
The Indo-French Strategic Ties

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Abstract

India's strategic partnership with France in 1998 was seen by many strategic experts as a significant change in Indian foreign policy. The demise of the Soviet Union and, later on, India's nuclear explosion were positive steps to develop an active multidirectional diplomacy which was quite different from the non-alignment. The opening of globalization of India's economy also had to be matched by the opening of her geo-political horizon. While the United States viewed India's nuclear explosion as the negative impact of the tests, France offered "a very distinct overarching perspective much more open to India's expectations. Moreover, the enhanced Indo-French security co-operation offers an opportunity to address much wider issues, which would look into the present status of global order and as well define India's status in international politics. To examine the development of Indo-French strategic cooperation one has to reassess the historical background of their overall relations and then to suggest the reasons for (1) limited French involvement in Indian affairs before 1991 and (2) after 1991 France's eagerness to improve relations with the country.

Keywords: non-alignment, strategic partnership, human rights, globalization, BRICS, Indo-China Conflict of 1962, NATO, Tarapur nuclear plant, NSG, National Security Advisor, Joint naval exercise, aerial exercise, army exercise, EDF.

India's strategic partnership with France in 1998 was seen by many strategic experts as a significant change in Indian foreign policy. On 26 July, 2013, at the IDSA, New Delhi, the French Minister of Defence Jean-Yves Le Drian termed India as a "major priority" for French diplomacy and stressed the need for military cooperation and the enforcement of their strategic autonomy so that they can "feel more stronger, safer, closer to each other." Motivating this diplomatic attitude are the perception of converging interests, a shared vision of the world and the need for France to shape new international partnerships.¹ The demise of the Soviet Union and, later on, India's nuclear explosion were positive steps to develop an active multidirectional diplomacy which was quite different from the non-alignment. The opening of globalization of India's economy also had to be matched by the opening of her geopolitical horizon. While the United States viewed India's nuclear explosion as the negative impact of the tests, France offered "a very distinct overarching perspective much more open to India's expectations."² Moreover, the enhanced Indo-French security co-operation offers an opportunity to address much wider issues, which would look into the present status of global order and as well define India's status in international politics. To examine the development of Indo-French strategic cooperation one has to reassess the historical background of their overall relations.

Historical Legacy:

The relationship between France and India is deeply rooted in our common history. From these historical relations was born a strategic partnership" the French President stated in February 2013 in Mumbai. This was, he wanted to bring out that France and India shared a particular link based on common history. Indeed, from the first half of the 17th Century, France has been one of the major European powers trying to establish colonies in India. The French East India Company established its first commercial post on Indian territory in 1719. The French

possessed 510 km² of Indian land till 1954. It included Chandernagor in Bengal, Mahe on the Malabar Coast, and Pondicherry, Karikal and Yanaon in the current Tamil Nadu. In 1798, the Directory, in spite of the huge cost of such an enterprise, agreed to send “a force of 15000 men from Suez to India, to join the forces of Tipu-Sahib and drive away the English”. Napoleon Bonaparte even promised that “as soon as he had conquered Egypt, he would establish relations with the Indian princes and, together with them, attack the English in their possessions.”³

But despite these irregular rises of interests towards India, the English presence was more overwhelming. From 1741, under the leadership of Joseph Francois Dupleix, the French troops tried hard to increased their physical presence through an aggressive policy against both Indians and the British. But in 1754, as the situation worsened in Europe, the French government sent a special commissioner with orders to stop Dupleix’s expansionist policy.

However, history reveals that there was long-lasting bond between the two countries. But as compared to Great Britain, India had deep and better understanding with Britain. They share a common language and are part of a same organization, the Commonwealth. Earlier in 1950’s and 60s, the first French President did not even showed a political will to build a strategic partnership with India. Later on, in 1998, Jacques Chirac came up with a concrete proposition to develop strategic partnership.

Although India’s attitude towards human rights is somewhat not upto the mark. Like France, India is also signatory of the universal Declaration of Human Rights. In case of India, a respectful and democratic image thus prevails. For the former President Chirac, “Nowadays, the Indian and the French share the most important values. These values we both fought for at different stages of our History. We have in common the idea of a nation creating people’s adhesion, their will to live together, and their projects of future. Each nation following its path, India and France made live and grow these

universal values: justice, liberty, equality, and fraternity. These same principles are the basis of the French Republic and included in your Constitution. Both claim the principle of secularism which lay stress on tolerance and people's unity". In 1988, he was, therefore, highlighting the reasons why the solidarity and cooperation between the two countries was making sense. In today's globalized world, such countries should stick together to impact the multilateral game and impose their shared vision of a multi-polar world.⁴

Vision of a Multi-Polar World:

France fully understand that India's democracy is quite different from western world. The non-aligned movement promoted by Nehru was a compulsion for India to improve economic conditions. Hence, India did not responded to US sponsored military alliances. After the cold war, India re-shaped its foreign policy and relations with the United States. The Indo-American reconciliation really moved forward under Bush. However, India will never be an unwavering performer of the American policy in Asia. Indeed, the Asian nation is a lonely player in the international game, in the way that it does not in align on other's view.⁵ In order to protect its own interests, India went for strategic dialogue with every potential partner on specific issues. Therefore, India forged alliances in North-South groups (India, Brazil, Japan, Germany) to reform the United Nations Security Council, as well as in South-South groups or even the World Trade Organisation, to denounce the US and EU protectionism in agriculture. India is also working on a deepened collaboration with emerging countries such as Brazil and South –Africa in the form of BRICS.

In the South Asian region, India appears to France a factor of stability, said Jean-Yves Le Drian in a speech about the Indo-French defence strategic partnership, in July 2013. Indeed, India is seen as a possible counterbalance in the South-Asian geopolitical scheme. The French officials , especially François Holland in his last speche on the Indian soil, re-

affirmed their support to India as a reasonable actor of stability and security in Asia. He said it clearly, "India reassures where China is scaring". The role of India is, therefore, crucial to ensure a balance in a region dominated by the powerful China. For instance, during the visit of the Indian Defence Minister, one of the questions asked by the French diplomats showed their concerns about the Chinese neighbor, and their credit in the Indian capacity to solve the issue. He was indeed asked whether China's string of pearls programs, which recently worked on several maritime locations in India's neighbourhood, was a cause of worry for Mr. Mathai. Apparently this French concern was not shared by the Indian minister. Eventually, the disappointing visit of the French President in Shanghai and Beijing, in April 2013, urged their needs to forge other alliances in the region. The sudden rise of interests towards India thus makes sense.

If China is a major actor in the region, the United State's influence cannot be neglected. At several occasions, France refused to play the US game in Asia. For instance, in 2003, France refused to answer the call by the American government to send troops in Iraq. The famous anti-war speech of the Foreign Minister in front of the UN assembly surprised the US officials and its allies who did not dare to oppose the intervention. India has also interest in leading a distinct policy in Asia. For instance, in Afghanistan, both countries have been more or less constrained to follow the US view in the region. The partnership with India is, therefore, seen as a boon for France in order to weigh more on the strategic policies and the regional stability.

Furthermore, the struggle against international terrorism is a priority for both government, since they have both undergone or been the target of terrorist attacks. With Pakistan as a neighbor, a country carefully scrutinized by the French anti-terrorism services, India appears as a key partner. The French Defence Minister affirmed that his country was "ready to share with India the military lessons drawn from its action against terrorism . High risks exit beyond Mali in the

other countries of the Sahel region and the entire geographic axis that runs from Pakistan to the North Atlantic.”

A Deepened Security Cooperation:

The French has identified common interest with India in terms of defence, internal security and nuclear energy. This vision largely influenced in shaping the Strategic Partnership. The cooperation in defence has always been seen as a priority for the French government. For our purpose, we can divide the Indo-French defence cooperation in two phases 1947-1990 and 1991-till now.

Phase I - : 1947-1990

After gaining independence in 1947 Nehru’s problem was to assess properly the international strategic environment and then, to formulate India’s foreign and defence policies to meet any eventuality. The Indo-French defence cooperation, during this period was influenced by the following factors:

- Externally, the major challenge to India’s security came from the politics of the Cold War particularly the ideological rivalry between the USA and the Soviet Union.
- The assertive role of France and China also affected the functioning of the western and eastern camps. In a way, it was a turning point towards multipolarism in international politics.
- Internally, Nehru’s stress on geography⁶ to realize India’s foreign policy goals. This was based on the conviction that every big nations of Europe after World War II, were involved in their own problems. The United States was “too far away for effective action. The threat from Russia was largely imaginary because Russia was in greater need of peace.”
- Hence post independent India had to face actual and potential threats from Pakistan and later China.

- To meet the external and internal challenges, India opted for the policy of “non-alignment.”

When the French government asked for a 10 year extension of the 1945 agreement permitting military air ferries to fly across India, Nehru, then denied the permission by saying Indian was very much against the use of force by the French government against the people of Indo-China. But, on July 16, 1947, an Agreement on Air Services between India and France was nevertheless signed.

In early 1950's, Nehru was eager to develop atomic energy in India. For Nehru “the scientific approach and temper represented “the temper of a free man.⁷ In 1947, while addressing the 34th session of the Indian Congress, he declared that in India there is a growing realization that the scientists and politicians should work together. Furthermore, in the same year, he states that ”atomic energy is going to play a vast and dominating part in the future shape of things...it will make power mobile and this mobility of power can make industry develop anywhere. We will not be tied up by the accidents of geography. Atomic energy will help cottage industry.”⁸ Thus, India's desire for nuclear technology was an important element of national development for the next six or seven decades.

When Nehru visited Paris on September 22, 1962, he made it clear to General de Gaulle that the danger is from China “which is sending most of the resources for preparing the bombs.” Four weeks after the meeting in Paris, the Chinese attacked India on October 20, 1962. During this war, General de Gaulle conveyed to the India Ambassador, Ali Javar Jung, that “France is a friend of India and not its ally and, therefore, will not provide any military support, which in case, has not been requested by India.” France was prepared to provide some military supplies but was not ready to intervene.

During this period, the French armament sales were relatively large. Though the Indian Air Force did not directly participated in the conflict with China but Frances's 49 Ouragan fighter planes, 110 Mystere and 12 Alizee were in

service. Furthermore, 150 AMX 13 light tanks were sold to India in 1957. The total arms sale from France between 1950 to 1962 was \$ 794 million which made it the second most important country after Britain's \$4,612million and the USSR and the USA contributed \$ 612 million and \$ 248 million respectively.⁹

After the Sino-India War, on Jan. 31, 1964, General de Gaulle stated "China as a great people, the most populous country, industrious, hardworking.... a state more ancient than history, steadfast proud of its ageless continuity; that is China of the age. "On this basis, France recognized the people's Republic of China and found a new "friend". Nehru had to plan her security needs against China whom he considered as "Asian brother."

In 1965, India fought another war with Pakistan. The American military assistance to Pakistan depended the crisis in South Asia. Between 1963 to 1965, the American military aid to Pakistan and India were \$ 285 million and \$ 75 million respectively. During this war, following the US's leadership, France imposed arms embargo against the belligerents. However, France continued to send spare parts for Indian aircraft. This embargo was lifted in March 1966.

The Franco-Indian reaction to the NPT is interesting. The nuclear policies were integral part of their foreign policies during the Cold War period which was still dominated by superpowers power politics. Charles Gaulle's decision in 1966 to keep it out from integrated military command of NATO is a classic example of the French foreign policy in practice. On the other hand, India's policy of non-alignment and anti alliance attitude were the cornerstone of her foreign policy. It was found that during this period, France remained an "Indian friend" not an "ally". French arms sale "to India was \$ 323 million while the Soviet Union gave \$7100 million and the US\$ 76 million arms aids. The French arms delivery were Alize aircrafts, AS 30 air to surface missile. Entai and SS-11/AS-11 anti tank missiles. On the whole, France's approach was commercial. The "commercial" attitude of the French government was criticized

by its western allies but in India it enhanced France's image as the most reliable western friend.

The year 1971 was an important watershed in the history of Indo-French cooperation. India fought another war with Pakistan. During the war, USA tilt towards Pakistan became important for France to support the Indian cause on Bangladesh crisis. This was made clear by French Representative during the debate in the UN Security Council. He stated; "we appreciate the fact that India cannot feel satisfied with a superficial solution when it has million of refugees under its care". The Indian Official Report of the 1971 war stated that although France and UK were both allies of the USA, "they did not toe American line."

In the 1970s certain events directly or indirectly affected Indo-French security relations. First in May 1974, India tested a nuclear bomb in Pokhran. Second, India's nuclear test got adverse reactions from countries like the USA, Canada, Australia, Japan and other countries. Third, it was France the only western country, that supported India on the test and it further depended the Indo-French cooperation. On May23, 1974, the French Ambassador to India said, "The Indians are particularly pleased because France has abstained from all unfriendly judgments and they believe that France is herself well placed to understand the Indian position in this domain. India has demonstrated at the same time interesting technical capacities as well as great statecraft by conducting the first explosion underground thus making her undoubtedly a nation that has never tested in the atmosphere. The great power the only nuclear power who are criticizing the increase of "pollution" in the world, thus cannot mobilize against India on this ground the peaceful nuclear brought these two countries more closer and French government attitude explosion."¹⁰ Thus, the peaceful nuclear was more confident that the NPT would not be a hindrance further strengthened their relation, particularly, the technological collaboration with France in the years to come.

In the mid 1970's Indian and French intelligence had a friendly rapport when RAW Chief R.N.Rao visited Paris to meet Alexander de Marenches to set up a tripartite collaboration between RAW, the SDECE and the Iranian JAVAC. The end of 1970s was marked by the Soviet presence in Afghanistan. The assassination of Indira Gandhi in 1984 and later on a French spy scandal, known as Coomar Narain case, had shocked the nation. Despite this, it did not affected India's collaboration with France, particularly for the Mirage deal. Another scam which had indirect ramification for France was the Bofour arms deal which has remained in the news till date. The former Army Chief, General K.Sundarji, affirmed: "In 1982, talks were going on with the French government for 300 Sofma self-propelled guns. He even suggested the French guns because of its performance and trials. And the Sofma guns fitted into the category. The rest of the story is well known.

Thus, during this period, French remained India's friend. From 1972 to 1989, France was the third country which supplied arms to the tune of \$ 2113 million only after the Soviet Union and Britain's supply of arms worth \$ 33,622 million and \$ 7001 million respectively. In 1979, India ordered 1000 short range air to air missiles, R-550 magic-I and 40 PA-6 diesel engines for offshore patrol vessels. In 1981, France supplied 1000 Milan anti tank missiles. By the end of 1982, India received its first Milan anti tank missiles. The Bharat Dynamic Limited started manufacturing them in January 1985 under a French license. Moreover, the purchase of 150 Mirage-2000 was announced in December 1981 but the first part comprising of 26 single seater and 4 two seaters were shipped in 1985. A second batch of 6 Mirage 2000 H single seater and 33 Mirage 2000 TH were dispatched in 1987-88.¹¹

1991 to till Date:

The year 1991 saw the emergence of India as a major power. India had the courage to open up the economy with the result witnessed by us even today. In 1992, the then, Prime Minister

P.V. Narasimha Rao visited France and discussed the economic reforms that India was implementing. He called for investment, cooperation in nuclear energy, space and oil research and drew the attention of the French government.

In economic terms, India gave enough a space for France to secure a “noticeable market” both in civilian and defence fields. In 1994, 40 Airbus and 49 Mirage aircraft were flying in India. There were certain issues where India and France had different perceptions. For instance, on the extension of NPT, France was in favour and as a France stopped the delivery of enriched uranium to Tarapur nuclear plant. But these difference did not affected other political and economic bilateral relations. Such was the kind of relationship developed between India and France in 1990s that led Hubert Vedrine, the then Minister for External Affairs to state that India should be given a higher status for in world affairs.

The most striking feature of this period was Indo-French strategic partnership. The French President Jacques Chirac was keen on an “ambitious partnership”. He stated that India has “affirmed its personality on the world stage” and France wanted to “accompany India in its potent march towards the future”. Later on, in order to promote and protect her interests globally and regionally, India signed Strategic Partnership Agreements with the European Union and the United States. Both the countries realized the necessity to build a more stable relationship with European Union. The reason being that both India and European Union laid great emphasis on the imperatives of opposing unilateralist tendencies in the world political order. The Indo- European Strategic Partnership effectively added yet another “pole” to the emerging multi-polar global balance of power and “both the European Union and Indian have always been strong defenders of multilateralism.”¹²

The end of the 20th Century was marked by the nuclear explosion by India and Pakistan. There was worldwide condemnation. But, France was one of the few countries which did not condemned Indian nuclear explosion or imposed sanctions. The French Defence Minister viewed that India’s test

conduct as relying solely upon her capacity and that she was not willing to export her technological knowledge. This was greatly appreciated by the India government.

The explosion also gave a strong message to Indian decision makers that there was no room for Nehru's non-realist foreign and security policy based on "playing off the great powers against each other diplomatically from a position of military and economic weakness."¹³ Ashok Kapur felt that "Nehru paradigm effectively made India a weak status quo country. After 1998, India sought a position as a strong status quo power. The 1998 test decision secured long term gain and an increase in India's negotiating space with the powers."¹⁴

Furthermore, Atal Vajpayee, the then Prime Minister, in October, 1998 told that the press, "French and India have decided to initiate a strategic dialogue between the two countries. Both the countries share a perspective that the new world order has to be a genuine multipolar world order. Our bilateral relationship is poised to grow in the coming months in a multi dimensional manner." Hence, the relationship was transformed from "friendship" to "partnership". "The political and strategic dialogue initiated by France could now be started with Indian, who was then defining herself, to quote Air Commodore Jasjit Singh, as "a state with nuclear weapons".¹⁵

Although France signed the NPT in 1992, it did not affected Indo-French bilateral relations. In 2006, France signed an agreement expressing its desire for civil nuclear cooperation with India and finally in September 2008, France became the first country to sign a civil nuclear agreement with India, even before the United States Senate had approved US-India civil nuclear agreement. In June 2011, when NSG declared that it would not supply enrichment and reprocessing technology to countries that are non-signatories to the NPT, France declared that it would not affect its bilateral nuclear cooperation with India.¹⁶

Moreover, France and India have also instituted a high level "Strategic Dialogue at the level of National Security Advisor". It provides both sides an opportunity to review key

elements of the bilateral agenda between them and more so, the overall global security situation and emerging challenges. In 2011, the former French Foreign Minister, Alian Juppe and the then Indian External Affairs Minister, SM Krishna reviewed the progress on the implementation of the Joint Declaration on bilateral, regional and international issue of common interest and importance. “India-France : Partnership for the Future” was adopted by the Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and the then French President Nicholas Sarkozy on December 6, 2010. In June 2012, both the Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and the French President François Hollande’s met at the G-20 Summit in Los Cabos. Francois Hollande visit to India in the first quarter of 2013 was seen as an important step in developing an enduring and close partnership. This was Francois Hollande’s first visit to a large Asian democracy and he preferred India to Brazil, Russia and South Africa.

Decoding the Strategic Partnership:

When the two countries Presidents met in February 2013, an Indian editorial in the Hindustan Times sarcastically pinpointed that Belgium was a bigger commercial partner than France. However, the direct sales from state to state are considerable for France, as India is a major customer for military and nuclear equipments. In fact, every French President visiting India has been depicted as a salesman, and said to be coming only to get contracts for the big companies. Recently, the main goal of Francois Hollande was indeed to sell aircrafts, the Rafale, never sold abroad so far, and nuclear plants.¹⁷ Consequently, France’s exports toward India mostly depends on the signature of big contacts in armament and infrastructures. As of today, less than 800 French companies are settled in India, employing almost 150000 Indian workers.¹⁸

France has also showed keen interest in infrastructural development in Maharashtra. In December, 2010, as a result, a project was signed for two pressurized European reactors at Jaitapur 400 km south of Mumbai. The \$ 9.3 billion framework

agreement is a contract for Areva to develop a 9900 megawatt nuclear power plant. Recently, it was opposed by the environmentalists who are more serious about seismic activity in the area. They quoted the Fukushima nuclear disaster in Japan. Hence, they emphasised on the safety of the nuclear plant. The joint statement emphasized that the Jaitapur units would incorporate the highest safety standards. The Indo-French strategic relations have benefitted both the countries in several ways. Besides this, both the countries have now started conducting various joint armed exercises.

Joint Naval Exercises:

India and France have cooperated in various areas of defence cooperation. As the Indian Ocean is critical for both the states, the cooperation is important not only for information exchange but also for joint anti-piracy operation in the wake of China's growing dominance. In 2006, the Indian navy regarded joint naval exercises as a "significant indicator". Conducting successful Varuna joint naval exercise, the Indian Ministry of Defence said that "in recent years the Indian navies had laid great emphasis on increasing bilateral ties and interoperability with navies of developed countries through professional and operational interactions." Varuna, 2007, a sea and air military exercises was held from September 11-19, 2007, off the Somali Coasts and in the Gulf of Aden in continuation of the exercises organized in March and April 2006 off the coast of Goa. Again, Indo-French Naval exercise Varuna, was held in the Mediterranean sea off the port of Toulon from 19-22, July, 2012.

Aerial Exercise: From February 12 to 23, 2007 the French and Indian Air Force carried out the third edition of the Garuda series of airforce exercises. The exercise took place at Kalaikunda Air Force Station. The French Air Force participated with I Airborne Warning and Control System aircraft, 4 Mirage 2000-D, air to ground Fighters and 4 Mirage

200-5 Air Defence fighters. The Indo-French Air Force Exercise Garuda IV was held at Istres air base in France from 14-25 June 2010 with participation of SU MKI aircraft from India.

Army Exercise: Both the countries have held their first ever joint army exercises in India called “Shakti 2011” at Chaubattia from 9-22 October 2011. Such joint armed exercises have further increased military-to-military relations between the two countries.

The Mirage- 2000 up gradation contract was signed between India and French companies M/s Thales, M/s Dassault aviation on 29 July, 2011. Similarly, a contract for procurement on 493 MICA Air to Air missile for fitment on upgraded Mirage-2000 has also been signed between the Indian government and M/s MBDA, France in January, 2012.¹⁹ India, with its skill base and projected economic growth is the preferred partner nation for MBDA due to its unique potential of becoming a defence industrial hub. It will benefit from India software skills with the country’s low cost base. On the other hand, India will gain access to the world’s most advanced guided missile technology, which will give the nation a much greater degree of autonomy in developing its current and long term defence capabilities.²⁰

One of the most closely watched military deals in the world saw India, in the beginning of February 2012, opting for French firm Dassault Aviation Rafale over its rival EADS Cassidian’s Eurofighter Typhoon worth \$ 18 billion (Rs 90,000 crore) to supply as nuclear strike, air defence, air superiority, air-to-ground precision strikes and antiship attacks.²¹

Today, the Indian military finds itself in the midst of a renaissance driven by induction of top of the line weapon system. In the age when Europe is facing economic crisis and the western world is feeling the sharp edge of cuts in arms spending, India is building her military capabilities by including such weapons as stealth jets, aircraft carriers, nuke powered submarines, submarines hunters and special operational aircrafts.

France-Pakistan-China vis-à-vis India:

Any discussion on Indo-French defence cooperation would be complete without drawing attention on the relationship between France, Pakistan and China. So far France is concerned, it has been a good arms suppliers to Pakistan. India believes that these sophisticated weapons or equipments acquired by Pakistan would be used against India rather against the terrorists. Pakistan's priority is to fight against terrorism which endanger its national security. France cannot say no to Pakistan in its fight against terrorism at home, without helping it to strengthen the security capability. It is in this spirit and with this requirement in mind France is supporting Pakistan. Terrorism has engulfed the entire world. France is no exception. What happened in France in January 2015 cannot be easily forgotten.

Then, there is the Chinese question. Recently, in nuclear power cooperation France and China signed statements and MOU on 25 April, 2013. Even in the cold war era, the two countries in cooperated in nuclear power capabilities. 30 years ago both France and China began to build the Daya Bay Nuclear Power Station in Shenzhen, South China's Guangdong Province. Daya Bay station is China's largest supplying electricity to Hong Kong and the country's mainland power grid as well. The reactors were designed and developed with nuclear power technologies from Electricity De France (EDF). France was the only country that transferred its nuclear power in the 1980s. "EDF has become the largest foreign electricity investor in China and the country's most important international partner on the field of electricity."²² EDF is participating in China's massive development of nuclear power capacity by not only providing technical support but also getting involved in operation and investment. EDF has also signed cooperation agreement with several major electricity supplies in China. The cooperation will help EDF make breakthroughs in its business in China, Asia as well as other markets.²³

Has French defence cooperation with Pakistan and China affected India's security. The answer is no, every country has the privilege to develop its relations with any power. Today, France is more reliable partner and in future also the relationship will be strengthened because of the changed global power politics, problem of terrorism and their role in United Nations for peace-keeping and peace building in conflict ridden states.

Conclusion:

What kind of scenario emerges from the above analysis? France, like other countries, has now fully recognized the power potential of India. Besides a market of arms sale to France, India also offers the potential of a regional stabilizer, a force for political stability and democratic norms. Defence cooperation between India and France has entered a new phase with the growth of India's defence industrial base. From earlier position of "buyer-seller" relation" it has now transformed into "co-development and co-production" of major defence equipment of India. Defence analysts point out that both countries are now looking to enhance their bilateral relationship to a more solid strategic partnership, a development that could see the European powerhouse rival, the United States, as India's defence partner of choice.

The recent visit of the French President Francois Hollande has added an impetus to Indo-French strategic partnership. India was his first destination to Asia and this indicates that India is a priority for French foreign policy. Today, one finds deepening of European crisis on the one hand and economic reforms in India, on the other hand. In the light of economic crisis, Francois Hollande persists for improved trade and economic relations that will result in economic growth and create employment opportunities in France. Recent trends indicates both the countries like to develop and expand their economic and defence ties. Furthermore, both India and France could enlarge it to areas of cooperation by not limiting to

only economic or defence ties but also work for further expansion of relations in the fields of education, cultural exchange and tourism that will create an ideal environment for a viable commercial opportunities.

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