

India-Australia Defence Ties

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India-Australia Defence Ties: A Pillar for Indo-Pacific Stability

Context

The evolving global security environment, especially due to unpredictable U.S. foreign policy and the possible return of **Donald Trump**, has created uncertainty around traditional alliances like **NATO**. This opens new opportunities for **middle powers** like **India and Australia** to build a stronger defence partnership, especially in the **Indo-Pacific**.

Strategic Convergence

- Both nations are key players in the **Indo-Pacific**, facing common concerns over **China's assertive behaviour**.
 - **Australia's location** between the Indian and Pacific Oceans complements **India's maritime strategy**.
 - Their cooperation has become deeper than with some of India's other strategic partners like **Japan or South Korea**.
 - Australia now sees India as a **top-tier security partner**.
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Institutional and Operational Progress

- Key frameworks:
 - **Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (2020)**
 - **2+2 Ministerial Dialogue (2021)**

- Operational ties include:
 - **Mutual Logistics Support Agreement**
 - **Air-to-Air Refuelling Arrangement (2024)**
- Joint exercises:
 - **AUSTRAHIND** (Army), **AUSINDEX** (Navy)
 - Multilateral: **Pitch Black, Malabar**

These reflect growing **interoperability and trust**.

Limits to U.S. Substitution

- India faces **continental security threats**—from **China and Pakistan**.
 - Australia is adjusting under **AUKUS** and expanding ties with **Pacific Islands**.
 - Hence, bilateral efforts should focus on **areas of tangible cooperation**, not replacing U.S. security roles.
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Five Focus Areas for Future Cooperation

1. Go Beyond Naval Focus

- Encourage **tri-service joint exercises** simulating real-world conditions.

2. Upgrade India's Defence Presence

- Raise Canberra's **Defence Adviser** post to **one-star rank**.
- Add **Army and Air Force assistants**, with focus on **Pacific engagement**.

3. Include Operational Officers

- Engage **mid-level officers** in strategic dialogues.
- Promote **war-gaming, fellowships, and military exchanges**.

4. Collaborate on MRO and Maritime Security

- Use India's **MRO expertise** for joint production (e.g., patrol boats for island nations).

5. Boost MSME and Start-up Engagement

- Create an **INDUS X-style model** for joint **defence innovation and tech start-ups**.

Conclusion

In an era of uncertain alliances, the India-Australia defence relationship is becoming **central to Indo-Pacific security**. By deepening coordination, joint innovation, and operational synergy, both countries can turn their strategic convergence into **actionable security outcomes**, ensuring **stability, autonomy, and resilience** in the region.

