

Abstract:-

This paper analyses the changing patterns of Indo-France relations and traces issues of conflict and cooperation, and continuity and change between the two countries. It argues that although France's traditional-cultural relations with pre-

independent India had been good, diplomatic and political relations during the entire Cold War period were far from being friendly; rather they were formal, commercial and business oriented. The end of the Cold War ushered in new challenges for India, compelling it to undertake a thorough revision of its foreign policy. India's neo-realist aspirations to play a more active role in global politics, the French strategic support to India during the Pokharan nuclear tests, the far-

reaching changes in Europe and the desire of both countries for an all-round intensification of cooperation have led to a transformation of Indo-French relations from a 'buyer-seller syndrome' to a strategic partnership in the twenty-first century. Going by the current trend, the future of Franco-India relations look promising.

Keywords:

defence cooperation, aircrafts, armaments, insurgency, Security, strategic partnership, joint naval exercises

INDIA-FRANCE DEFENCE COOPERATION IN POST-COLD WAR ERA

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INTRODUCTION :-

India and France have come a long way and their cooperation and coordination in the fields of economy, science and technology including nuclear power, defence, culture and other spheres must be seen within the context of their common quest for achieve a just and viable multipolar world order. Indo-French cooperation in the defence field has a long history. The French help in the sphere of the Indian defence preparedness is note worthy. France has actually relieved India from the botherations of procuring arms from both of the bloc leaders, which would have brought in unnecessary political strings.

Proving Chanakya, the noted the ancient Indian Realist thinker and strategist, who said, 'your mediate neighbor is your enemy', right, India had to face the enmity and consequent security threat from both China and Pakistan. India has already fought one decisive war with China and three full-fledged wars and a low-intensity conflict at the heights of Kargil with Pakistan. This situation has necessitated high level defence preparedness on the part of India. There were several suppliers in the international arms market, especially the two Super Powers, used to attach strings with their supplies. Since India has been following the non-aligned policy, it hesitated to procure arms from the bloc leaders alone.

Hence the Indian effort was to diversity their source of arms procurement. France is a known arms supplier, specialized in certain armaments and accessories like fighter aircrafts, submarines, missile system and avionics. India needed arms for its security and France was ready to supply arms to anybody to sustain its highly sophisticated and well developed arms industry. France's arms exports unlike those of the two Super Powers go mainly to non-aligned states, which are glad to find a supplier who would not commit them to either of the blocs. Frances argues that her arms sales to the non-aligned states fare conducive to stability and peace in the world for they increase the national security of these states without drawing them into the Cold War between the two Super Powers. It was in France's own interest that the non-aligned states remain outside of the blocs. This common interest has resulted in decades long relations between France and India as supplier and procurer of arms.

India got 15 Breguet 1050 Alige aircrafts from France in 1961. During the course of the India-China war 1962, France offered to supply arms, ammunition and other equipment either in the form of grants or on credit. It provided spare parts worth \$ 4 million free of cost for its Ouragan fighter planes.

After the war with Pakistan in 1971 India emerged with a regional power in South Asia. But India still depended on USSR for his defence production. But he took some steps in defence field's varsity. This step gave more majorities under the government of Indira Gandhi in 1980. France was the main developed country to provided weapons to India in some of other world countries. The decade of 1980 when India took decision with France in the diversity of defence deals, it is the movement of developing in defence co-operation with France. India purchased defense instruments Mirage Aircraft and missile from France in this decade. This process not only continued but also become stronger in both countries.

In the early 1990s, the French offered to export the Advanced Jet Trainer (AJT) to India. This offer was under the 'technical considerations' of the Indian arms procurement decision-makers for quite some time. France and the UK were on the race to sell AJT and Hawk respectively to India. Like this, France government gave permission to sale there 1000 MW two nuclear reactor to India. So, in two decades France ready to help India in some fields like defence, nuclear and space.

In 1991, with the end of the Cold War, there was a shift in India's global strategic perception towards a closer military relationship with the West and especially with France. This has become more pronounced when India agreed to undertake joint naval maneuvers with France in the Indian Ocean. This development gave scope in service-to-service cooperation between the two countries. During his visit to India in December 1992, the French Defence Minister, Pierre Joxe, called for extended collaboration in this field.

The French were also willing to negotiate on a buy-back arrangement. As a part of the agreement to deliver Mirage-2000 combat aircrafts, France has agreed to transfer necessary technology for manufacturing 110 more of such planes in India. Later, India has also developed the facility to overhaul these fighter aircrafts. Again, France offered India to establish a part of the manufacturing facility for the latest generation of its prestigious aircraft, Mirage 2000 series; it was a package for cooperation in the defence related field. Moreover, a pact was signed between MBDA Missile Systems, a French company and Bharat Dynamics Limited company India's agency for missile development. The agreement is signed to design a new anti-tank missile and also technical cooperation in future production of air-to-air and surface-to-air missiles by India.

In 1994 Alain Juppe, French Minister for External Affairs came to India, and defined the French agenda: to restart the political dialogue and to develop the defence cooperation. Both countries could build up on what had already been achieved. Politically, New Delhi and Paris were always been to remember that France and India were democracies sharing affinities. Indo-French interests or policies diverged in several areas, for instance the French position favoring the extension of the NPT; the decision to stop the delivery of enriched uranium to Tarapur nuclear plant; or commercial litigations opposing Indian and French trade partner on energy projects; such differences would not hamper said, the Minister, the willingness to give a

new push to political defence and economic bilateral relations.

In 1995, India and France have agreed to give a new dimension to defence relations. During Paris visit Indian Air chief Marshal S.K. Kaul and his French counterpart and senior Defence Ministry officials agreed to intensify defence cooperation, especially in the state-of-the-art technology. Prime Minister P. V. Narasimha Rao, who concluded his four-day visit to France, the talk was held on June 14, with the French leadership on expansion of ties in defence and political fields. Defence Secretary, A.K. Nambiar was present at the meeting between Rao and French Defence Minister Charles Million. During the visit the Indian Prime Minister had gone to witness of air show. Moreover, New Delhi and Paris decided to form joint policy consultative ministries. The Defence Secretary was to be the head of this apex group, which also included a joint technical wing, the sub-group looking into defence know-how exchanges as well as imports from France. GIFAS, a consortium of 200 aerospace companies and the Society of Indian Aerospace Technologies and Industries (SIATI) are interacting regularly.

In 1997, India and France may give a new thrust to their defence ties, focusing on military know-how exchanges. The need for tie-ups was started, June 21, by the new French visiting Minister of State for Defence NVN Somu. Somu is leading an Indian delegation to the Paris air show. Other members of the team include the Chief of Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal, S. K. Sareen and Chairman of the Hindustan Aeronautics R. S. Sharma. India is buying a few Mirage-2000 planes from France as replacements for the peace time losses of its existing inventory of around 40 such planes, defence sources say. Paris technically is also in the race for the possible sale of its Alpha-Jet trainer aircraft to India. Service to service cooperation is governed by steering groups which take decisions after actively lassoing with the apex consultative group. The Army so far has benefited by French expertise in making antitank projectiles based on French know-how.

In the post-Pokhran-II era, India and France have begun intensive discussions on formulating and building up a long term defence partnership which transcends the traditional buyer-seller, relationship and includes technology transfers and joint development. A new 'High Committee' in the area of Defence cooperation has been established to institutionalize defence ties and determine the nitty-gritty of cooperation. The visible improvement in Indo-French defence relations has been triggered with the larger 'strategic dialogue' initiated by the two countries. The principal Secretary to the Prime Minister, Brajesh Mishra, heads, this dialogue with his French counterpart Gerard Errera. Moreover, both India and France intended to enter into a new phase of pervasive engagement, which also includes a strong service-to-service cooperation such as joint naval exercises.

The French have been participating with the Indians in war games almost twice a year since 1999. The war games had the participation of formidable maritime surveillance aircraft-Atlantique. In January 1999, George Fernandes, on his first trip abroad as Indian Defence Minister, came to Paris. The High Level Committee in the area of defence cooperation met first time in May, 1999.

In February-March 2000, Vessels from the Indian Ocean French Fleet sailed to Mumbai, then to Visakhapatnam, in the Bay of Bengal, joint exercises with the Indian Navy, an operation defined in the Indian press as 'India's first post-Pokhran naval exercise with a UN Security Council member.

Indian Air Force conducted joint exercise with the French Air Force in Gwalior in March, 2001. Its significance lies in the fact that it was first ever fighter-oriented practical exercise, during which various war-like situations were stimulated by fighter aircrafts of both countries. France has offered a long lasting military relationship to India in view of the similar vision shared by both countries on the global geo-political situation. Deeper ties could particularly evolve in joint development, technology transfer; sale of hi-tech weapons systems suggested the visiting French Defence Minister, Michelle Alliot Marie, during an interaction with press persons in New Delhi April 28, 2003.

India has signed a deal to construct six French submarines at a cost of over Rs. 15,000 Crore in October, 2005. The official go-ahead for this mega project had come through a joint statement made by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and the French President Jacques Chirac in Paris On September. The contract will just about fill the breach in submarine force levels that are poised to decline. The deal has a 30 percent offset clause, meaning that one-third of the cost of the deal would be met through import substitution. The first French Scorpion submarine will be ready for service within seven years of signing the contract.

France is bidding for the 126 combat aircraft contract with the Rafale aircraft that is a more advanced variant of the mirage. India Air Force officials have been actively lobbying for the Mirage citing investment made in maintenance, management and operations apart from the efficiency of the aircraft. The two nations recently completed the 8th round of naval exercise to achieve better compatibility improve communication and testing dissimilar equipment. Both countries fielded their flagship aircraft carriers, guided-missile destroyers and submarines.

The french helicopter carrier, frigate arrive on a six day visit Kochi in January 2007. As an important economic power, India has capable to control the seas by deploying its Navy. The Kochi visit is part of the ships visit to different countries, aimed at acquainting trainee officers on board with life at sea. The port visit at Kochi will provide an ideal opportunity for the cadets to exchange analysis with Indian Navy officers and to

enrich mutual knowledge, through cross visits, exchanges, sports and social events.

In September 2008 India and France agreed to bolster bilateral defence ties by working on joint development of quick reaction short range surface-to-air missiles and concluding a crucial deal on upgrade of Indian Air Force's front line Mirage 2000 fighters. Transformation of defence ties from a buyer-seller relationship to joint production and transfer of technology for making hi-tech weapon systems and platforms was highlighted in a joint statement issued after summit talks between Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and French President Nicolas Sarkozy in Paris. Negotiations on upgrade of IAF's fleet of 52 mirages 2000 fighters, which will enhance their life for another 25 years, are almost in final stages.

Paris and New Delhi also agreed to increase the range level and frequency of their military exchanges, joint exercise, joint programmes and prospects in the fields of defence industry, research and technology. France and India have extensive defence cooperation, with the military services of both nations conducting joint exercises. India has purchased much military equipment from France, especially the French Mirage 2000 fighter aircraft and the Scorpène class submarines. France was one of the few nations who did not condemn India's nuclear tests in 1998 and has supported India's bid to become a permanent member of the U.N. Security Council as well as G-8. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in a statement said, the two countries agreed that bilateral defence cooperation should move away from a buyer-seller relationship to joint production and transfer of technology.

CONCLUSION:

Indo-French defence ties have traditionally been good even when their broader bilateral relations were relatively indifferent. Since 1998, the fast evolution from a buyer-seller relationship to trusted multi-faceted defence cooperation is remarkable. The success of this association in the field of defence could be used as a lever for boosting other areas of Indo-French bilateral relations which are still dragging. Despite a somewhat indifferent past, defence cooperation between India and France since the establishment of their strategic partnership has proven that while both in need, the two countries have become friends indeed, which have a lot to gain from continuously improving their exchanges in the field of defence. The near future will be determining for this new-born friendship. The time has come for Indo-French defence cooperation to evolve to real mutual dependence. This will be tested by France's ability to assist India in the field of defence high technology and in the two countries' ability to design and develop joint defence projects. The possibilities are numerous but need to be seized if France and India wants to become true friends in the field of defence.

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