimland can help in controlling the heartland. India has a significant naval presence in the Indian Ocean, and France has a naval base in Djibouti, on the rimland of the Indian Ocean. India and France could potentially collaborate to establish more naval bases along the rimland, which would enhance their strategic influence over the heartland (Banerjee, 2022).

The concept of Indo-Pacific was brought again in modern times by the former Japanese PM Shinzo Abe in 2007 at the Indian parliament in his speech titled, *'Confluence of the Two Seas'* (Basu, 2021). C.R Mohan articulates that France sees itself as a resident player in the Indo-Pacific as the islands of Réunion and Mayotte in the Indian Ocean, as well as France and French Navy still own New Caledonia and French Polynesia in the South Pacific has naval bases in these islands (Mohan & Baruah, 2018).

Subhash Singh suggests that India and France's strategic partnership reached a pinnacle in the Modi era. Both nations signed numerous agreements in the areas of defence, security, counterterrorism, space exploration, and nuclear energy since assuming power. The visit of Emmanuel Macron, the French president, to India in March 2018 marked a turning point in their strategic partnership. Both leaders held extensive and fruitful discussions during this visit, highlighting the growing agreement between the two nations on regional and international issues.

In conjunction with the strategic partnership between France and India's 20th anniversary, PM Modi and the French President reaffirmed their commitment to advancing it and decided to take it to a new level by deciding to hold summits every two years. Based on shared beliefs in democracy, freedom, the rule of law, and respect for human rights, they decided to strengthen and deepen their bilateral ties. The signing of the Agreement between the governments of India and France regarding the exchange and reciprocal protection of classified or protected information between India and France was welcomed by both Prime Minister Modi and the President of France, demonstrating the highest level of strategic trust between the two nations. (Singh, 2019).

3. Data and Methods

Several government websites, think tanks, international organisations, the European Union, Freedom House, and other websites were used to gather the data. To examine the Indo-French strategic collaboration in various fields like defence, space cooperation, culture etc. This study uses both primary and secondary data. Information from embassies, ministries, newspapers, and editorials is also included in the research. In addition to these sources, this research describes the documents and agreements between the two governments that pertain to the military as well as online media posts on the expanding alliance between France and India.

The descriptive analysis in this research is used to determine how India and France can collaborate more closely in the areas of the economy, defence, culture, and the Indo-Pacific region. The bilateral relationship has been concentrating on various forms of cooperation and advancing strategic partnerships every year, especially since the leadership was taken by PM Narendra Modi in India and President Emmanuel Macron in France. In the cooperation areas mentioned above, a lot has been accomplished. The study also discusses future growth prospects for the partnership between France and India and draws on empirical research.

4. Results and discussion

DEFENSE COOPERATION

Initially, the Indo-French partnership has been based on their defence cooperation. France has been a defence partner to India since the phase of the cold war. Even after India conducted a nuclear test, though France condemned the test it took a progressive approach to understand the causes and reasons behind conducting these experiments (Roger, 2007).

India's strategic relations were established with France with French President Jacques Chirac's visit to India in 1998. Since then there has been significant cooperation in all areas with high-level visits, joint training and exercises, joint research and development programs, and arms deals which used to be the basis of Indo-French relations. They regularly engage in military and defensive training like Shakti-Army, Varuna-Navy, and Garuda-Air Force. In addition, the two superpowers also participate in a yearly High Committee on Defence Cooperation at the level of the French Director General and the Defence Secretary (Ministry of External Affairs, 2017). After the exception granted by the Nuclear Suppliers Group, France was the first nation with whom India entered into an agreement on civil nuclear cooperation, enabling India to begin full civil nuclear cooperation with the international community (Singh, 2019).

India has frequently referred to France as “one of (its) most dependable defence partners”. The appointment of Narendra Modi as the Prime Minister of India in 2014 brought about a new direction in the Indo-French partnership. In order to upgrade India’s air force, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced a defence agreement with the French aviation company Dassault in 2015 (Majumdar, 2021). In order to fortify the northern Indian borders against nations like Pakistan and China, India and France agreed to supply 36 Rafale aircraft in 2016 under the most prestigious and costly government-to-government agreement of the twenty-first century. The first batch of 5 rafale fighter jets arrived in July 2022. The acquisition of Rafale fighters has advanced their defence and strategic relations, and Prime Minister Modi and President Macron expressed their gratitude and pleasure for this development (The Hindu, 2018).

The Indo-France relationship was further heightened after the election of Emmanuel Macron as the President of France in 2017. France has emerged as one of India’s closest allies in Europe under Macron’s leadership, and the two nations now coordinate on various projects including space exploration, defence, and counterterrorism. Macron visited India in 2018, marking his first bilateral visit. On the first day of President Emmanuel Macron’s visit to India, contracts worth 13 billion euros (\$16 billion) were signed between French and Indian businesses, according to a statement from the French administration. While addressing a conference both promised that India and France were committed to strengthening their defence and security partnerships (Reuters, 2018).

The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) of India signed an agreement with the Naval Group of France to develop India’s ‘Kalvari’ submarine series. Both the Indian PM Narendra Modi and French President Emmanuel Macron participated in the commissioning of the first Scorpene submarine built in India, the INS Kalvari, by Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Ltd. in close coordination with Naval Group, a French shipbuilder, as part of the Indian Navy’s “Project 75” plan. To further solidify its strategic partnership, defence collaboration, and Bharat Dynamics Limited (BDL), an Indian missile manufacturer, with the strong support of France, has produced more than 10,000 anti-tank Milan missiles; Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL), with the support of France, built the light helicopters Cheetah and Chetak. Also, French Safran and DRDO have plans to cooperate on fighter engines and upgrade them (The Hindu, 2018).

Paris also supported Delhi’s ‘Make in India’ initiative which provides the opportunity for many French and Indian companies to work together (Rajagopalan, 2019). The French backing remains imminent for India, especially in the defence sector.

Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific Region

“I want India to be one of the key partners of the region precisely in terms of security in order to secure what I would call the liberty of sovereignty. I think you have a big challenge, which is to preserve your sovereignty in the Indian Ocean and Pacific Ocean regions. For me, India is one of the critical partners to preserve the stability of the whole region” (see “I want France to be India’s new entrepot to Europe”)

*~ Emmanuel Macron, French President
in an exclusive interview with India Today,
an Indian-based media house*

The term ‘Indo-Pacific’ originated from a German geopolitical scholar Karl Haushofer who used it in his work ‘Indopazifischen Raum’. The modern use of the term was by former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe who introduced it in the Indian Parliament in 2007 where he remarked that *“we are now at a point at which the Confluence of the Two Seas is coming into being.”* This led to increasing cooperation with Australia, India, Japan and the USA through Quadrilateral Security

Dialogue (QUAD) thereby gaining attention from all around the world including European countries like U.K. and France (Basu, 2021).

France becomes an important player in the Indo-Pacific as Mayotte and Reunion are the naval base for the French Navy. French President Emmanuel Macron and Narendra Modi have expressed their interest to strengthen the Indo-French partnership in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). The geopolitical shift made the French interest more prominent in the Indo-Pacific and is willing to establish more substantial relations with the major players in the region which includes India.

The islands of Réunion and Mayotte in the Indian Ocean, as well as New Caledonia and French Polynesia in the South Pacific are still owned by France, which sees itself as an Indo-Pacific force. France now has the largest exclusive economic zone in the world (11 million square kilometres), 62% of which is in the Pacific Ocean and 24% in the Indian Ocean, thanks to these overseas territories and other scattered islands in the area (Mohan, 2018).

India and France decided to start a bilateral conversation to consider measures to improve their marine cooperation, particularly in the Indian Ocean region (IOR). India welcomed France's active participation in the operations of the *Indian Ocean Rim Association* and will continue to collaborate closely with France to achieve the goals outlined in the Association's charter (Ministry of External Affairs, 2015).

The *Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative* (IPOI), which India announced in November 2019, and France's 2018 *Indo-Pacific Strategy* both called for cooperation on important issues in the Indo-Pacific area, including biodiversity protection. This resulted in the '*Indo-Pacific Parks Partnership*' or '*I3P*' a Joint Declaration between Paris and New Delhi (Ministry of External Affairs, 2022a). A Maritime and space research cooperation was agreed upon by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and French President Emmanuel Macron. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on the implementation of the agreement between the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) and the French National Center for Space Studies (CNES) for cooperative work on maritime domain awareness in the IOR was signed by the two nations (Bharti 2022).

The recent high-level visits often include the Indian Ocean as an area of discussion making it a more crucial area, which included the exchange of prime ministers, the chief of the Indian Navy's trip to Paris in 2017, the French defence minister's trip to Delhi, and the exchange of foreign ministers in 2018. Both nations conduct their naval exercises in the IOR. The first bilateral naval exercise was held in 1983 and was named 'Varuna' in 2001, the 17th edition of this exercise was held in 2019. With eleven of India's and France's most advanced equipment, including two aircraft and two submarines, it was the largest exercise the two navies had ever conducted (Pandey, 2019).

The stability and security in the IOR are threatened by power competition, rising military spending and naval capabilities, threats to the multilateral order and international laws, particularly the United Nations Conference on the Law of the Seas (UNCLOS), and problems with climate change, piracy, and terrorism. The Indo-French partnership comes at an important time against the backdrop of the '*Border and Road Initiative*' (BRI) of China, and the dubious nature of China's '*String of Pearls*' strategy. This encourages the advancement of the strategic partnership between India and China in the context of the Indo-Pacific (Pandey, 2019).

ECONOMIC COOPERATION

Over the years, there has been significant economic cooperation between France and India. Since the 1950s, the two nations have been actively engaged in economic cooperation. France is one of India's most important economic partners in Europe, and the two nations have been trading and investing together for many years. Through a number of initiatives, including bilateral trade agreements, joint investments, and scientific and technological cooperation, the two nations are collaborating to strengthen their economic ties. They also have similar interests in matters like

defence, energy security, water management, climate change, sustainable development, and anti-terrorism (ICWA, 2018).

India and France established the International Solar Alliance in 2018. In order to promote solar energy and lessen reliance on fossil fuels, the alliance was formed. France has also made investments in India's renewable energy industry, with firms like Total and Engie establishing local operations. Numerous agreements facilitating cross-border trade, investment, and technology transfer have been signed by the two nations. Additionally, they are collaborating to address issues like terrorism and climate change on a global scale.

TRADE AND INVESTMENTS

This relationship, between both countries have grown stronger over the years and France has become one of India's largest trading partners. Major French companies Gobain, Veolia, Michelin, Capgemini, Sanofi, EDF, Airbus, Lactalis, Sodexo, Total, Renault, and Saint are keen to expand their business in the country. Alstom has won a major project worth 3.2 billion Euro for manufacturing 800 locomotives in Madhepura, Bihar. India's Reliance, Tata, Mahindra and other big companies have tied up joint cooperation with major French companies like Dassault, SAFRAN, Thales and others in the defence sector. French infrastructure companies are looking forward to major opportunities in Indian projects, including in smart cities and renewable energy (Ministry of External Affairs, 2017).

Goods trade (excluding military equipment) between India and France from January to December 2021 was \$12.14 billion (+39.17% year-on-year). Based on annual data provided by the French Central Bank (Banque de France), the Indian exports of services to France from January to December 2021 registered of a slight decrease of 5.84% as compared to the same period of the previous year from € 2.51 billion to € 2.37 billion, with the following five categories of services recording a growth (in descending order): 1) maintenance and repair services (+68.96%); 2) building and public works (+66.66%); 3) transport (+30.07%); 4) cultural, leisure and personal services (+5.26%) and 5) telecommunication, computer and information services (+0.27%). The two categories of services which recorded the largest decrease were: 1) financial services (-62.99%) and 2) pension and insurance services (-58.33%) (Embassy of India).

Table 1 – India-France Trade in Services over the last 5 Years (in Million €)

Year (Jan.-Dec.)	Indian Exports to France	French Exports to India	Total	Y-o-Y % of Increase/Decrease
2017	2,563	1,739	4,302	+32.85
2018	2,459	1,928	4,387	+1.97
2019	2,463	2,004	4,467	+1.82
2020	2,517	2,249	4,766	+6.69
2021	2,370	3,909	6,279	+31.74

Source: India-France Comprehensive Economic and Commercial Brief, Ministry of External Affairs

The Indian imports of services from France have however recorded a substantial growth of 73.81% last year from € 2.24 billion in 2020 to € 3.90 billion in 2021. The following seven categories of services contributed to this increase (in descending order): 1) transport (+136.02%); 2) other services to businesses (+110%); 3) commission for use of the intellectual property (+58.87%); 4) travel (+55.35%); 5) maintenance and repair services (+19.11%); 6) manufacturing services supplied

by physical inputs held by third parties (+18.96%) and 7) cultural, leisure and personal services (+14.28%) (Embassy of India).

France has emerged as a major source of FDI for India with more than 1,000 French establishments already present in India. France is the 11th largest foreign investor in India with a cumulative investment of USD 10.49 billion from April 2000 to December 2022 which represents 1.68% of the total FDI inflows into India according to statistics provided by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT). The highest FDI equity inflows are in the services sector (18.05%), with cement & gypsum products (9.29%) in the second place, followed by air transport (including air freight) (7.59%), miscellaneous industries (7.24%) and petroleum & natural gas (7.10%). These five sectors represent 49.27% of the total equity inflow from France from April 2000 to December 2022 (Embassy of India).

SPACE COOPERATION

France is a major player in the aerospace industry and India is working to develop its own aerospace industry. There have been several collaborations between Indian and French companies in the aerospace sector in recent years.

Space collaboration between France and India has a long history. The pact, which was focused on the peaceful use of space, was first signed by the two nations in 1983. An agreement to jointly develop and launch a satellite called SARAL was signed in 2007 by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and the French space agency, CNES. The satellite was put into orbit in 2013 and is used for climate and oceanographic research. On several Mars missions, India and France have also worked together. The creation and launch of the Megha-Tropiques satellite in 2011 were one of the most significant partnerships between France and India. This satellite was created to study the tropical atmosphere's water cycle and aid in the improvement of weather forecasting and climate monitoring. The French space agency assisted in the launch of India's Mars Orbiter Mission in 2013 and provided tracking assistance throughout the mission (Embassy of India).

A joint venture to produce aerospace components in India was announced in 2018 by the French company Dassault Aviation and the Indian company Reliance Defence. An agreement to establish a Bangalore-based skill development centre for the aerospace industry was signed by France and India in 2018 (Embassy of India).

The first space-based system in the world capable of tracking ships continuously will be developed by CNES and ISRO and will consist of a constellation of satellites carrying telecommunications (AIS*), radar, and optical remote-sensing instruments. France and India will work together to run the satellites, which will watch over ships in the Indian Ocean. The system will also benefit a wide range of French economic interests by providing coverage across the globe. It will be able to detect oil slicks and track their origin thanks to a revisit capability that enables tasking acquisitions several times per day (Consulate General of France, 2020).

The facility aims to educate workers in fields like aircraft assembly, maintenance, and repair. India and France will work together to launch the Mars Climate Orbiter in 2022 to learn more about the Martian atmosphere. Along with these missions, India and France have worked together on a number of other space-related projects, such as the creation of satellite launch vehicles and the sharing of technical and scientific data (Embassy of India).

France will take part in ISRO's mission to Venus, set to launch in 2025, in the field of space exploration. Following a request for proposals, ISRO chose the VIRAL instrument (Venus Infrared Atmospheric Gases Linker), which was jointly developed with the Russian Federal Space Agency Roscosmos and the LATMOS atmospheres, environments, and space observations laboratory attached to the French National Scientific Research Centre CNRS. The French contribution will be organised and prepared by CNES; this will be the first time a French payload is launched on an Indian exploration mission (Consulate General of France, 2020).

INFRASTRUCTURE

India's Indo-Pacific commitments are constructing sustainable infrastructure and promoting a blue economy and maritime policy that fully supports the rule of law at a time when China's aggressive policies and Belt and Road Initiative are pushing nations into debt. Co-launching the roadmap with France gave it a boost. Based on the roadmap, India and France will hold an annual bilateral discussion on the blue economy and ocean governance. The roadmap document states that the dialogue will be crucial in developing, organising, and monitoring cooperation projects in the partnership's four pillars, which are economic, infrastructure, scientific, and academic (CW Team, 2022).

AFD's work in India, where we are funding the construction of metro lines in Bengaluru, Kochi, Nagpur, Pune, and Surat, is centred on sustainable mobility. France helped the cities of Nagpur, Chandigarh, and Pondicherry develop and implement their "Smart City" projects to share French expertise. This national initiative aimed to boost urban services' effectiveness and efficiency, especially in the fields of transportation, governance, energy, and the environment (AFD and India). The Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor, the Smart City, the Chennai Metro Project, the Mumbai Metro Project, and others are some of the major projects. French firms like Alstom, Thales, Egis, Schneider Electric, and EDF participated in the construction work for these important projects. Aside from this, France supported these projects financially and technically (IBEF, 2022).

Overall, the relationship has significantly grown in recent years as a result of increased trade and investment between the two nations. The global economy, as well as the future of both countries, will be significantly impacted by the economic ties between France and India.

CULTURAL COOPERATION/ SOFT POWER

Cultural exchange between France and India has a long and rich history. India and France have had a close relationship going back to the days of the Silk Road. The appreciation of one another's traditions, arts, music, literature, cuisine, and other cultural aspects strengthen the cultural bonds between the two nations. Over the years, this shared understanding has contributed to the improvement of India and France's diplomatic ties. Prime Minister Modi himself said that "the most important dimension for a bright future of our bilateral relations is our people-to-people contacts, especially among our youth". "Namasté France" festival to highlights Indian culture and arts was organized in 41 cities in France in 2016. 'Bonjour India' was also organized in 33 Indian cities (Ministry of External Affairs, 2018).

"France-India Programme for the Future", which is a French initiative aimed at fostering youth exchanges, are useful initiative for the future growth of India-France ties (ICWA, 2018).

India and France want to promote tourism. India registered a growth of over 15.7 per cent in foreign tourist arrivals in 2017. About 5.67 million foreign tourists visited during the first seven months of 2017 compared to 4.9 million guests recorded in the corresponding period of 2016 (Behra, 2017). France – one of the most attractive destinations in the world is also keen to attract more tourists. India and France have also taken the help of Bollywood to generate more awareness about each other.

The two nations have been able to establish close ties in a variety of areas, including art, literature, music, dance, theatre, and film, thanks to various initiatives like educational exchanges, collaborative research projects, and cultural events. The citizens of India and France are now more aware of one another's cultures as a result of their collaboration.

Additionally, the two nations have collaborated to address international problems like combating poverty, addressing climate change, and fostering regional stability. The two nations' close relationship has led to a greater exchange of ideas and information in a variety of fields, including the arts, cultures, sciences, and technologies. As a result, there is now more cooperation

between Indian and French citizens in a variety of areas, including business opportunities, research, and education (ICWA, 2018).

The shared appreciation of art and literature between India and France is among the most important facets of their cultural relationship. Long fascinated by India's rich cultural heritage, French authors and artists have created a large body of work that draws inspiration from Indian philosophy, literature, and art. Similarly, French culture has influenced Indian writers and artists, and their works show this influence. India and France both have a passion for cinema in addition to art and literature. One of the most prestigious film festivals in the world, the Cannes Film Festival, frequently screens films from France and India.

Their shared love of food and cooking is a significant aspect of India and France's cultural relationship. Indian cuisine has been greatly influenced by French cuisine, which is well-known throughout the world. In turn, Indian spices and flavours have influenced French cooking, resulting in the development of fusion dishes that are well-liked in both nations.

5. Conclusion

The partnership between India and France, which was formed in 1998, has only become more robust over time. Although the initial focus was on defence contracts, the relationship has undergone significant changes with the shift in leadership. The change in dynamics of the bilateral relations was seen after the appointment of PM Narendra Modi in India in 2014 and French President Emmanuel Macron in 2017.

While France is a proponent of India's "Make in India" program, India remains keen to attract investments from France, particularly in the defence industry. The Indo-French alliance is crucial in counterbalancing China's increasing influence in the Indo-Pacific which has been accelerated since the establishment of the I3P.

One of the most important recommendations for enhancing future relations is to address the trade imbalance between the two nations. The trade imbalance, which sees India importing more from France than it does from it, is one of the main issues in the economic relationship between France and India. Both nations can work to increase Indian exports to France as a solution, especially in industries like IT, pharmaceuticals, and textiles. To encourage exports, France can also look into investment opportunities in the manufacturing sector of India.

India and France could encourage Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) Collaboration as both their economies heavily rely on small and medium-sized businesses. Cooperation between SMEs from the two nations can improve trade relations and create new business opportunities. The governments can facilitate this by organizing business delegations, trade fairs, and exhibitions.

The two countries' bilateral relations will benefit from promoting research and development collaboration as well. India and France can consider working together on research and development in industries like biotechnology, aerospace, and renewable energy. The two nations can work together to advance technology and innovation because they both have strong capabilities in these fields.

Facilitating business between the two nations will also help to strengthen relations. India has made a number of improvements to the country's business environment, including streamlining procedures and regulations. France and India can cooperate to make it easier for French businesses operating in India to conduct business, including by streamlining tax and investment regulations.

In summary, addressing trade imbalance, promoting collaboration between SMEs, encouraging research and development collaboration, improving ease of doing business, and promoting people-to-people contact can all help in enhancing economic relations between India and France.

As two nations with rich cultural histories, France and India could further their bilateral ties

by fostering cultural ties. Promoting Cultural Exchanges is one way to improve ties between France and India on a cultural level. Fostering cultural exchanges can aid in fostering appreciation and understanding of one another's cultures. This can be accomplished by planning cultural activities like concerts, dance performances, exhibitions, and film festivals. These occasions can offer a stage for performers and artists from both nations to exhibit their abilities and interact with one another's cultures. Increased language exchange programmes could be another action. French is widely spoken in India, and India is one of the largest markets for French language education. France can work with India to promote language exchange programs, providing opportunities for Indian students and professionals to learn French and vice versa. This can help in improving communication and understanding between the two countries.

A great way to advance cross-national cultural ties is through heritage conservation. France and India have extensive cultural ties, and there is great potential for cooperation in heritage preservation. The preservation and promotion of the two nations' historical sites, museums, and cultural institutions can be accomplished through cooperation. This may promote a greater understanding of one another's cultural traditions.

Academic cooperation between institutions of higher learning and organisations could be a significant step towards bridging the cultural divide between the two nations. India and France can work together academically to advance cross-cultural understanding. Collaboration in the academic sector can lead to a better understanding of each other's cultural traditions and foster deeper ties between the two countries.

The best way to experience a culture is when it is open to tourists, so promoting tourism is another excellent idea for assisting the two nations' successful cultural fusion. The two countries' cultural ties can be strengthened by promoting tourism. India has a thriving and diverse tourism industry, and France is one of the most popular tourist destinations in the world. The two nations can cooperate to promote cultural tourism by showcasing one another's traditions and cultural heritage. This may contribute to fostering a greater appreciation for and understanding of one another's cultures.

6. Funding

This study received no specific financial support.

7. Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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