



Strengthening Ties: How India and Australia are Shaping a New Partnership Amid Global Challenges


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In recent years, India and Australia have strengthened their relationship across defence, economy, and culture, despite global challenges such as U.S. sanctions on India for its ties with Russia. These sanctions have encouraged New Delhi to diversify its partnerships, with Australia emerging as a key ally. Defence cooperation has deepened through the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (2020), 2+2 Ministerial Meetings, and joint military exercises like AUSINDEX and MALABAR, enhancing maritime security in the Indo-Pacific. Australia’s logistical and refuelling support for Indian forces highlights growing trust and shared goals, particularly in balancing China’s influence. Economically, the partnership has expanded under the India–Australia Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement (AI-ECTA), covering critical minerals, renewable energy, digital technology, and education. This paper analyses the evolving dimensions of India–Australia relations, examining their current scope and potential for deeper cooperation in the Indo-Pacific and on the global stage. This article looks at the important defence, trade, cultural, and educational connections between the two countries. It tries to understand why India needs Australia, especially with the restrictions the United States has placed on India. It also questions how these US restrictions might influence Australia’s foreign policy towards India. The article also highlights how shared democratic values and Indo-Pacific interests have positioned India and Australia as key partners in ensuring regional stability.

Keywords: MLSA, AI-ECTA, QUAD, CSP, ICCR, 2+2 dialogue, US tariff restriction

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1. Introduction

The story of India and Australia's relationship has changed over time—from being just distant friends during the colonial days to becoming strong partners in today's Indo-Pacific region. Both countries have a long history that goes back to the British Empire, which influenced their legal systems, democratic governments, and the use of English (Gopal & Ahlawat, 2015, p. 210). Even though they share these colonial backgrounds and are both part of the Commonwealth, India and Australia didn't interact much for a large part of the 20th century. After India became independent in 1947, their views were quite different: India chose to stay neutral during the Cold War, while Australia closely allied with Western countries like the United States and the United Kingdom. These differences in beliefs, along with not much trade between them, kept their relationship pretty quiet for many years.

When the Cold War ended and India opened up its economy in the 1990s, new opportunities for connection appeared. As the world's power began to shift towards Asia, both India and Australia started to see the benefits of working together more closely (Reddy & Boutin, 2014, p. 263). In the early 2000s, there was a renewed interest in diplomacy, leading to the signing of the India–Australia Strategic Partnership in 2009, which set the stage for better communication and teamwork (Prakash, 2021, p. 9). The relationship grew even stronger with the creation of the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership in 2020, showing a common goal for stability in the region, economic development, and security collaboration.

Defence and maritime collaboration became crucial aspects of this evolution, particularly through joint military exercises such as AUSINDEX and participation in the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) alongside the United States and Japan. Economic ties also expanded, with trade and investment growing in sectors like education, critical minerals, renewable energy, and technology (Chacko, 2023). Moreover, the Indian diaspora in Australia has emerged as a strong bridge between the two societies, enriching cultural and educational linkages.

2. Major Defence Agreements between India and Australia

Formal defence cooperation between India and Australia started in the early 2000s, but it really picked up speed after the 2006 Memorandum on Defence Cooperation (Rediff News, 2006). This agreement established a basis for regular discussions, military exchanges, and joint exercises. In 2009, the two countries signed a Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation, which was the first declaration India made with any nation besides the United States (Press Information Bureau, Government of India, 2009). This marked a significant change, indicating mutual trust and common strategic interests.

The defence and security partnership between India and Australia has gradually developed through key agreements that show the increasing strategic alignment between these two democracies in the Indo-Pacific. The Memorandum on Defence Cooperation (2006) was the start of a formal framework for defence relations. It focused on collaboration through sharing information, military training, exchanging defence delegations, and regular high-level visits between the armed forces of both nations. This memorandum established a foundation for deeper institutional interaction and helped both countries understand each other's defence priorities and operational frameworks.

The relationship deepened further in 2014, when India and Australia elevated their ties to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP). Since then, defence collaboration has become a cornerstone of their bilateral engagement. Building on this base, the Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation (2009) was a significant advancement in bilateral defence diplomacy. It created a structured way to consult on various regional and global security issues, including counterterrorism, piracy, and maritime security. This declaration was especially important as it was the first agreement India made with a country other than the United States — clearly showing the trust and significance both nations placed on their strategic partnership. It also opened the door for better policy coordination to promote peace and stability in the Indian Ocean region (Press Information Bureau, Government of India, 2014).

The bond grew stronger with the signing of the Framework for Security Cooperation (2014) during Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott's visit to India.

This detailed framework broadened collaboration into new and advanced fields like defence science and technology, maritime domain awareness, joint military training, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR), and peacekeeping operations. It also promoted regular ministerial discussions and improved interoperability between the defence forces of both nations (Press Information Bureau, Government of India, 2014).

A significant achievement was reached with the signing of the Mutual Logistics Support Agreement (MLSA) in 2020, a key agreement that permits mutual access to each other's military bases for logistics support, refuelling, and maintenance. This pact holds strategic importance, as it allows both navies to enhance their operational reach and carry out sustained deployments in the Indian Ocean and Pacific regions (Department of Defence, Government of Australia, 2020). By boosting logistical cooperation, the MLSA fortifies joint readiness, improves maritime security, and aids in upholding a free and open Indo-Pacific order.

Supporting these agreements are various institutional mechanisms like the Defence Policy Talks (DPT) and the Joint Working Group on Defence Research and Materiel Cooperation. These platforms guarantee ongoing engagement at different levels of defence policy, strategy, and capability development. They facilitate regular reviews of current initiatives, sharing of insights on emerging security issues, and exploration of new opportunities in defence research, innovation, and industrial collaboration. Through these discussions, both countries have been able to promote transparency, mutual understanding, and a long-term vision for defence cooperation.

The India-Australia 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue, which includes the Foreign Affairs and Defence Ministers, was first held in September 2021. This meeting raised the level of engagement between the two countries. It confirmed strategic goals, assessed defence and security partnerships, and introduced new initiatives. The second 2+2 dialogue took place in November 2023, following the same trend, with both parties highlighting the importance of improved maritime domain awareness, industrial collaboration, and more frequent and complex joint exercises and staff-level exchanges (Government of India, Ministry of Defence, 2023).

3. Trade Relations between India and Australia

Trade has become essential to the economic relationship between India and Australia. Recent statistics show that the trade in goods and services between the two countries has exceeded USD 30 billion, indicating a consistent growth trend. Australia sends coal, gold, copper ores, education, and professional services to India, while India provides refined petroleum, pharmaceuticals, textiles, and IT services to Australia. A significant achievement in their trade relations was the signing of the India-Australia Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement (ECTA) in 2022, which took effect in December 2022 (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade [DFAT], 2022). The ECTA removed tariffs on more than 85% of Australian goods exported to India and 96% of Indian goods exported to Australia (IndBiz, 2023). This agreement greatly enhanced sectors such as agriculture, textiles, gems and jewellery, and information technology. Both countries are also in talks for a Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA), which aims to further enhance collaboration in investment, services, digital trade, and innovation.

The investment relationship between India and Australia is steadily increasing. Australian investments in India focus on areas like mining, infrastructure, renewable energy, and financial services. Conversely, Indian firms have invested in Australia's IT, resources, and manufacturing sectors. Notable Indian companies such as Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), Infosys, Wipro, and Mahindra are successfully operating in Australia, generating thousands of local jobs. Likewise, Australian firms like BHP, Rio Tinto, and Macquarie Group have built strong operations in India (India Brand Equity Foundation. (2024). The Australia-India Business Exchange (AIBX) initiative, launched in 2021, further enhances business connections by facilitating trade missions, business discussions, and investment support.

As of 2024 approximately 916,330 Indian born individuals were residing in Australia. In 2023-24 Indian received 36,251 places in skilled migration sector which is 26.4% increase from previous year (DD News, 2023). Additionally approximately 20,000 Indians were granted temporary skilled visas in recent years.

On the other hand according to Australia High Commission in India informed that approximately 3000-4000 Australians living and working in India (India Brand Equity Foundation, 2024).

4. Cultural and Educational Ties

India and Australia have developed a lively cultural bond marked by a shared respect for each other's traditions, art, cinema, and festivals. The first Indian immigrants came to Australia in the 19th century as workers and merchants. Currently, the Indian community—over 975,000 according to the 2024 Australian Bureau of Statistics—represents one of the fastest-growing migrant groups in Australia. This has introduced Indian culture, food, language, and celebrations like Diwali and Holi into everyday Australian life (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2024).

The Australia-India Council (AIC), founded in 1992, has been instrumental in fostering cultural awareness by supporting artistic collaborations, exhibitions, and performances. Similarly, Sahapedia and various Indian cultural organizations frequently collaborate with Australian museums for heritage preservation and cultural studies (Government of India, Ministry of External Affairs, 2023). The annual Confluence Festival of India in Australia, supported by both governments, celebrates Indian music, dance, theatre, and yoga. Similarly, Australian Indigenous artists have exhibited in India, showcasing parallels between ancient Aboriginal traditions and Indian tribal art (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade [DFAT], 2024).

Both governments have taken important steps to improve education connections. The Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP) established in 2020 highlighted education as a major area of collaboration. In 2023, the two nations signed the India-Australia Mutual Recognition of Qualifications Agreement, which facilitates easier academic and professional movement for students and graduates (Australian Government Department of Education, 2023). This agreement guarantees that degrees obtained in one country are acknowledged in the other, making it easier for individuals to transition into jobs or pursue further education. Moreover, the Australia-India Future Skills Initiative and Skill India partnerships focus on boosting vocational training and job readiness, particularly in growing sectors such as green technology, AI, and logistics.

India and Australia offer various scholarship programs to encourage educational exchange. The Australia Awards Scholarships and Endeavour Leadership Program give Indian students chances to study and conduct research in Australia. India's ICCR Scholarships assist Australian students who are studying at Indian universities (Indian Council for Cultural Relations [ICCR], 2023). Joint initiatives like the Study in India program and Australian Education Fairs have enhanced awareness and movement between the two countries.

5. Neutral Foreign Policies of India and Australia and impacts of USA in Australia's Foreign Relations

Foreign policy is the strategic approach that countries use to handle their relationships with others to protect national interests, security, and economic development. Recently, India has encountered sanctions from the United States due to certain geopolitical and strategic disagreements. These sanctions pose difficulties for India's international relations, especially in economic, defence, and diplomatic areas. On the other hand, Australia, a significant player in the Indo-Pacific region, has its own foreign policy goals influenced by economic connections, regional security issues, and strategic partnerships. Notably, both India and Australia have succeeded in keeping a neutral foreign policy, steering clear of conflicts between the United States and India, while concentrating on their common regional interests.

5.1. India's Neutral Foreign Policy

India's foreign policy philosophy rests on the principles of strategic autonomy and non-alignment, which allow it to navigate great-power rivalries without becoming overly dependent on any one country (Government of India, Ministry of External Affairs, 2023). Despite US sanctions, India has pursued a policy of diversification:

Strategic Partnerships beyond the US: India has deepened relations with Russia, the European Union, Japan, and the Middle East to mitigate reliance on the US.

Economic Diversification: India has strengthened trade with ASEAN countries and boosted regional connectivity projects to reduce the impact of sanctions.

Defence Autonomy: India continues to develop indigenous defence capabilities, reducing vulnerability to sanctions on arms and technology.

By maintaining strategic autonomy, India demonstrates a neutral stance, ensuring its foreign policy is guided by national interest rather than alignment to a single global power.

India's foreign policy towards Australia shows its overall dedication to a neutral, balanced, and multi-aligned stance in global matters. Grounded in the idea of strategic autonomy, India aims to work with Australia as an important partner without strictly tying itself to any specific global group. Historically, India's neutrality came from its Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) roots, where it sought to stay independent from Cold War conflicts. Nowadays, this neutrality has turned into a practical form of diplomacy that focuses on cooperation based on shared interests rather than ideological ties. With Australia, India has built a relationship that is both strategic and adaptable, enabling collaboration in fields like defence, trade, education, and climate change, all while preserving its independent decision-making in foreign affairs (Gopal & Ahlawat, 2015). The Comprehensive Strategic Partnership formed in 2020 highlights India's eagerness to enhance connections with Australia, particularly in the Indo-Pacific area, but not at the cost of its relationships with other powers like Russia, the United States, or China. This balanced approach is especially clear in India's reactions to global crises—like its neutrality during the Russia-Ukraine situation where it favoured dialogue and diplomacy instead of taking sides, even as it kept engaging with Western allies like Australia through platforms such as the Quad (Quadrilateral Security Dialogue). India's neutrality acts as a smart strategy, allowing it to team up with Australia for joint military drills, maritime security, and tech partnerships, all while steering clear of the image of an anti-China coalition (Brewster, 2020). On the economic front, both nations gain from this balanced approach, with Australia being a dependable supplier of energy, minerals, and education, while India steps up as a vital market and strategic ally in diversifying regional supply chains. This partnership is built on mutual respect, acknowledging India's non-aligned history and Australia's democratic principles and regional goals.

By sticking to neutrality, India makes sure its foreign policy is driven by national interests instead of outside influences, establishing itself as an independent player that can connect with various partners at the same time.

5.2. Australia's Neutral Foreign Policy

Australia's approach to foreign relations is influenced by its location in the Indo-Pacific and its dependence on trade with various nations, such as China, India, and the US (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2022). When the US imposes sanctions on India, Australia does not simply comply. Instead, Canberra adopts a balanced approach:

Economic Pragmatism: Australia maintains robust trade relationships with India while also fostering good ties with the US, steering clear of conflicts driven by sanctions.

Regional Stability Focus: Australia prioritizes working with India to ensure stability in the Indo-Pacific, irrespective of Washington's sanctions.

Diplomatic Balance: Australia advocates for dialogue and collaboration, avoiding division among major powers.

This illustrates Australia's dedication to a middle-ground foreign policy that emphasizes its national interests and the stability of the region.

India and Australia's impartial position allows for enhanced collaboration, even in the face of US sanctions. Their joint efforts concentrate on shared interests like counterterrorism, maritime security, climate change, and diversifying trade. This alliance bolsters their capacity to operate autonomously while promoting a rules-based framework in the Indo-Pacific area.

Australia's foreign policy toward India reflects a measured, pragmatic, and strategically neutral approach that balances Canberra's Western alliances with its growing engagement with Asian powers. While Australia has long been aligned with the United States and other Western democracies through frameworks like AUKUS, ANZUS, and the Quad, it has increasingly sought to maintain a flexible foreign policy that emphasizes partnership, dialogue, and shared regional goals rather than ideological confrontation (Gyngell & Wesley, 2017). India occupies a unique place in this framework.

Canberra recognizes New Delhi as a key player in maintaining stability, democracy, and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific region, yet it is careful to engage with India on terms that respect India's long-standing non-aligned tradition. The Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP), signed in 2020, serves as the cornerstone of this relationship, enhancing cooperation in defence, maritime security, cyber resilience, climate action, education, and trade. Australia's policy remains neutral in that it does not seek to pull India into rigid military commitments or geopolitical blocs. Instead, it prioritizes mutual interests such as regional connectivity, sustainable development, and open sea lanes. While both countries share concerns over China's assertiveness in the Indo-Pacific, Australia consciously avoids framing its cooperation with India as anti-China, focusing instead on ensuring a "rules-based regional order" (Medcalf, 2020). Economically, Canberra's approach to India is driven by diversification and complementarity rather than dependency. With the Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement (ECTA) signed in 2022, Australia seeks to expand its trade and reduce reliance on any single market, particularly China. This pragmatic engagement reflects Australia's broader foreign policy neutrality, allowing it to maintain constructive ties with both Beijing and New Delhi despite their complex relationship. In the cultural and educational realms, Australia's engagement with India has deepened through the presence of a vibrant Indian diaspora, academic collaborations, and student exchanges that strengthen people-to-people bonds. Canberra's diplomacy is rooted in respect for India's strategic autonomy and independent global outlook, avoiding pressure or conditionality in bilateral relations. By doing so, Australia reinforces its image as a responsible, neutral power in the Indo-Pacific—one that values partnerships based on mutual benefit, trust, and equality rather than power projection. This balanced approach enables Australia to engage India as a partner in addressing global challenges like climate change, supply chain security, and renewable energy while preserving the flexibility to collaborate with other nations. Ultimately, Australia's neutral foreign policy toward India represents a refined blend of realism and cooperation—acknowledging global power shifts, promoting regional harmony, and emphasizing diplomacy over division.

5.3. How Australia's Foreign Policy is Influenced by United States of America

The impact of the United States on Australia's foreign policy is significant and complex, stemming from years of political, economic, and military collaboration that have influenced Canberra's strategic perspective. This connection, formalized by the ANZUS Treaty in 1951, laid the foundation for Australia's defence and diplomatic stance (The Sydney Morning Herald, 2024). Over time, this treaty has transformed from a strictly military alliance into a wider strategic partnership, which includes intelligence sharing, trade agreements, and aligned positions on both global and regional matters.

Australia's defence white papers consistently stress the significance of the U.S. alliance, underscoring that Australia's capacity to tackle threats in the Indo-Pacific is closely tied to its relationship with Washington (United States Department of State, 2023). This reliance indicates that Australia's foreign policy, especially concerning regional security, is greatly shaped by U.S. priorities, such as countering China's influence, ensuring freedom of navigation in the South China Sea, and addressing North Korea's nuclear ambitions.

Intelligence collaboration is another area where U.S. influence plays a vital role. Australia is part of the Five Eyes alliance, which includes the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, and New Zealand. This alliance entails extensive intelligence sharing, cyber cooperation, and coordinated actions against security threats.

On the economic front, the United States ranks as one of Australia's largest trading partners and a major source of foreign investment (Financial Review, 2024). The U.S.-Australia Free Trade Agreement, which has been in effect since 2005, promotes bilateral trade and enhances economic interdependence. U.S. influence reaches beyond trade to include investment flows, technological exchanges, and alignment of economic policies (Lowy Institute, 2024). Canberra frequently aligns its economic diplomacy with Washington's broader strategy, particularly in multilateral settings like the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the G20, advocating for rules-based trade systems that benefit U.S. economic interests (The Australian, 2025).

In the Indo-Pacific, U.S. influence is particularly visible. The United States regional balance, especially given China's growing influence (The Conversation, 2024). Australia's foreign policy reflects this strategic reality, with Canberra supporting U.S.-led initiatives such as the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) and the AUKUS trilateral security pact with the United States and the United Kingdom (The Guardian, 2024). These agreements enhance Australia's defence posture and deepen strategic alignment with Washington, shaping Canberra's approach to regional security challenges (Reuters, 2025). By participating in these frameworks, Australia signals its commitment to U.S. leadership in the region and aligns its policy to support U.S. objectives, including upholding freedom of navigation, deterring aggression, and promoting a rules-based order.

6. The Relationship between India and Australia amid Ukraine War, During which Australia has Imposed Sanctions on Russia, A Close Ally of India

The Russia-Ukraine war has emerged as a significant test of diplomatic agility for India and Australia, two democracies whose strategic convergence in the Indo-Pacific has deepened over the last decade. The conflict, which began in February 2022 with Russia's invasion of Ukraine, has not only reshaped global geopolitics but also challenged the foreign policy equilibrium of both nations. Australia, a steadfast ally of the United States and a member of the Western alliance system, swiftly condemned Russia's aggression and imposed comprehensive sanctions targeting Russian banks, defence entities, energy exports, and individuals close to President Vladimir Putin (The Guardian, 2025). Its response was consistent with its commitment to a rules-based international order and collective security principles, aligning with partners like the U.S., the U.K., Japan, and the European Union. On the other hand, India took a markedly different stance—abstaining from UN resolutions condemning Russia, maintaining energy and defence ties with Moscow, and emphasizing dialogue and diplomacy as pathways to peace (Tellis, 2022).

This divergence highlighted the contrasting strategic compulsions shaping each country's foreign policy and raised questions about whether their expanding partnership could withstand such geopolitical strain.

For India, Russia is a long-time friend, and their relationship goes back to the Cold War. Moscow has been the most dependable source of defence gear for New Delhi, supplying about 60–70 percent of India's military equipment today, which includes fighter jets, nuclear submarines, and advanced missile systems like the S-400. Besides defence, they also work together in energy, space technology, and on platforms like BRICS, SCO, and RIC (Russia-India-China dialogue). When Western countries, including Australia, quickly tried to cut off Russia economically and diplomatically, India decided to protect its own strategic independence and national interests (Panda, 2025). New Delhi kept buying cheaper Russian crude oil, which helped it deal with global energy issues and rising prices. This also showed its neutral stance in foreign policy—saying that talking, not isolating, is the best way to solve the conflict. India's choice was influenced not just by its reliance on Russian defence and energy supplies but also by its aim to keep a careful balance between its long-time ally Russia and its growing partnerships with the United States, Australia, and Japan through the Quad (Quadrilateral Security Dialogue).

From Australia's perspective, its decision to impose sanctions on Russia was a reaffirmation of its values-based foreign policy and alliance commitments. Canberra has historically aligned with Western democracies in upholding international law, sovereignty, and territorial integrity. The invasion of Ukraine, seen as a direct challenge to these principles, prompted Australia to act decisively. It imposed travel bans, froze Russian assets, and restricted exports of critical technologies to Moscow. Australia also extended humanitarian aid to Ukraine and supplied defensive military equipment, reinforcing its moral and strategic alignment with NATO and other Western powers. While these measures were driven by a principled stand against aggression, they also reflected Canberra's broader geopolitical concern that unchecked authoritarian behaviour whether in Europe or the Indo-Pacific could embolden similar acts in its own region, particularly in relation to China's assertiveness in the South China Sea and Taiwan Strait.

Even though India and Australia had different reactions to Russia, they still managed to keep and even improve their relationship during the crisis. The secret to this strong diplomacy was their understanding of each other's geopolitical needs. Australia understood that India relied on Russian defence technology and had a long history with Russia, so it was not realistic for India to completely cut ties. On the other hand, India recognized that Australia was standing up for Western democracies and didn't see its sanctions as a hostile move. Instead, both countries worked on increasing cooperation in important areas they both cared about—like maritime security, critical minerals, renewable energy, cybersecurity, and stability in the Indo-Pacific region. The 2020 Comprehensive Strategic Partnership and regular 2+2 Ministerial Dialogues created official ways to make sure that temporary global disagreements wouldn't mess up their long-term goals (Layton, 2023).

One of the most striking aspects of India–Australia diplomacy during the Ukraine war was their ability to compartmentalize differences. While Australia unequivocally condemned Russia, it refrained from publicly criticizing India's neutral stance. Canberra's nuanced approach reflected a recognition that India's strategic autonomy is vital to the success of broader Indo-Pacific frameworks. Similarly, India continued to view Australia as a reliable partner in balancing China's regional influence. Both countries reinforced their commitment to the Quad's non-military agenda—focusing on vaccine distribution, infrastructure development, and climate resilience—while ensuring that the grouping was not undermined by divergent views on Ukraine (The Guardian, 2025). In essence, the war underscored the maturity of the India–Australia partnership: it had evolved from a transactional association to one grounded in mutual respect for each other's sovereign choices.

Additionally, the conflict in Ukraine indirectly boosted the reasons for stronger cooperation between India and Australia. As global supply chains faced disruptions and energy prices increased, both countries sped up their efforts to reduce economic dependencies. Australia recognized India as an important market for its critical minerals, education, and technology exports, while India viewed Australia as a reliable and democratic source of raw materials needed for its clean energy shift.

In 2022, both nations signed the India–Australia Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement (ECTA), which marked a new chapter in their economic partnership despite the global challenges. This action showed that their shared goals went beyond immediate geopolitical issues.

On a larger scale, India and Australia kept working closely together in groups like the G20, the East Asia Summit, and the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF). During India's G20 presidency in 2023, Prime Minister Anthony Albanese notably supported India's inclusive approach, even though the forum was facing serious disagreements on how to deal with the Ukraine conflict. Their focus on building consensus instead of confrontation showed a common belief in practical diplomacy. Both countries prioritized stabilizing global economic governance and keeping a strategic balance in Asia rather than sticking to strict ideological views.

In this context, the divergence over Russia became less a point of contention and more a demonstration of their respective foreign policy identities. India's stance embodied its doctrine of "strategic autonomy" and its quest for a multipolar world order, while Australia's position reflected its identity as a "middle power" committed to liberal internationalism (Reuters, 2025). Rather than clashing, these differences enriched the bilateral relationship by fostering greater mutual understanding. Australia came to appreciate India's unique geopolitical constraints and its desire to act as a bridge between the Global North and the Global South. India, in turn, acknowledged Australia's role as a responsible regional actor seeking to uphold stability and rules-based governance.

Looking ahead, the challenge for India and Australia lies in translating this diplomatic understanding into sustained strategic cooperation. The Ukraine war has illustrated that their partnership must be resilient enough to withstand global disruptions without compromising core national interests. Strengthening defence collaboration—through joint exercises like AUSINDEX and MALABAR—enhancing supply chain resilience, and deepening collaboration in emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence and cybersecurity will be vital. Equally important is continuing people-to-people engagement through education, diaspora ties, and cultural exchanges, which help anchor the relationship beyond geopolitics.

7. India's Strategic Necessity for Australia

India's strategic need for Australia has become increasingly vital in the context of the Indo-Pacific region, especially given China's growing assertiveness. The Indo-Pacific has emerged as the focal point of global geopolitics, where economic interests, maritime security, and power dynamics intersect. China's expanding influence through military build-up, territorial claims in the South China Sea, and strategic investments under the Belt and Road Initiative have raised concerns among regional democracies. In response, India recognizes the importance of partnering with like-minded nations such as Australia to maintain stability and a rules-based order in the region. The India–Australia partnership, strengthened through frameworks like the Quad (Quadrilateral Security Dialogue) and defence cooperation agreements, reflects a shared vision for a free, open, and inclusive Indo-Pacific (PTI, 2022). India sees Australia as a crucial ally in countering China's expanding influence in the Indo-Pacific region. Both nations are members of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad), which includes the US and Japan, with the goal of promoting a free, open, and inclusive Indo-Pacific. Their naval collaboration plays a vital role in ensuring stability in these essential maritime routes. Agreements such as the Framework for Security Cooperation and joint military drills bolster India's defence capabilities in the Indo-Pacific. Australia possesses abundant natural resources (coal, uranium, lithium) that are essential for India's energy and industrial development. On the other hand, India provides Australia with a vast market for its goods and services.

China remains an essential economic and trade partner for both India and Australia, despite the strategic and geopolitical tensions in the Indo-Pacific region. For India, China is one of its largest trading partners, with significant imports of machinery, electronics, chemicals, and raw materials that support its manufacturing and technology sectors (Vishvas, C. M. 2024). While political frictions and border disputes have strained ties, economic interdependence continues to drive pragmatic engagement between the two Asian powers.

Similarly, for Australia, China has long been its biggest export destination, particularly for iron ore, coal, and agricultural products, which are vital to Australia's economic growth. Both India and Australia recognize that completely decoupling from China is neither practical nor beneficial in the short term. Instead, they aim to balance economic cooperation with strategic caution — engaging Beijing on trade while strengthening alternative partnerships to ensure long-term stability.

Australian investments in India's infrastructure, education, and mining sectors yield significant economic advantages (The Economic Times, 2023). Australia is a popular destination for Indian students, and educational partnerships foster skills exchange and strengthen connections between people. Joint efforts in science, technology, and innovation aid India's progress in fields like renewable energy, agriculture, and digital infrastructure. From India's viewpoint, Australia is more than just a trading partner; it is a strategic ally in the Indo-Pacific, a source of technological and educational collaboration, and a partner in maintaining regional stability. Enhancing this relationship benefits India economically, strategically, and diplomatically while addressing geopolitical challenges.

India's future strategic interests make Australia an important partner in managing potential crises and negotiations with the United States. As a close ally of Washington and a trusted partner of New Delhi, Australia occupies a unique diplomatic position that can facilitate dialogue and understanding between the two nations during periods of tension (Vishvas, C. M. 2024). In times of political or economic disagreement, Australia's balanced foreign policy and commitment to regional stability can help bridge communication gaps, ensuring that cooperation within frameworks like the Quad remains strong. Moreover, Australia's shared democratic values, defence alignment, and growing economic ties with India strengthen its credibility as an intermediary. By maintaining close coordination with both India and the United States, Australia can contribute to preventing misunderstandings and promoting mutual interests in the Indo-Pacific. Thus, India's partnership with Australia is not only strategic but also essential for effective crisis management and sustained trilateral cooperation.

8. Can US Restrictions on India Effect on Australia's Foreign Policy with India

Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong stated Australia doesn't back tariffs. She frames openness in trade as foundational to the post-war economic order (Indian Express, 2025). She also emphasises the importance Australia places on a "deep, strong and trusted partnership" with India. Australian Trade minister Don Farrell reiterates Australia does not support tariffs (on Australia or India). He counters Trump's "dead economy" remark and calls India a "thriving democracy" with "fantastic opportunities.". He says "We are a country that believes in free and fair trade. ... So we don't support the imposition of tariffs, whether they be on Australia or India." Farrell rebuts Trump's "dead economy" claim, stating that Australia sees India as full of "fantastic opportunities." (Hindustan Times, 2025).

If the U.S. puts a tariff sanction on India, it would really change things for the global political economy and would also impact Australia's foreign policy with India. This is because global trade, strategic alliances, and the Indo-Pacific geopolitical setup are all connected. The U.S. and Australia have a strong partnership that comes from the ANZUS Treaty and both want to keep stability in the Indo-Pacific area. Because of this, Australia usually follows the U.S. in its foreign policy, especially when it comes to security, economic matters, and working with other countries. United States tariff sanction on India whether it's due to trade arguments, competition, or geopolitical issues wouldn't just be a simple economic issue; it would mark a big change in how the U.S. and India relate to each other and would also affect how Australia deals with India. Economically, these sanctions would limit India's access to the U.S. market, which would lower Indian exports and might slow down India's economic growth. This would push India to look for other markets and economic partners to lessen the effects of U.S. sanctions, which would bring both chances and challenges for Australia.

In the economic area, Australia might see this situation as a chance to improve trade ties with India, especially in fields like minerals, energy, education, and technology, where they already complement each other.

Australia could take advantage of India's need to diversify its trade to boost economic cooperation, create new trade deals, and increase investment. This could mean special trade agreements, better teamwork in important industries, and more connected supply chains, all of which would help strengthen economic relations between the two countries. But, Australia's choices would be tricky because of its commitments to the United States. As a close ally of the U.S., Australia would feel pressure to follow American policies, including any actions against India. This balancing act would require managing the challenge of seeking economic chances with India while keeping a strong relationship with the United States. From a foreign policy viewpoint, how Australia reacts to a U.S. sanction on India would involve complicated decisions about alliance politics, economic goals, and larger strategic interests in the Indo-Pacific. In terms of security, the effects of U.S. sanctions would be even more significant. Australia and India have similar strategic goals in pushing back against China's assertiveness in the Indo-Pacific, and they have been strengthening their defence cooperation through agreements and groups like the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad), which also includes the U.S. and Japan. U.S. tariff on India could hurt U.S.-India relations and might impact the unity of these multilateral groups. In response, Australia could feel pressure to change its own position on India to keep regional stability and support the Quad's integrity.

Australia might choose to strengthen its defence cooperation with India to make sure that the Quad stays effective in balancing China's power, which would help counter the negative effects of U.S. sanctions. This strategic shift would mean that Australia has to balance its commitments to the United States with its growing defence and strategic partnership with India, showing a careful foreign policy that manages different priorities. On the diplomatic front, this situation would also affect how Australia engages more broadly in the Indo-Pacific region. Australia has been working hard to diversify its partnerships and build stronger connections with important regional players like India to maintain a multipolar balance of power in the Indo-Pacific. U.S. sanctions on India might speed up Australia's efforts to strengthen its relationship with India as part of this larger strategy, allowing Canberra to act more independently while still honoring its alliance commitments (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2025).

This would mean increasing high-level political talks, boosting exchanges between people, and improving cooperation in areas like maritime security, counterterrorism, and critical technologies. However, this shift would also require Australia to carefully handle its diplomatic ties with the United States, making sure that its engagement with India doesn't seem to go against U.S. policy goals. This careful balancing act would shape Australia's foreign policy after the U.S. tariff sanctions, showing Canberra's ability to act independently while still being a solid ally. Additionally, the larger geopolitical situation would highlight the effects of these sanctions (Smith & Patel, 2025). The Indo-Pacific region is increasingly influenced by strategic competition among the United States, China, and other regional powers. India is a key player in this situation as a major power and a counterbalance to China's influence.

For Australia, sustaining a strong relationship with India is critical to its Indo-Pacific strategy, particularly in terms of collective security, economic resilience, and maintaining a rules-based order (Kumar & Wang, 2025). U.S. sanctions on India could compel Australia to reassess the strategic calculus in the region, potentially leading Canberra to adopt a more independent stance that strengthens its bilateral partnership with India while managing alliance commitments with Washington (Lee, 2025). This recalibration would not only influence Australia's foreign policy towards India but also shape its broader strategic posture in the Indo-Pacific.

9. Conclusion

India and Australia are set to significantly enhance their foreign relations in the coming years, fuelled by shared strategic interests, economic synergies, and common democratic principles. As geopolitical tensions rise in the Indo-Pacific especially with China's growing assertiveness both countries are likely to strengthen their security and defence collaboration through platforms like the Quad (Quadrilateral Security Dialogue), joint military drills, and intelligence sharing. Economically, the India-Australia Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement (ECTA), signed in 2022, lays the groundwork for increased trade, investment, and collaboration in sectors such as critical minerals, education, renewable energy, and technology.

Australia's rich resources and India's vast market and tech-savvy population create mutual benefits, with potential for significant growth in green energy partnerships, especially around hydrogen and solar. Education and migration will remain strong pillars of the relationship, with Indian students and skilled workers contributing to Australia's economy, while educational institutions in both countries seek closer academic and research collaboration.

Politically, both governments are anticipated to maintain high-level exchanges and strategic discussions to promote regional stability, uphold freedom of navigation, and comply with international law. Climate change collaboration may also become a more prominent aspect of their bilateral agenda, given the increasing environmental challenges both face. Even though there are challenges like visa rules, racial issues, or trade arguments that might sometimes put a strain on the relationship, it needs careful handling by diplomats. In general, the relationship between India and Australia is likely to grow from just being symbolic to a more practical and complex partnership. This partnership shows the trust they have in each other and their common goals in creating a free, open, and strong Indo-Pacific area.

In the last few years, the Khalistan movement has become a major issue within Australia's big Indian community. Non-binding referendums and protests organized by groups like Sikhs for Justice have created tension between pro-Khalistan activists and members of the Indian community. For instance, during a referendum in Melbourne in January 2023, there were clashes at Federation Square between Khalistan supporters and pro-India demonstrators, leading to arrests and injuries (The Indian Express, 2023). Similarly, in Sydney, a vote in favour of an independent Sikh state triggered protests from Indian-Australians, and authorities have expressed concern about rising temple vandalism and communal tension (Australian Broadcasting Corporation [ABC], 2023). These events have led the Indian government to repeatedly reach out to Australian Government, urging it to curb anti-India activities and ensure public safety. Meanwhile, Canberra has emphasised its dedication to freedom of speech and democratic rights, while also showing that it respects India's worries.

In conclusion, U.S. restrictions on India would undoubtedly affect Australia's foreign policy with India by introducing complex economic, strategic, and diplomatic considerations. Australia would need to navigate a challenging environment where economic opportunities with India must be weighed against alliance obligations to the United States. Strategically, Australia would have to consider the implications for regional security, the stability of multilateral frameworks such as the Quad, and its broader Indo-Pacific strategy. Diplomatically, Australia would be tasked with balancing its growing partnership with India against the need to maintain alignment with U.S. policy. The interplay of these factors would compel Australia to adopt a nuanced, multidimensional foreign policy that manages the tensions between alliance solidarity and strategic autonomy. Ultimately, Canberra's response would reflect its evolving role as a middle power navigating the shifting currents of the Indo-Pacific, striving to strengthen its relationship with India while maintaining its position within the U.S. led strategic architecture.

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