



DAILY EDITORIAL ANALYSIS

TOPIC

**BEYOND THREE CS, THE NEW LEXICON
OF INDIA-AUSTRALIA TIES**

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Context

- PM Modi's third visit to Australia, three years after the **Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (2020)**, tests whether the relationship's self-description as "T20 mode" matches delivered outcomes, or whether institutional follow-through still trails expanding rhetoric across trade, defence, energy and education.

Trade and Investment: The Anchor Pillar

- Duty free access:** The ECTA gives all Indian exports duty free entry into Australia, benefiting textiles, pharmaceuticals, chemicals, engineering goods, gems and jewellery, while India offers preferential access to 90% of Australia's trade value for critical minerals, wool, avocados and macadamia.
- Trade target:** Both sides aim to raise bilateral trade from \$33 billion (2025) to \$100 billion by 2030.
- Investment flows:** Cumulative two way investment nears \$50 billion. Australia's AirTrunk plans \$30 billion for AI ready data centres in India, while Indian owned Perdaman Chemicals is building Australia's largest urea plant (\$4.5 billion), with over 98% modules manufactured in India, an example of reverse manufacturing linkage.

Defence: The Fastest Growing Pillar

- Institutionalised tri service exchanges and **joint exercises like AUSINDEX, Malabar and Talisman Sabre** strengthen maritime interoperability.
- Emerging cooperation in cyber, AI and drones is linked to India's expanding shipbuilding capacity.
- The **Mutual Logistics Support Agreement (MLSA)** enables reciprocal access to facilities, enhancing logistics and maritime domain awareness.
- The **'2+2 Ministerial Dialogue'** brings together Australian and Indian Foreign and Defence Ministers every two years to discuss strategic, defence, and regional security issues, strengthening their Comprehensive Strategic Partnership.

Energy and Education: The New "Es"

- Clean energy:** A Solar Taskforce and Green Hydrogen Task Force anchor renewable cooperation on critical minerals, manufacturing and rooftop solar.
- Civil nuclear potential:** Uranium export arrangements are reportedly nearing finalisation, a conditional but significant boost for India's civil nuclear ambitions.
- Education:** Over one lakh Indian students study in Australia, while Australian university campuses now operate within India itself. Joint research spans advanced computing, health and space.
- Skilling and mobility:** Vocational skill transfer in solar and mining (Gujarat, UP, Odisha) addresses Australia's workforce shortfall through temporary worker assignments, though employment visa pathways await fuller utilisation.

Sport and Diaspora: Emerging Soft Power Vectors

- The over ten lakh strong Indian diaspora, called a "living bridge," anchors people to people ties.
- Commonwealth Games 2030 and Brisbane Olympics 2032 offer platforms for cooperation in sports training, medicine and infrastructure.
- Traditional sports like kabaddi and kho kho are gaining traction beyond the diaspora, indicating cultural soft power diffusion.

Minilateral Architecture: Countering Concentrated Supply Chains

- Trilateral formats (India Indonesia Australia, India France Australia), the Australia Canada India Technology and Innovation Partnership (launched November 2025), and the **India Japan Australia Supply Chain Resilience Initiative** aim to counter market dominance in critical minerals, rare earths and semiconductors, an implicit response to concentrated Chinese supply.
- A prospective India Australia UAE triad remains unfinalised.
- Broader engagement continues through the **Quad, IORA and outreach to Pacific Island Countries** on health, fintech and disaster relief.

Challenges/Concerns

- **Outpacing institutionalisation:** The relationship keeps getting new labels, from three Cs to three Ds to now Development, Defence, Energy and Education. But new labels do not automatically mean new results on the ground.
- **Conditional commitments:** Uranium exports remain only “likely,” not concluded.
- **Nascent mechanisms:** The Technology and Innovation Partnership that was launched in late 2025 has no delivery track record yet.
- **Underutilised pathways:** Employment linked visa programmes await better uptake despite being operational.
- **Personality dependent momentum:** Progress is often attributed to leader level chemistry rather than binding institutional mechanisms, raising sustainability concerns beyond current leadership tenures.

Way Forward

- Convert in principle understandings, particularly on uranium exports and technology partnerships, into binding, time bound agreements.
- Strengthen defence industrial collaboration through joint production in emerging technologies rather than exercises alone.
- Deepen institutional mechanisms for visa and skill mobility pathways to match demand with utilisation.
- Diversify minilateral engagement outcomes beyond declaratory statements into functional supply chain resilience projects.

Conclusion

- India Australia ties have matured from civilisational shorthand into a substantive multi domain partnership shaped significantly by shared concerns over China’s supply chain dominance. However, sustaining momentum requires institutionalising delivery mechanisms across trade, defence, energy and education, rather than relying on personal chemistry between leaders to carry the relationship forward.

Daily Mains Practice Question

[Q] **The India-Australia Comprehensive Strategic Partnership has expanded rapidly in vocabulary but institutionalisation still trails rhetoric.” Critically examine**

Source: TH

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