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France-Nepal Cooperation and Collaboration in the Context of Diplomatic Anniversaries

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Abstract: This article examines the history, evolution, and future perspectives of France–Nepal cooperation on the occasion of the 76th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the two countries (1949–2025). The analysis situates this relationship within the broader context of Nepal’s diplomacy, including its simultaneous commemoration of Nepal–China relations. The study highlights the political, cultural, scientific, economic, and humanitarian dimensions of Franco–Nepali collaboration. Emphasis is placed on the bilateral green roadmap adopted in 2023, the enduring scientific cooperation in seismology since 1978, and the cultural and educational role of the *Alliance Française* in Kathmandu. Drawing from diplomatic sources, trade statistics, and institutional reports, the paper argues that the France–Nepal partnership, while modest in economic terms, is exemplary in terms of mutual respect, scientific collaboration, and shared global priorities, notably in climate action and sustainable development.

Keywords: France; Nepal; diplomacy; bilateral relations; climate change; sustainable development; cultural cooperation; seismology; education; EU–Nepal relations.

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1. Introduction

In 2025, Nepal finds itself at the crossroads of two diplomatic commemorations: its anniversary of cooperation with China, a key regional partner, and its 76th anniversary of relations with France. These two anniversaries illustrate Nepal’s strategy of balancing its immediate neighborhood relations with longer-term partnerships that transcend geography. The relationship between France and Nepal has been marked by continuity, solidarity, and shared values. While trade remains relatively small, cooperation has thrived in areas such as scientific research, culture, health, and climate policy. This paper provides a comprehensive analysis of Franco–Nepali collaboration, structured into political, cultural, economic, scientific, and multilateral dimensions. It is important to remind about the historical context of France–Nepal Relations. France and Nepal officially established diplomatic ties in 1949, only two years after Nepal joined the international community by opening its borders. Early cooperation included scientific missions in the Himalayas and anthropological studies. A milestone was reached in 1978 with the agreement between the French *Commissariat à l’Énergie Atomique* (CEA) and the Nepali Department of Mines and Geology. This cooperation on seismic monitoring has

endured for nearly five decades, providing essential data for one of the world’s most earthquake-prone regions. In 2024, both countries celebrated 75 years of diplomatic relations, reaffirming their long-standing friendship.

2. Political and Diplomatic Exchanges

Political dialogue between France and Nepal has intensified over the past decade, marked by key high-level visits and sustained consultations: in March 2019, Nepal’s Minister of Telecommunications and Information Technology visited France, followed by Prime Minister KP Oli’s visit to Paris and Chamonix in June 2019, and from 2019 to 2025, a regular cycle of political consultations has been maintained, alternating between Paris and Kathmandu, with the most recent meeting held in June 2025 in Kathmandu. Table 1 summarizes this dialogue. France and Nepal share common diplomatic priorities regarding the defense of global commons, including biodiversity, freshwater resources, and glaciers. The adoption of the Franco–Nepali Green Roadmap in January 2023 confirmed this alignment. Humanitarian diplomacy also plays a role. During the COVID-19 pandemic, France delivered 7 tonnes of medical supplies in June 2021 and donated 1.58 million vaccine doses in July 2023 through the COVAX facility.

Table 1. Key Milestones in France–Nepal Relations^{1,2}.

Year	Event	Significance
1949	Establishment of diplomatic relations	Beginning of formal ties
1978	CEA–Department of Mines and Geology agreement	Start of seismic cooperation
2019	Visit of PM KP Oli to France	Strengthened political dialogue
2021	Delivery of French medical aid during COVID-19	Humanitarian solidarity
2023	Adoption of Green Roadmap	Shared climate and sustainability agenda
2024	75th anniversary of diplomatic ties	Celebration of long-standing friendship
2025	76th anniversary	Consolidation and outlook for the future

3. Cooperation between France and Nepal

Cooperation and economical relation are modest but some efforts are made for their development.

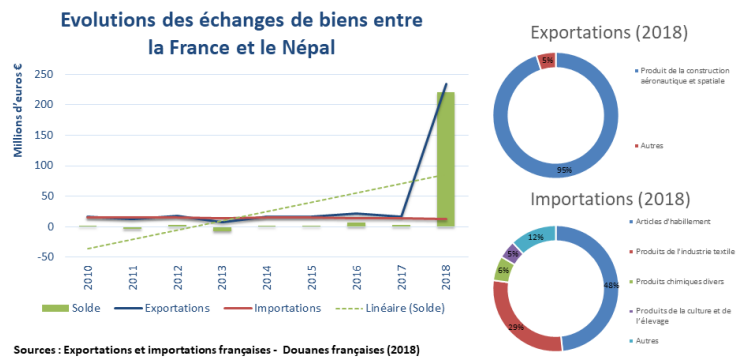
3.1. Economic Relations: Limited but Evolving

Table 2. Key Milestones in France–Nepal Relations^{1,2}.

Aspect	France -> Nepal	Nepal -> France
Main goods	Capital goods, IT, aeronautics	Textiles (80%)
Rank in trade	Nepal = 164th client	Nepal = 145th supplier
Tourism (2019)	30,646 French visitors	Not applicable
Tourism (2024)	25,000 French visitors	Not applicable
Investments	Hotels, restaurants	Limited

Trade between France and Nepal is modest but structurally complementary, with France exporting capital goods, IT equipment, and aeronautics, while Nepal exports primarily textiles, which account for 80% of its exports. According to the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Nepal ranks 145th as a supplier to France, contributing 0.00% of French imports, and 164th as a client, representing 0.00% of French exports. Tourism

offers a more dynamic dimension to bilateral relations, with 30,646 French tourists visiting Nepal in 2019 and 25,000 in 2024, reflecting post-COVID recovery though still



below pre-pandemic levels. French investment in Nepal is largely concentrated in the hospitality and restaurant sectors, underscoring the country's significance as a tourism destination. Table 2 records the Key Milestones and Figure 1 represents the evolution of trade of Goods between France and Nepal in 2018.

Figure 1. This Figure in French shows the evolution of trade of Goods between France and Nepal until 2018. Credit by Alonso01 - Own work, CC BY-SA 4.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=79146834>

3.2. Cultural and Educational Cooperation

Cultural and educational cooperation forms a cornerstone of the bilateral relationship, with cultural diplomacy at its heart. The *Alliance Française* of Kathmandu serves as the primary hub for French cultural outreach, while the French International School of Kathmandu offers bilingual education, fostering early academic and linguistic exchange. Academic mobility is further supported by Campus France, whose research portal provides Nepali students with access to PhD opportunities in France. Collaborative initiatives also extend to heritage and linguistics, exemplified by the Collège de France's digitization of a Nepalese manuscript, which combines preservation with broad digital accessibility.

3.3. Scientific Cooperation

Scientific collaboration is a cornerstone of Franco–Nepali relations, exemplified by the longstanding CEA–DASE partnership (1978–present), which monitors seismic activity through a network of sensors across Nepal. Joint initiatives extend to glaciology, biodiversity, and water resources, reflecting the pressing challenges of climate change, while the 2023 Green Roadmap further emphasizes sustainability, reinforcing scientific cooperation as a strategic pillar. This collaboration not only supports Nepal's environmental and scientific development but also serves the global community, as Himalayan glaciers are vital indicators of worldwide climate trends.

3.4. France, Nepal, and the European Union

Since 1996, the EU–Nepal Cooperation Agreement has structured relations in areas such as human rights, trade, science, agriculture, and development.

France, as an EU member state, complements this framework by offering targeted bilateral initiatives. The dual track (EU + France) enhances Nepal's ability to engage internationally while maintaining national priorities.

4. Perspectives

Academic laboratories operate under a distinctive paradigm compared to National Metrology Institutes (NMIs) and industrial labs. While the latter typically focus on providing calibration services with legal or economic consequences (such as ensuring compliance with regulatory standards), academic labs primarily concentrate on advancing scientific understanding and technology. Their role is not to offer commercial calibration services but to explore the limits of measurement science and develop cutting-edge methodologies.

4.1. Comparative Perspectives: Nepal–China and Nepal–France

As illustrated in Table 3, Nepal–China relations, shaped by geographic proximity and extensive economic cooperation, focus primarily on infrastructure, connectivity, and projects under the Belt and Road Initiative, reflecting a pragmatic, neighborly engagement, whereas Nepal–France relations emphasize cultural exchange, scientific collaboration, sustainable development, and education, representing a partnership grounded in shared values and global priorities rather than geographic or economic asymmetry; together, these relationships illustrate Nepal’s foreign policy strategy of balancing regional pragmatism with broader global engagement.

Table 3. Comparative Features of Nepal’s Partnerships¹⁻³.

Feature	Nepal-China	Nepal- France
Geography	Shared border	Distant partner
Trade	High volumes	Very limited
Cooperation focus	Infrastructure, BRI projects	Culture, science, climate
Asymmetry	Strong	Limited
Symbolism	Regional power ties	Global, values-based partnership

4.2. Future Prospects for France–Nepal Relations

Future prospects for France–Nepal relations present several promising avenues for deepening cooperation. In the field of climate and environment, both countries can expand renewable energy projects, enhance water management, and support biodiversity conservation initiatives. Tourism offers opportunities to develop sustainable models that protect fragile Himalayan ecosystems while promoting economic growth. Education and research collaboration can be strengthened through scholarships, PhD programs, and joint digital heritage projects. In health, cooperation can extend beyond COVID-19 to broader medical and public health initiatives. Additionally, technology and innovation partnerships can flourish in areas such as aerospace, information technology, and environmental monitoring, creating a multifaceted framework for long-term bilateral engagement^{4,5}.

8. Conclusion

The 76th anniversary of France–Nepal diplomatic relations highlights a partnership that is modest in trade but rich in cultural, scientific, and environmental cooperation. France has supported Nepal during crises, promoted knowledge through scientific research, and acted as a cultural bridge via education and the arts. As Nepal navigates its regional partnerships and global responsibilities, its cooperation with France illustrates how two distant nations can sustain a meaningful and forward-looking partnership, built not on asymmetry but on shared commitments to sustainability, cultural dialogue, and scientific progress. This collaboration serves as a model of how

small states and middle powers can jointly address the global challenges of the 21st century.

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