

AIR Spotlight - Indian Prime Minister's Tri-nation Tour

AIR Spotlight is an insightful program featured daily on the All India Radio Newsonair. In this program, many eminent panellists discuss issues of importance which can be quite helpful in [IAS exam](#) preparation. In this article, the Prime Minister's tri-nation European tour is discussed.

Participants:

- Anil Wadhwa (Former ambassador)
- Simran Sodhi (Journalist)

Context:

- Indian Prime Minister's three-nation Europe visit to Germany, Denmark, and France.

Background:

- India's neutral position in the ongoing [Russia-Ukraine conflict](#) is not in alignment with the European Union's view on the issue. There has been considerable pressure on India from the western nations including countries from the European Union to cut its ties with Russia.

Significance of the Europe visit:

- This visit signifies outreach to [European Union](#) countries amid the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict.
- The visit to Germany and France in the backdrop of the formation of a new government in Germany and the re-election of the French President is aimed at establishing a working relationship with the leadership and ensuring continuity of the exchanges.
- The visit will play a critical role in strengthening the spirit of cooperation with the countries of Germany, Denmark and France.

Progress made over the years in the India-Euro relations:

- India has traditionally shared strong bilateral ties with individual countries like the U.K. and France in Europe, whereas the overall relations with Europe have remained below potential.
- India and U.K. have a 2030 roadmap for the bilateral relationship which aims for shared security and prosperity.
- Notably, India's European engagement has been deepening over the years.
- A virtual India-EU summit was held in July 2020. In 2021, the first India-EU Leaders' meet was held and separate summit-level bilateral meetings have also occurred.

- Important agreements have been finalized in the recent past. The notable being the India-EU Strategic Partnership Roadmap to 2025 and the follow-up action plan for India-EU Strategic Partnership.
- The discussions for India-EU Free Trade Agreement have been taking place.
- The frequent official visits of European officials to India in a sign of the importance the European nations attach to relationships with India. The recent visit of the European Commission Chief Ursula Von Der Leyen to India to attend the [Raisina Dialogue](#) marks an important development.
- India and the European countries have shown increasing interest to cooperate and collaborate on the Indo-Pacific policy given the close alignment in their views for the region.

Germany visit:

- The Prime Minister took part in the biennial 6th round of the Intergovernmental meeting between India and Germany.

Significance of Germany to India:

- Germany currently holds the presidency of [G7](#) and also exercises considerable influence over the overall European Union view. This can be used to push forward the India-EU FTA negotiations and also push for closer cooperation and collaboration between India and Europe with respect to the Indo-Pacific policy.
- Germany is a world leader in clean energy technologies like battery technology and the hydrogen economy. This holds immense significance for India which has envisioned notable climate action goals for itself with steep targets for renewable energy adoption. Notably, Germany has been giving billions of dollars for the adoption of green technology in India.
- Germany houses some notable global companies. India offers them a big market for their goods and services. These companies can bring substantial amounts of foreign investments into India along with critical technology and knowledge transfer.
- Notably, India and Germany share a strategic partnership. There seems to be a growing alignment on Indo-Pacific policy and the need to contain increasing Chinese assertiveness both regionally and globally.

Recommendations:

- Given the potential for defence production, the two countries should consider working towards joint development of defence systems. This will help strengthen the strategic relationship that the two countries share.
- Collaboration in the education sector and scientific studies will impart impetus to this relationship. This involves incentivizing more Indian students to pursue higher education in Germany.

- Commercial ties should remain a major focus area for the relationship going forward and steps should be taken to energize industry to industry contacts.

Read more on the [India - Germany relations](#) in the link.

Denmark visit:

- As part of the Denmark visit, the Indian Prime Minister visited Copenhagen and also took part in the summit with Nordic nation leaders.
 - The first India-Nordic summit was held in 2018 in Stockholm, Sweden.
 - Notably, the Nordic nations of Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Iceland and Norway engage in such joint summits only with U.S. and India.
- A business roundtable was also held which involved the participation of business leaders from both countries.

Significance of relationship with the Nordic nations:

- Three nations out of the five taking part in the India-Nordic summit are part of the European Union and this can help influence the EU's approach towards India.
- Despite being home to a relatively small population of around 27 million, these five nations have a total GDP of around 1.6 trillion US dollars. These are rich and prosperous countries with high levels of per capita income and Human Development indices. Hence, these nations offer a significant market for the export of Indian goods and services.
- India has a green strategic partnership with Denmark. This offers immense potential for collaboration in the renewable energy, transportation, and environmental engineering sectors. Given the expertise in clean technology possessed by Denmark, this collaboration holds immense significance for India. Also, the Nordic nations possess niche technology in the renewable energy sector and are known for their innovation. This would be of immense significance to a country like India seeking to transition to clean energy as part of its climate action and adoption of a more sustainable development pattern.
- Around 200 Danish companies are present in India. These companies have so far brought in a cumulative investment of around 3.3 billion US dollars investments into India. Notable companies like Volvo, Scania, and Ericsson based in these nations can bring in huge foreign investment and technology into India which can help generate job opportunities.
 - India is a fast-growing economy and its huge population offers a huge market opportunity.
- The Nordic nations are home to major defence manufacturers like SAAB and Bofors. There is the potential for engaging in the joint development of weapon systems. This would help meet India's demand for defence systems while also ensuring the transfer of valuable knowledge and technology into India. This could in the long run help India attain self-reliance in defence equipment manufacturing.

- Given that the Nordic nations are in the Arctic Ocean region, closer collaboration with the Nordic nations will help India gain a foothold in the critical Arctic region.
 - The Arctic region is rich in mineral resources such as fossil fuels and marine resources.
 - The Arctic region is emerging as a new transportation route.
 - It offers immense potential for sustainable tourism.
 - The region holds immense scientific value given that it holds clues to a better understanding of the global climatic conditions and functioning.

Challenges:

- Countries like Sweden and Finland have expressed interest in seeking membership in [NATO](#). Russia has expressed its anger over this development. This could threaten peace and security in the Nordic region. India will have to balance its relationship with the Nordic region on the one hand and Russia on the other if tensions flare up in the region.

Recommendations:

- India should pursue pushing forward the economic agenda in its relationship with the Nordic nations. India should portray itself as an attractive investment destination not just for good economic returns but also as a reliable supplier of goods and services. This gains more significance in the face of repeated global supply chain disruptions due to repeated strict lockdowns in China which have been following the zero-Covid policy. India with its abundant manpower and natural resources can become an important production base for global companies.
- India should seek to highlight the complementarity between India and the Nordic nations. India's youth dividend can provide much-needed manpower to cover up for the ageing population in Nordic countries. India offers a large market for clean technology expertise of the Nordic nation companies. This will create a positive environment around the relationship.
- India should seek to clarify its stand on the Russia-Ukraine conflict and explain its principled stand. This will help address doubts about India and establish its credibility to take the relationship forward.
- India should also highlight other topics of geo-political relevance in its engagement, especially the increasing Chinese assertiveness. This will help India in the long run.

France visit:

- The Prime Minister made a brief visit to France to meet the newly re-elected French President Emmanuel Macron.

Significance of France for India:

- The French have considerable presence in the Indo-Pacific region and have convergence on the China issue with India. This is a critical aspect for India with respect to its relationship with the French.
 - There has been considerable defence cooperation between India and France over the years.
 - Given the influence enjoyed by France in the EU grouping, France can help India strengthen India-EU cooperation.
 - The India - France trade relationship is also on the rise and holds immense potential.
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