

## India Australia Defence Ties

Mains Syllabus: GS II - India and its neighborhood- relations

### Why in the News?

Recently Defence Minister and Deputy Prime Minister of Australia Richard Marles visited New Delhi.

### What are the significances of Australia in India's security landscape?

- **Australia's Strategic Geography** - Australia bridges the Indian and Pacific Oceans with territories and military presence near Southeast Asia, complements India's maritime ambitions.
- **Coalition Operations** - The Australian Defence Force (ADF) is experienced in coalition operations and can effectively enable Indian military capabilities, as seen in the recently implemented air-to-air refuelling arrangement.
- **Pacific Island Relations** - Australia's established relationships with Pacific Island nations align with India's growing interests.
- **Countering China** - Both nations share concerns about China's assertiveness and a common vision for sovereign resilience and regional stability.
- **Balancing America** - Canberra viewing New Delhi as a "top-tier security partner" helps India navigate a world where American security guarantees appear increasingly conditional.

### What are the security agreements and partnerships between India and Australia?

- **Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP)** - In June 2020, India and Australia elevated their relationship from a "Strategic Partnership" to a "Comprehensive Strategic Partnership" (CSP).
- **2+2 Ministerial Dialogue** - Defence and External Affairs ministers of India and Australia regularly meet to discuss a wide range of strategic, defence and security issues.
- **Mutual Logistics Support Agreement (MLSA)** - It streamlines logistical support during joint exercises and humanitarian missions.
- **Air-to-Air Refuelling Arrangement** - Signed in 2024, It allows the Royal Australian Air Force to extend the operational reach of Indian aircraft.
- **Military Exercises** - AUSTRAHIND (Army), AUSINDEX (Navy), and participation in multilateral exercises such as Pitch Black and Malabar, demonstrate a decade of careful relationship-building.

## What are the challenges in strengthening India - Australia defence ties?

- **Geopolitical Divergences** - Australia's close alliance with the United States contrasts with India's tradition of strategic autonomy.
- This difference sometimes creates hesitation in aligning their geopolitical strategies, especially when it comes to joint military operations or intelligence sharing.
- **Asymmetric Threat Perceptions** - India and Australia do not always perceive security threats in the Indo-Pacific in the same way.
- **Institutional Barriers**- There are gaps in institutional capacity, such as understaffed defense liaison offices and limited people-to-people military exchanges.
- **Reduced Efficacy of Strategic Forums** - Too often, strategic dialogues become exercises in diplomatic niceties rather than forums for hard truths.

## How can India and Australia can strengthen regional security architecture?

- **Rebalancing Defence Engagement** - While Navy-to-Navy cooperation has flourished, there is a need to break down service barriers.
- This could be achieved through joint military exercises that reflect real world operations, and moving towards a dedicated forum for joint staff talks.
- **Reflecting Strategic Importance in Defence** - Defence Adviser (DA) position in Canberra can be upgraded to a one-star rank with the addition of dedicated Army and Air Force personnel as assistants to help balance the service participation.

*Defence Adviser (DA) position in Canberra has always been held by a Navy official.*

- **Strengthening Discussion Forums** - Including more uniformed professionals with operational insights and creating spaces for classified discussions can generate fresh thinking that both nations need.
- **Building Mutual Understanding** - Simple initiatives such as fellowships for staff college graduates or regular war-gaming exchanges would build the mutual understanding that underpins genuine cooperation.
- **Deepen MRO** - India can explore cooperation with Australia in the Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul (MRO) of naval vessels.
- **Showcasing Joint Intentions and Capabilities** - Joint manufacturing and provision of patrol boats for small island security forces in the Indian Ocean Region and in the Pacific can be undertaken.

## References

[The Hindu | India-Australia defence ties](#)