

INDIA- AUSTRALIA RELATIONS: A NEW STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

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"I believe with all my heart that our first priority must be world peace and that use of force is always and only a last resort, when everything else has failed, and then only with regard to our nation's security." - Ronald Reagan

ABSTRACT

The India-Australia bilateral relationship has undergone an evolution in recent years, developing along a positive track, into a strategic partnership. India and Australia have several commonalities, which serve as a foundation for closer cooperation and multifaceted interaction, on lines similar to what India has developed with other Western countries. The relationship has grown in strength and importance since India's economic reforms in the nineties and has made rapid strides in all areas of trade, energy, and mining, science & technology, information technology, education, and defence. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison had a long discussion on the increasing China's impact in Indo-Pacific Region. India and Australia raised their ties to a "Comprehensive Strategic Partnership" after a first virtual summit. Both Prime Ministers concluded total of nine agreements including Mutual Logistics Support Agreement (MLSA) issued a joint declaration on a shared vision for maritime cooperation in Indo Pacific Region. Indian Ocean has its own significant strategic importance as it is the 3rd largest water body of the world that has vital sea lanes of communication and feeds Asia's largest economies.

INTRODUCTION

National Security is referred as a nations security first and I do not think it is in proper to discuss such details in a public forum. Both India-Australia shared "Comprehensive Strategic Partnership" between them. Before the independence both the countries were the territories of British Empire. The relationship between India and Australia have been long characterized by mutual indifference is a part because neither country is central to the security of the other. In broader aspect it may be changing as their strategic interest which are becoming more and more convergent. Trade relations between the two countries also growing along with it.

After the end of World War-II, the Government of Australia under the Ben Chifley

supported the Indian Independence from the British Empire to act as a frontier against communism. Afterwards Australia under the Robert Menzies supports India to be a part of the Commonwealth Nations. Both the countries had built strategic trust over the years, slowly but steadily. India and Australia both the countries established their diplomatic relations for the first time in the pre-independence period, when the Consulate General of India was first opened as a Trade Office in Sydney in 1945. On March 1944, Lieutenant General Iven Mackay was appointed as the first Australian High Commissioner to India. In the year 1945, first High Commissioner of India arrived at Canberra, Australia.

In present times both the nations were focused on increasing their power projection capabilities and increasing the importance of Indian

Ocean Region for their strategic importance. Both the countries also announced the upgrading of a key dialogue to the level of foreign and defence ministers. India-Australia both are the members of Commonwealth of Nations. They both also shared the political, economic, security, lingual, education and sports relations. In year 2014, India and Australia signed a MoU for 'Cooperation in the Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy' during the Australian Prime Minister's visit to India.

India-Australia has a strong relationship in the field of military and strategic relationship in the present context. The both countries have signed several agreements and MoU's to make their relationship strong at a different level. Moreover, both the countries perception of their strategic landscape especially regarding the role of China which aligned more closely than ever before. India's border dispute with China's rise although for different reasons. Both the countries gained the momentum globally and marked their presence near the Indo-Pacific Region which has become the imperatives to oneness and provide the stability in the region desired owing to the over-indulging nature of China.

India and Australia relations touched a historic low when the Australian Government condemned India's 1998 nuclear test. India is a non-signatory to the Nuclear Non- Proliferation Treaty as Australia signed the Uranium Supply Deal with India as the first of its kind of India's "Impeccable" non-proliferation record it became evident what type of relation Australia wanted with India in 2014.

During the cold war India and Australia sometimes has divergent strategies perspective. In recent years both the countries have been much closer to security ties which includes Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation in the Year 2009. In 2014, Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott visited India and later in 2014 Indian Prime Minister Narendra Malcolm Turnbull's visited India to have stronger ties in their relationship. In January 2020, Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison scheduled to visit India but postponed due to Bush Fire in Australia. The reschedule plan for May 2020

but was put on hold due to the outbreak of COVID-19. The first virtual summit on June 4, 2020 as PM Modi hopes to expand its strategic partnership with Australia due to the increasing aggression and impact of China in Indo-Pacific Region. This summit also been taking place due to amid tensions increasing between Australia and China over Canberra's call for a global inquiry into the origin of the outbreak of corona virus.

FIRST VIRTUAL SUMMIT

India will strengthen its barricading against china after the successful first Virtual Summit between India and Australia which is held on June 4, 2020. In this summit Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison had a long discussion on the increasing China's impact in Indo-Pacific Region. India and Australia raised their ties to a "Comprehensive Strategic Partnership" after a first virtual summit. Both Prime Ministers concluded total of nine agreements including Mutual Logistics Support Agreement (MLSA) issued a joint declaration on a shared vision for maritime cooperation in Indo Pacific Region.

Both the countries also agreed to increase the frequency of meeting between the two Prime Ministers and also looking forward to hold the "2 + 2" format of bilateral meetings to level of defence ministers and foreign ministers which will discuss the "Strategic issues" of both countries may take place at least every two years. Both the leaders were expected to meet at the extended G-7 summit to be held at USA later on this year. Both India and Australia issued an official statement at New Delhi,

"Both the countries will share a vision of a free open, inclusive and rule based Indo-Pacific Region to support the freedom of navigation, over flight & peaceful and cooperative use of the seas by adherence of all nations to International Law including Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and peaceful resolution of disputes rather than through unilateral or coercive actions"

NO DISCUSSION ON INDO-CHINA STANDOFF

This official virtual summit came amidst tension between India and China standoff at the Line of Actual Control and Australia-China tension over trade issues and differences over handling of the Corona Virus Pandemic. "Both the countries were agreed to continue to deeper and broader defence ties by enhancing the scope and complexity of their military exercises and engagement activities to develop different and innovative ways to address shared security challenges." Both the countries were also agreed to allow to use their military bases, humanitarian and disaster relief cooperation, ports and passage exercise. To barricade China, India already signed these type of agreement with USA, France and Singapore. Other agreement which include the framework arrangement on-

- Cyber Technology
- Mining and Minerals
- Vocational Training
- Water Management
- Military Technology
- Electronic Governance

In the opening address Prime Minister Narendra Modi said that Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP) took on new meaning at the time of the global pandemic. "The World Need a Coordinated and Collaborative approach to come out the economic and social side effects of this Pandemic." Indian Government has decided to view and take this pandemic or crisis as an opportunity. India had already signed the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership with United Kingdom, Indonesia, Vietnam and United Arab Emirates does far while Australia has CSP's with China, Indonesia and Singapore.

Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison said that, CPS would have led to raise the level of "Trust and Believe" which required to improve the "trade and investment flow" between India and Australia. After nine inconclusive rounds of negotiations, ASEAN led Regional Comprehensive Economic

Partnership (RCEP) free trade agreement that Australia is a part of the two sides also decided to "re-think" over the suspended talks over the India-Australia Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA) which is suspended since 2015.

DEFENCE AND STRATEGIC TIES

Looking back before the independence, India and Australia have long historic military relations, when Indian soldiers fought along with Australian army in a huge number including both world wars India and Australia both borders the Indian oceans has shared interest in the maintenance of freedom of navigation and trade. Australia recognising Indians critical role in supporting security, stability and prosperity of Indian question

The security relations between India and Australia had gained the momentum by making considerable efforts to develop the comprehensive strategic relationship with India. This ships have not been without difficulties according to task force on Indian ocean security at the Australia – India institute which recognises its **"shared interest with the India in promoting regional security and stability"**

In the late 2009, a Joint Security Declaration signed by the "shared interest helping out in addressing the strategies occurring in the region" In 2013, Indian Defence Minister Shri A.K. Antony visited Australia for the first time to meet its Australian counterpart Stephen smith, both issued an official statement "reiterating the commitment to the 2009 Joint Security Declaration"

AUSTRALIA-INDIA COUNCIL (AIC)

The Australia-India Council (AIC) was established on May 21, 1992 on the recommendation of the Senate Standing Committee based on the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade. It follows an inquiry into Australia's relationship with India. The AIC broadens the relationship between the both

countries for raising the awareness and to promote exchanges among them.

STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE OF INDIAN OCEAN REGION

Indian Ocean has its own significant strategic importance as it is the 3rd largest water body of the world that has vital sea lanes of communication and feeds Asia's largest economies. It has about 80% of the global trade of oil & Gas reserves through Indian Ocean choke points through the Strait of Hormuz, the Strait of Malacca and the Bab el-Mandeb Strait. The Indian Ocean region includes five of Australia's top 15 trading partners: India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand.

Western Australia as the gateway of the state, Australia is a key to Indian Ocean. Australia braggings the region's longest Indian Ocean coastline as well as its largest Search and Rescue Zone. Indian Ocean is the home to the hydrocarbons deposits and some important offshore terrorist activities. Australia and India committed to play a leading role in managing the challenges and opportunities in the region over the coming decades. Also both the countries contributing to maintain regional stability through deeper regional cooperation., developing norms and building regional capacity to address the challenges peacefully. Both the countries encourage their resilient rule based orders by strengthening regional approaches to terrorism, transnational crime, illegal fishing, trade and climate change.

Australia also responding to the regional economic and strategic issues by engaging with key regional forums such as the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA). Both the countries advocate the diverse forms of regional dialogue and cooperation including through trilateral and other small arrangements of groups and also through very well-established bilateral relationship.

MILITARY EXERCISES

There are some military exercises conducted between Indian and Australia Navy & Air Forces. They are as follows:

AUSINDEX

A major biennial bilateral naval exercise which is conducted in year 2015 for the first time between A Royal Australian Navy (RAN) and Indian Navy (AUSINDEX). Their main aim was to focus on anti-submarine warfare, incorporating maritime patrol and reconnaissance air craft in support of a stable and secure Indian Ocean Region.

EXERCISE PITCH BLACK

Exercise Pitch Black is biennial exercise for the warfare which is hosted by the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF). Generally, this exercise held in Northern Australia at RAAF Bases Darwin and Tindal. The air of the exercise is to practice Offensive Counter Aim (OCA) and Defensive Counter Aim (DCA) combat in a fictitious war environment. It is traditionally consisting of "Red Teams" and "Blue Teams" based on their specific locations. In year 2018, India participated for the first time between July 27, 2018 to August17, 2018. Other participating countries are Australia, Canada, France (New Caledonia), Germany, Indonesia, Netherlands, New Zealand, Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia and the USA.

EXERCISE MALABAR

Exercise Malabar is trilateral exercise between USA, Japan and India as a permanent member officially it began in year 1992 with two permanent members India and USA. In the year 2015 Japan became the 3rd permanent member and Australia & Singapore were the two non-permanent member. But after several rounds of talks Australia became the fourth permanent member of this naval exercise to became the "QUAD" consist of India-USA-Japan-Australia to maintain peace and prosperity in the Indian

Ocean Region. This exercise includes diverse activities ranging from fighter combat operations from Aircrafts carriers through Maritime Interdiction Operations.

MUTUAL LOGISTIC SUPPORT ARRANGEMENT (MLSA) AND DEFENCE SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY IMPLEMENTING ARRANGEMENT (DSTIA)

- Australia and India concluded the Mutual Logistic Support Arrangement (MLSA) in 2020 during the virtual summit between Prime Ministers Scott Morrison and Narendra Modi.
- The agreement facilitates more sophisticated operational cooperation, enabling increasingly complex military engagement, and greater combined responsiveness to regional humanitarian disasters.
- The Defence Science and Technology Implementing Arrangement (DSTIA) facilitates interaction between our defence research organizations, both of which have made important contributions to addressing the COVID-19 pandemic.

INDIA-AUSTRALIA CIVIL NUCLEAR COOPERATION AGREEMENT

On September 2014 a “Civil Nuclear Cooperation Agreement” was signed and it came into existence in November 2015 and it provides the framework for substantial new trade in energy between India and Australia. The Australian Uranium can be supplied to India for their civil use but export of that is restricted under the legal laws which laid under the IAEA at an international non-proliferations obligation for India and Australia. It will also ensure that any future bilateral trade in other nuclear-related material or items for civil use will also be protected.

The Indian government has frequently been notifying about the future plan proposed for the nuclear energy expansion. By 2017, the nuclear power capacity is expected to marked with 10080 MW. By the year India also planning to start work on 19 its new nuclear power reactors. If this plan executed successfully then it may have a total capacity of 17400 MW more in its energy box. Earlier, India had planned to install about 20 GWe nuclear power by 2020 and 274.56 GWe by 2052. The plan may witness some adjustments.

INDIA-AUSTRALIA ECTA

Recently, India signed a historic trade agreement with Australia, the India-Australia Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement (Ind- Aus ECTA). Australia and India confirmed in writing on November 29 2022 that they had each completed their respective domestic requirements to implement ECTA and the Agreement would enter into force 30 days later. It is a [Free Trade Agreement \(FTA\)](#) that India has signed with a major developed country in over a decade.

The Agreement encompasses cooperation across the entire range of bilateral economic and commercial relations between the two countries and covers areas like:

- Trade-in Goods, Rules of Origin.
- Trade-in Services.
- Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT).
- Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) measures.
- Dispute Settlement, Movement of Natural Persons.
- Telecom, Customs Procedures.
- Pharmaceutical products and Cooperation in other Areas.

TREATIES

Since independence of India there are several treaties signed between India and Australia-

1. Postal, Money Order and Air Services Treaties.
2. Commonwealth of Nations Treaties.
3. Cooperative Aid to other Countries.
4. Mutual Protection of Patents of 1963.
5. A Cultural Agreement in 1971.
6. An Agreement to discuss Trade in 1976.
7. Science and Technology Cooperation Agreement in 1975 & 1986.
8. Australia has been involved with Peace keeping Mission between India and Pakistan.
9. Development Cooperation Agreement in 1990.
10. Promoting and Protecting Investment in 2000.
11. India & Australia signed the Multilateral Legal Assistance Treaty (MLAT) and the Extradition Treaty in June, 2008 and came into existence in January, 2011.
12. Peaceful use of Nuclear Energy Agreement in order to purchase Uranium from Australia in 2014.
13. A Social Security Agreement in 2016.

CONCLUSION

India and Australia are working together to promote peace and prosperity based on their shared values and interests in a stable, secure, rule based and inclusive Indo-Pacific Region. Both the countries also clear their views on their defence and strategic relationship that India will be on the top priority for Australia in the International Relations. Both the countries had its extensive maritime zones in the Indian Ocean Region and also had significant maritime capabilities, it makes a sense for India and Australia work together to ensure the Indian Ocean remain free, open and inclusive.

In a significant development that has been through multiple talks and controversies, India finally agreed to invite Australia to the Malabar Naval exercise 2020 to make the "QUAD". It will be

welcome break and would suggest the growing seriousness and synergy among the four key Indo-Pacific Powers i.e. India-USA-Japan-Australia. India Australia relations has taken away on a greater height after the first ever virtual summit held between Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison. They both have discuss several issues and agendas related to COVID-19, security, defence and strategic ties etc. This virtual summit having its importance because Australia claiming China over Corona Virus Pandemic spread. It will be a great opportunity for India to have a strong tie with Australia as India-China border tension were increasing at Galwan Valley and disputed area of Line of Actual Control (LAC).

Both the countries declared that the elevation of bilateral ties to a "COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP" with the two leaders of the sides saying they intend to sign pacts on cyber security and trade, on cementing cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region, and on logistics support for their militaries.

ABBREVIATIONS

MoU	-	Memorandum of Understanding
CSP	-	Comprehensive Strategic Partnership
MLSA	-	Mutual Logistics Support Agreement
ASEAN	-	Association of South-East Asian Nations
RCEP	-	Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership
CECA	-	Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement
RAN	-	Royal Australian Navy
RAAF	-	Royal Australian Air Force
OCA	-	Offensive Counter Aim

DCA	-	Defensive Counter Aim
IAEA	-	International Atomic Energy Agency
MW	-	Mega Watt
GWe	-	Giga Watt Electric
LAC	-	Line of Actual Control
AIC	-	Australia-India Council
QUAD	-	Quadrilateral
IORA	-	Indian Ocean Rim Association

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