

Strategic and Diplomatic Bilateral Relations between India and Mauritius under the Modi 3.0 Regime

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Abstract

Mauritius, a key member of the African Union and strategically located in the Indian Ocean along Africa's eastern coast, has long maintained a unique and enduring partnership with India. This paper examines the historical evolution and recent developments in this bilateral relationship, with particular emphasis on the Modi 3.0 regime. While successive Indian governments have nurtured cordial ties with Mauritius, the current phase under Prime Minister Narendra Modi is marked by a more assertive and multidimensional approach, linking strategic, economic, cultural, and technological cooperation. India has consistently demonstrated its role as a first responder in times of crisis, most notably during the COVID-19 pandemic and the Wakashio oil spill disaster, thereby strengthening its position as a trusted partner.

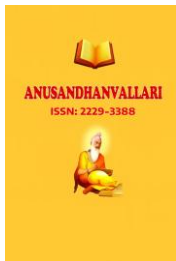
A defining feature of this relationship is the deep-rooted diasporic bond: nearly 70 percent of Mauritius's population is of Indian origin. This demographic connection provides not only cultural intimacy but also a socio-political foundation that ensures continuity in bilateral relations regardless of regime changes in either country. This paper traces the initiatives undertaken since 2014 to expand cooperation across political, economic, defence, cultural, and space domains, while highlighting how India–Mauritius relations are likely to evolve under Modi 3.0. By situating these relations within India's *Viksit Bharat 2047* vision and Africa's *Agenda 2063*, the paper argues that Indo-Mauritian ties represent both a civilizational bond and a strategic necessity for regional stability in the Indian Ocean.

Keywords: Strategic relations; Bilateral cooperation; Self-reliance; Sustainable development; Modi 3.0; Viksit Bharat 2047

1. Introduction

The reappointment of Dr. S. Jaishankar as India's External Affairs Minister in the Modi 3.0 government is a clear signal of continuity in foreign policy. Prime Minister Shri Narendra Damodardas Modi's third term emphasizes an assertive and principle-driven diplomacy, with a focus on building stronger regional and global partnerships. India's rise as a key voice of the Global South is evident from its successful presidency of the G-20, its facilitation of the African Union's membership in the grouping, and the organization of two "Voice of the Global South" Summits. These initiatives reveal a foreign policy that balances national interest with global leadership aspirations.

Within this framework, Mauritius occupies a privileged position. Its geographic location in the Indian Ocean, historical diaspora ties with India, and political stability make it an anchor state in India's maritime vision. Modi himself has framed Africa, and by extension Mauritius, as central to India's diplomatic philosophy. His words—*"When we use the term 'Global South,' it is not just a diplomatic term. In our shared history, we have together opposed colonialism and apartheid. It was on the soil of Africa that Mahatma Gandhi first used the methods of*



non-violence and peaceful resistance. It is on this strong foundation of history that we are shaping our modern relations”—reinforce the sense of shared destiny that underpins Indo-Mauritian relations.

2. Literature Review

Research on India–Mauritius relations is narrower compared to India’s engagements with larger African powers such as South Africa, Kenya, or Nigeria, yet the available literature highlights the unique position Mauritius enjoys in India’s Indian Ocean strategy. Government publications such as those from the Ministry of External Affairs (2025), the Press Information Bureau (2025), and the High Commission of India in Mauritius (2025) highlight official narratives emphasizing assistance, cultural diplomacy, and strategic trust.

Economic literature, particularly data from the Directorate General of Commercial Intelligence and Statistics (2025), demonstrates Mauritius’s role as both a trade partner and a financial conduit. Between 2000 and 2022, Mauritius accounted for 26% of cumulative FDI inflows into India, facilitated by the Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement. Indian investment in Mauritius, though smaller in scale, has expanded in recent years, using the island nation as a springboard into African markets.

Strategic analyses, particularly by the Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (2025), highlight India’s defence cooperation with Mauritius as a central pillar of SAGAR. The Vivekananda International Foundation (2025) situates Mauritius within India’s Africa engagement, noting its dual identity as both a close partner and a strategic node for maritime security. International perspectives, such as the Africa Centre for Strategic Studies (2025), stress the growing competition from China, which signed a Free Trade Agreement with Mauritius in 2021 as part of its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

Taken together, the literature underscores that Mauritius is not merely an ally of convenience but a partner of historical depth and contemporary strategic importance. The challenge for India lies in translating cultural affinity into durable strategic outcomes, particularly in defence, digital, and space cooperation, to counterbalance external competition.

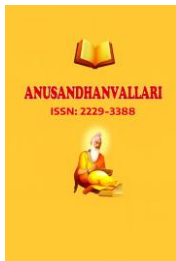
3. Evolution of Indo-Mauritian Bilateral Relations: Strategic Engagements and Diplomatic Milestones

3.1 Political Relations Since 2014

The political relationship between India and Mauritius is deeply anchored in shared historical experience and cultural proximity, but the post-2014 period represents a significant shift in intensity and scope. Diplomatic ties, officially established in 1948, were initially focused on people-to-people engagement and cultural solidarity, reflecting the fact that nearly 70 percent of Mauritius’s population is of Indian origin. While these foundations remain important, the Modi government has introduced a more strategic orientation to the relationship. Unlike the earlier decades, which emphasized symbolic solidarity, since 2014 India has pursued structured cooperation that includes defence, infrastructure, digital finance, and innovation.

This change reflects a broader recalibration in India’s foreign policy, where the Indian Ocean has become central to its strategic vision. Mauritius, by virtue of its location, offers India a forward presence in the southwest Indian Ocean, complementing its relationships with Seychelles and the Maldives in the northern and central zones. By framing Mauritius as both a cultural partner and a strategic collaborator, India has elevated the political dimension of the relationship beyond cultural nostalgia.

Another important element is the bipartisan consensus in both countries on nurturing close ties. In Mauritius, successive governments, regardless of party affiliation, have placed India at the top of their diplomatic priorities.



In India, too, successive governments before Modi valued Mauritius, but Modi's leadership brought a more proactive, high-visibility approach that sought to integrate Mauritius into India's larger Indo-Pacific strategy. Thus, the political relationship has transformed from a cultural partnership into a strategic alliance.

3.2 Mauritius at India's Leadership Transitions

Mauritius's presence at key Indian political milestones underscores the symbolic and strategic trust between the two countries. In 2014, when Prime Minister Modi first assumed office, then Prime Minister Navin Chandra Ramgoolam of Mauritius was invited to attend the swearing-in ceremony. Notably, he was the only non-SAARC leader present, which highlighted India's recognition of Mauritius as an exceptional partner. This was more than ceremonial; it was a diplomatic signal that Mauritius stood apart in India's Africa policy.

In 2019 and again in 2024, Mauritian leaders were once more present at Modi's oath-taking ceremonies. The continuity of these invitations reflects an important pattern: India uses high-level domestic political events to demonstrate Mauritius's privileged status. For Mauritius, participation in these ceremonies reinforces its visibility in Indian diplomacy and demonstrates to its domestic audience that it occupies a special place in New Delhi's worldview.

From a geopolitical perspective, this repeated participation serves as a signal to external powers as well. It reminds China, the U.S., and France—each with interests in the Indian Ocean—that Mauritius is India's closest partner in the western Indian Ocean. Thus, these ceremonial gestures play a subtle yet powerful role in embedding Mauritius into India's strategic signalling.

3.3 High-Level Visits and Strategic Partnerships

3.3.1 Prime Ministerial Diplomacy

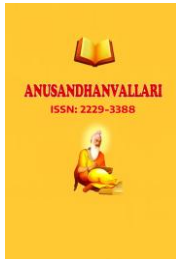
Prime Minister Modi's 2015 state visit to Mauritius was historic. It was during this visit that he introduced the *Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR)* vision, explicitly recognizing the Indian Ocean as a shared space of prosperity and responsibility. By doing so in Mauritius, Modi underlined the island nation's central role in India's maritime outlook. Agreements signed during this visit spanned trade, culture, and security, laying the groundwork for a more institutionalized relationship.

The partnership deepened further in 2019, when India extended support for critical infrastructure projects. The Metro Express project, for example, not only modernized Mauritius's public transport system but also demonstrated India's ability to deliver visible, citizen-centric development outcomes abroad. Similarly, the ENT Hospital project reflected a commitment to health diplomacy, reinforcing India's role as a development partner.

The 2025 visit was even more symbolic and substantive. Modi was invited as the Chief Guest for Mauritius's 57th National Day and was conferred the G.C.S.K, the country's highest civilian honor, making him the first Indian leader to receive it. His visit to the Ganga Talao, where he offered holy water from the Triveni Sangam, blended cultural symbolism with diplomacy, reinforcing the shared spiritual heritage of the two nations. Beyond symbolism, the visit produced eight new agreements, including initiatives on trade, innovation, and health, as well as the inauguration of the Atal Bihari Vajpayee Institute of Public Service and Innovation. These steps institutionalized governance and capacity-building as key elements of the bilateral relationship.

3.3.2 Presidential Diplomacy

President Droupadi Murmu's 2024 visit to Mauritius added a new dimension to the cultural and educational pillars of the relationship. As Chief Guest at Mauritius's National Day, she highlighted India's respect for the diaspora and the role of cultural diplomacy. Her announcement extending OCI card eligibility to the seventh generation of Mauritians of Indian origin signaled India's commitment to maintaining intergenerational diaspora connections.



The University of Mauritius's decision to confer on her an honorary doctorate in law underscored the intellectual and symbolic depth of these ties.

3.3.3 Ministerial Engagements

Ministerial visits in recent years have focused primarily on economic integration and strategic cooperation. Mauritius's Finance Minister Soomilduth Bholah's 2024 visit to India promoted the country as a jurisdiction for Indian investors seeking entry into African markets, reaffirming Mauritius's role as a gateway state. Similarly, Dr. Jaishankar's 2024 visit to Mauritius highlighted the country as a "model partnership" that demonstrates India's development diplomacy in practice. These ministerial-level interactions ensure that bilateral ties extend beyond the ceremonial and into policy frameworks and actionable projects.

3.4 Diplomatic Milestones and Initiatives

The celebration of 75 years of diplomatic relations in 2023 was not just a historical commemoration but also a reflection of the growth in political, economic, and cultural cooperation. Prime Minister Jugnauth's remark that ties had "never reached such heights" captured the trajectory of continuous growth.

In February 2024, India and Mauritius launched UPI and RuPay services, which not only revolutionized digital connectivity but also symbolized India's willingness to share its digital public infrastructure. This initiative has direct consequences: it makes remittances cheaper, facilitates student payments, and encourages tourism-related spending. Such initiatives anchor Mauritius within India's financial and digital ecosystems, creating structural interdependence.

3.5 Political Continuity in Mauritius

Mauritius's 2024 elections, which brought back Dr. Navinchandra Ramgoolam, further demonstrated the bipartisan consensus in Mauritius on maintaining close ties with India. Modi's congratulatory message invoked both Ramgoolam and his father, Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam, situating the relationship within a historical continuum. This intergenerational recognition not only highlights respect for Mauritian leadership but also reflects the civilizational depth of Indo-Mauritian ties.

4. Cultural Relations: A Shared Heritage

Mauritius's multi-ethnic and multi-religious society, where Hindu temples, Tamil kovils, churches, mosques, pagodas, and Buddhist temples coexist, mirrors India's pluralistic ethos. This shared pluralism underpins the cultural diplomacy between the two countries. The Indira Gandhi Centre for Indian Culture (IGCIC), established in 1987, and the Mahatma Gandhi Institute (MGI), inaugurated in 1976, remain central to this cultural exchange. The MGI's integration with the Rabindranath Tagore Institute has expanded its mandate, positioning Mauritius as a hub for South-South educational and cultural dialogue.

Through these institutions, India promotes not just heritage preservation but also academic collaboration, ensuring that Indo-Mauritian ties are grounded in intellectual and cultural continuity. They also provide Mauritius with platforms to integrate its cultural diversity into the wider Indian cultural world, making Indo-Mauritian ties not one-sided but mutually reinforcing.

5. Cultural Diplomacy and People-to-People Exchanges

The 2018 World Hindi Conference held in Mauritius underscored the country's role as a global hub for Hindi language promotion. By convening scholars, writers, and policymakers, it demonstrated how language can act as a tool of cultural diplomacy and diaspora integration.

Yoga, another pillar of India's soft power, has also taken root in Mauritius. Celebrations of International Yoga Day attract widespread participation, demonstrating how wellness traditions transcend communities and strengthen Indo-Mauritian cultural bonds. Such exchanges show that beyond economics and security, it is cultural diplomacy that makes the bilateral relationship resilient in the face of global competition.

6. Commercial Relations: Trade and Foreign Investment

6.1 Bilateral Trade Statistics

Trade between India and Mauritius has historically been shaped by the asymmetry of economic size. India, as a large emerging economy, is primarily an exporter of goods and services, while Mauritius, as a small island state, imports extensively from India to sustain its domestic consumption and production. Despite this asymmetry, the structure of trade has shown resilience and growth.

Year	Exports	Imports	Total Trade	Difference in trade (+/-)	Balance of payment
2019–20	662.13	30.41	692.54	631.72	95.41
2020–21	422.91	43.84	466.75	379.07	89.63
2021–22	714.85	71.88	786.73	642.97	89.95
2022–23	462.69	91.77	554.46	370.92	80.17
2023–24	778.03	73.63	851.66	704.4	90.54

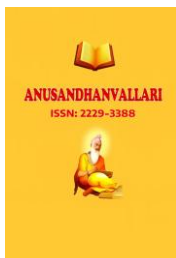
The figures reflect both volatility and adaptability. The sharp decline in 2020–21 corresponds to the COVID-19 pandemic, which disrupted shipping lines and supply chains. Yet, trade rebounded in 2021–22, reflecting the rapid recovery of Indian exports. The surge in 2023–24—reaching USD 851.66 million—represents a 65% increase over the previous year, underscoring the resilience of bilateral commerce.

India's major exports to Mauritius include petroleum products, textiles, pharmaceuticals, machinery, and spices. In return, Mauritius exports apparel, medical devices, and niche products such as processed fish and beverages. Although the trade balance is heavily tilted in India's favor, Mauritius benefits from affordable imports and stable supply chains, while India benefits from Mauritius's strategic role as a re-export hub to Africa.

Looking ahead, diversifying Mauritius's export base remains crucial. India's investment in Mauritian manufacturing and ICT sectors could help generate more Mauritian exports, addressing the asymmetry and deepening the partnership.

6.2 FDI Trends

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) has historically been the strongest pillar of India–Mauritius economic ties. Between 2000 and 2022, Mauritius accounted for nearly 26% of India's cumulative FDI inflows, totaling USD



161 billion. This was facilitated by the Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement (DTAA), which made Mauritius a preferred jurisdiction for routing investments into India.

For decades, global firms used Mauritius as a conduit for investments into India, taking advantage of favorable tax treatment. This, however, led to criticisms that Mauritius was functioning as a tax haven. In response, India renegotiated the DTAA in 2016, curbing “treaty shopping” while retaining Mauritius as a legitimate financial hub. Despite this reform, Mauritius remains an important FDI source, reflecting trust in its stable regulatory environment and long-standing ties with India.

From the Mauritian perspective, Indian FDI into sectors such as banking, ICT, pharmaceuticals, and tourism has been vital in sustaining its small economy. Over the past five years, Indian companies have invested over USD 200 million in Mauritius, using it as a gateway to Africa. Thus, Mauritius continues to serve both as a financial bridge and as a host economy benefiting from Indian enterprise.

6.3 CECPA: Opportunities and Challenges

The signing of the Comprehensive Economic Cooperation and Partnership Agreement (CECPA) in 2021 marked a milestone, making Mauritius the first African country to conclude a trade pact with India. This agreement covers goods, services, investment, and technical cooperation.

Under CECPA, India has offered tariff concessions on over 600 product lines, while Mauritius has provided concessions on around 300. Early trade under CECPA has included Indian exports of textiles, quartz slabs, and spices, and Mauritian exports of apparel and medical devices. While the trade volume remains modest, the agreement provides a framework for expansion.

The real opportunity lies in services. Mauritius’s strength in financial services, ICT, and tourism complements India’s expertise in IT, pharmaceuticals, and higher education. If leveraged effectively, CECPA could create sectorial synergies that move beyond goods trade.

However, challenges remain. The limited export base of Mauritius restricts its ability to maximize concessions, while India must compete with China, which already has an FTA with Mauritius. To realize CECPA’s full potential, India must expand investment-led trade, encourage joint ventures, and help Mauritius build export capacity.

7. e-Commerce and Digital Collaboration

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the growth of digital commerce in Mauritius, reshaping its small economy. According to Mauritius’s Statistical Report (2021), digital revenues in 2020 reached USD 135.1 million, with e-commerce contributing USD 103 million (76.4%). Other components included e-services (USD 4.7 million), e-travel (USD 10 million), and digital media (USD 17.2 million). This digital transformation mirrors global patterns but is particularly significant for a small island nation with limited physical markets.

India has been a major partner in this transformation. The joint launch of UPI and RuPay services in 2024 placed Mauritius within India’s pioneering digital public infrastructure ecosystem. This has practical benefits: remittances from the diaspora can now be transferred instantly, students can make seamless payments, and tourists enjoy digital convenience.

At a strategic level, this collaboration positions Mauritius as a test case for India’s ambition to export its digital governance model globally. It demonstrates how India’s domestic innovations can be adapted for other developing economies, reinforcing its role as a leader of the Global South. Mauritius, in turn, gains credibility as a digital hub in the Indian Ocean, attracting fintech and IT investments.



8. Strategic and Defence Cooperation

Strategic and defence cooperation forms the backbone of India–Mauritius relations in the 21st century. India has consistently invested in enhancing Mauritius’s maritime security capacity, recognizing the island’s vast Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of over 2.3 million square kilometers. Protecting this EEZ against illegal fishing, trafficking, and piracy requires capabilities that Mauritius alone cannot sustain.

India has provided Dornier aircraft and Dhruv helicopters, trained Mauritian defence personnel, and extended a USD 100 million Line of Credit for the acquisition of additional defence assets. Hydrographic surveys by INS *Sarvekshak* have mapped over 25,000 square nautical miles, producing navigational charts vital for maritime safety and blue economy projects.

The Agalega Islands project is particularly significant. India has been developing infrastructure on Agalega, including airstrips and logistical facilities, which will enhance Mauritius’s surveillance capacity while also providing India with a forward presence in the southwest Indian Ocean. This development, often compared to India’s cooperation with Seychelles on Assumption Island, reflects India’s ambition to secure key maritime nodes.

Beyond bilateral cooperation, Mauritius actively participates in multilateral forums championed by India, such as the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS), and the Colombo Security Conclave. These engagements not only reinforce regional security but also integrate Mauritius into India’s broader Indo-Pacific strategy.

Defence cooperation is not limited to hard security. Through the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) program, Mauritius receives around 400 training slots annually for both civilian and military officers. Since 2002, nearly 5,000 Mauritians have benefited from this training, embedding long-term institutional linkages between the two nations.

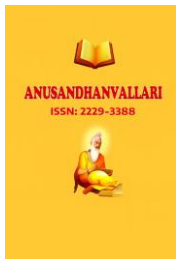
9. Space Research Collaboration

India’s space cooperation with Mauritius dates back to the 1980s, when ISRO established a ground station on the island to support satellite launches. This collaboration reflects a unique dimension of bilateral relations: cooperation in advanced scientific domains.

The 2023 MoU between ISRO and the Mauritius Research and Innovation Council (MRIC) to co-develop a satellite represents a new chapter. Under this agreement, India will fund, launch, and support operations of a Mauritian satellite, while training Mauritian scientists in satellite technology. The applications of this project are wide-ranging: disaster management, coastal monitoring, agriculture, and telecommunications.

For India, this cooperation serves multiple purposes. It showcases India’s leadership in space technology as a form of soft power, strengthens strategic trust with Mauritius in a sensitive domain, and demonstrates how India’s innovations can be shared with developing nations. For Mauritius, it represents capacity-building in a frontier area, elevating its scientific profile in Africa.

This partnership also contributes to India’s larger space diplomacy agenda. Alongside collaborations with countries like Bhutan, Maldives, and Sri Lanka, Mauritius’s inclusion in India’s space program strengthens New Delhi’s narrative of being a technology provider for the Global South.



10. Conclusion: Indo-Mauritian Relations in a Changing Geopolitical Context

India–Mauritius relations today are more comprehensive and strategic than at any point in their history. What began as a diaspora-driven cultural partnership has evolved into a multidimensional alliance spanning trade, finance, defence, digital cooperation, and space research. Yet this progress must be viewed against the backdrop of intensifying competition in the Indian Ocean. China’s Belt and Road Initiative, including its Free Trade Agreement with Mauritius, and the U.S.’s growing naval interest in the region underscore the need for India to consolidate its position.

Under Modi 3.0, the way forward requires deepening and diversifying cooperation. Economically, CECPA must be expanded to cover more products and services while encouraging Indian investment-led manufacturing in Mauritius. In digital cooperation, India should help Mauritius develop as a fintech and digital hub for Africa. In defence, operationalizing facilities in Agalega, enhancing joint surveillance, and expanding hydrography will be critical. Space research should remain a frontier of cooperation, with Mauritius serving as a partner in India’s ambition to democratize access to space technology.

At the cultural level, India must continue to nurture diaspora ties, expand academic exchanges, and promote intergenerational linkages. By aligning Mauritius’s goals with *Viksit Bharat 2047* and Africa’s *Agenda 2063*, India can ensure that the partnership remains future-oriented. Mauritius is not just a small island state in India’s foreign policy; it is a strategic anchor, a cultural cousin, and a development partner whose role in India’s Indian Ocean strategy will only grow in the decades ahead.

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