

Political Aspects of Indo-French Relation in Post Independent India

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Abstract-Indo-French relations took a new direction in the 1990s. The year 1991 saw the emergence of India as a major power. After more than 40 years of planned economy, 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. Narashimha 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 to the issue of terrorism. The most striking feature of this period was Indo-French strategic partnership. The end of the 20th Century saw the nuclear explosion by India and Pakistan. Major Power condemned their action. But, France was one of the few countries which did not condemn Indian nuclear explosion or imposed sanction.

Keyword: - Indo, France, Terrorism, Defence, Strategic partnership.

Introduction-Relations between India and France have traditionally been close and friendly. With the establishment of strategic partnership in 1998, there has been a significant progress in all areas of bilateral cooperation through regular high-level exchanges at the Head of State/Head of Government levels and growing cooperation and exchanges including in strategic areas such as defence, counter-terrorism, nuclear energy and space. France was the first country with which India entered into an agreement on civil nuclear cooperation following the waiver given by the Nuclear Suppliers' Group, enabling India to resume full civil nuclear cooperation with the international community. There is also a growing and wide-ranging cooperation in other areas such as trade and investment, culture, science & technology and education. France has consistently supported India's increasing role in international fora, including India's permanent membership of the UNSC.

The momentum of bilateral exchanges has been maintained at the highest level over recent years. A clear indication of the importance that France assigns to the strategic partnership with India was the fact

that India was the first country in Asia that the President chose for a bilateral visit.

Institutional Structure for Dialogue-France and India have instituted a Strategic Dialogue at the level of National Security Advisors whose 24th round took place in New Delhi on September 4, 2012. NSA held talks with the Diplomatic Advisor to the French President, Mr. Paul Jean-Ortiz in New Delhi on 12 July 2013. The latest round of Annual Foreign Office Consultations at the level of Foreign Secretaries was held in Paris on 17 June, 2013. The 3rd meeting of the JWG on Counter-terrorism was held in New Delhi on November 19-20, 2012. The first round of the India-France cyber dialogue was held in Paris on 24 May, 2013. The first round of the Track 1.5 India-France Annual Dialogue between the Observer Research Foundation, India and the Centre for International Studies and Research was held in Paris on 23 May, 2013. The High Level Committee for Defence Cooperation (HCDC) at the level of Defence Secretaries, met in New Delhi on 26-27 April 2012. The 11th meeting of the Indo-French Research Forum (IFRF) was held in Paris from 17-19 December 2012. The 16th session of the Joint Committee for Economic and Technical Cooperation, at the level of Ministers of Commerce was held on 23-25 June, 2010 in Paris.

The Indo-French CEOs Forum, formed in 2009, has been tasked to identify new avenues for cooperation and take initiatives to facilitate business links between both countries. The sixth edition of the CEO's Forum was held in Paris on 8-9 July, 2013. It was inaugurated by Shri Anand Sharma, Hon'ble Commerce & Industry Minister along with the French Minister for Economy and Finance, Mr. Pierre Moscovici.

Indo French Trade & Investment

Bilateral trade-Indo-French bilateral trade has been growing though it has still not reached the € 12 billion target set by both the Governments during the visit of the French President to India in January 2008. The growth continued in 2011, with bilateral trade increasing by 6%. In 2012, the overall bilateral trade increased by 5.98% to € 7.9 billion riding on an increase in French aero-space exports to India but there was a decrease of 2.06% in the Indian exports to France over the same period of 2012. India still had a small trade surplus of € 1.4 billion.

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) approvals-France is the 9th largest foreign investor in India with a cumulative investment of approximately € 2.31 billion (USD 3.01 billion) during the period April 2000 to June

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2012 which represents 2% of total FDI equity inflows into India for the period. The number of technical and financial collaborations approved with France is 952. Top sectors attracting FDI inflows from France are Chemicals (other than fertilizers), Cement and Gypsum Products, Services Sector (financial & non-financial), Fuels (power & oil refinery), Electrical Equipment (including computer software & electronics) and automobile sector. There are about 800 French companies (subsidiaries or JVs, representative offices or branch offices with about 150,000 employees. These include major French companies like Capgemini, Schneider Electric, Lafarge, Renault, Sanofi Aventis, Essilor, BNP Paribas, Louis Dreyfus, Armateurs, Alstom, Areva, Saint-Gobain, Onyx, Pernod Ricard, Alcatel-Lucent, Louis Vuitton, L'Oreal, GDF, Total, Danone, Air Liquide, Vici, Veolia, Vicat etc.

Civil Nuclear Energy Cooperation-A landmark Agreement on Civil Nuclear Cooperation was signed between India and France on 30 September, 2008 during the visit of Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh to France. Subsequently, during the visit of President Nicolas Sarkozy to India from 4-7 December 2010, the General Framework Agreement and the Early Works Agreement between NPCIL and Areva for implementation of EPR NPP Units at Jaitapur were signed.

Space Cooperation-France and India view each other as important partners in space technology and applications. Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and its French counterpart Centre National de Etudes Spatiales (CNES) have a rich history of cooperation and collaboration spanning about four decades. Scientific community of the two nations cooperates in joint radiation experiment, space components development and space education.

ISRO and CNES (French National Space Agency) have an umbrella agreement, operating successfully since 1993, under which joint missions like Megha-Tropiques and SARAL have been taken up. The joint satellite Megha-Tropiques was launched on October-12, 2011 by ISRO's Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV). Another joint Indo-French satellite SARAL (Satellite for ARGOS and ALTIKA), carrying a Ka-band altimeter to study the ocean surface and a platform for collecting data, was successfully launched by PSLV on February 25, 2013. A 'Science Seminar' and 'Research and Technology Workshop' was organised in Bangalore during February 05-06, 2013 and ISRO and

CNES have jointly identified areas of further cooperation. A Statement of Intent for Long-Term Co-operation in Space between ISRO and CNES was signed between Chairman ISRO and President of CNES on 14 February 2013.

Under a commercial Launch Service Agreement between Antrix Corporation Limited (ANTRIX), the commercial arm of ISRO and ASTRIUM SAS, a Company under EADS, France, an advanced Remote Sensing satellite - SPOT -6 built by ASTRIUM SAS was successfully launched on-board ISRO's Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV – C21) on 9 September 2012. Arianespace based at France has been the major provider of launch services to Indian Geo-Stationary satellites. Subsequent to the launch of APPLE satellite on a co-operative mode, 14 Geo-Stationary satellites of India have been launched by Ariane on a commercial basis.

Defence Cooperation-With in the framework of structured talks under the Indo-French Defence Cooperation Agreement several meetings on industrial collaboration and service exchanges are held regularly. The High Level Committee for Defence Cooperation (HCDC) at the level of Defence Secretaries, met in New Delhi on 26-27 April 2012. The 11th meeting of the Indo-French Research Forum (IFRF) was held in Paris from 17-19 December 2012. Indo-French Air Force Exercise Garuda IV was held at Istres air base in France from 14 - 25 June 2010. Indo - French Naval Exercise, Varuna was held in the Mediterranean sea off the port of Toulon from 19-22 July, 2012. The first India-France joint army exercise named Shakti was conducted in India at Chaubattia from 9-22 October 2011.

Cultural Exchanges-Indian culture enjoys a wide and discerning audience among the French population, as is evident in the numerous and frequent cultural events organized all over France, spanning the entire spectrum of Indian art, music, dance, cinema and literature. While the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) sponsors visits of Indian artists to France, from time to time, there are a growing number of private impresarios who organize cultural events throughout France.

Hon'ble Minister of Culture of India, H.E. Mrs. Chandresh Kumari Katoch was on a two-day official visit to France on April 3-5, 2013. During the visit, she met her counterpart Minister of Culture and Communication of France, H.E. Mme Aurelie Filippetti. The two

Ministers reviewed the cooperation between India and France under the bilateral Cultural Exchange Programme, which was signed in Delhi on 14 February, 2013, during the visit of President Francois Hollande to India, including cooperation in the area of museums.

In keeping with the importance both the countries accord to cinema and the willingness to enhance cooperation in the field, a revised Indo-French Bilateral Film Co-Production Agreement was signed during the visit of French President to India in December 2010. An MOU was signed on 26th January 2012 between the Ministry of Culture of India and the Louvre Museum with the aim of establishing an active partnership in the area of exchange of competencies and expertise, particularly in the field of museology, temporary exhibitions etc.

The 15-month long Indian cultural festival - "Namaste France" held from 14 April, 2010 to 28 June, 2011, was a comprehensive presentation of Indian culture including art, music, dance, fashion, films, and literature as also business and education. The Festival was organized in response to 'Bonjour India', a French cultural festival, organized by the French Embassy in India in 2009-2010. The French Embassy in India has successfully organized the second edition of 'Bonjour India' from January-March, 2013. The second edition of 'Namaste France' would be held in France in February-May 2015. Various film festivals in France are celebrating the Centenary of Indian Cinema in 2013 in France. Cannes films festival had invited India as the 'Guest Country' in 2013. Several other film festivals including the South Asian Film Festival (January 2013), Vesoul International Film Festival of Asian Cinema (February 2013), Clermont Ferrand Short Film Festival (February 2013) and La Rochelle Film Festival (July 2013) have celebrated the centenary of Indian cinema.

Educational and Technical Cooperation-The bilateral educational cooperation between India and France has grown over the last few years. Around 300 MoUs have been signed between Indian and French universities and private institutions. The number of Indian students studying in France in various fields has increased over the years. For the academic year 2011-2012, 2550 Indian students came to France as compared to 2500 a year ago. There is a growing desire to further strengthen the bilateral E&T collaboration. This is reflected in the joint statement issued during the visit (February 14-15, 2013) of French

President Francois Hollande to India, which lays stress on building an education plan including twinning of higher education institutions, mutual recognition of degrees, research collaborations and training of teachers. The framework for bilateral educational cooperation is provided by the Educational Exchange Programme (EEP), which includes mutual recognition of degrees, bolstering the research programme and increasing student-scholar research mobility through a flexible visa regime). A Joint Working Group has also been set up under the EEP. One of the most important initiatives in the field of education has been the cooperation on the new IIT in Rajasthan, following a joint declaration in 2008. A Letter of Intent (LoI) was signed in 2012.

Conclusion-From present study we observed that there is a growing and wide-ranging cooperation in areas such as trade and investment, culture, science & technology and education. France has consistently supported India's increasing role in international forum, including India's permanent membership of the UNSC. The momentum of bilateral exchanges has been maintained at the highest level over recent years. A clear indication of the importance that France assigns to the strategic partnership with India was the fact that India was the first country in Asia that the President chose for a bilateral visit.

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